

# The Thirteen 25 Report



November 2012—February 2013 Edition



**Vision:**  
**We seek a Pacific region committed to gender equality and women's rights where women are heard and fully participate in all development and decisionmaking processes for peace and security.**

**Mission:**  
 To promote the full implementation of UNSCR1325 (women, peace and security) and of women, peace and human security concerns in the Pacific Island countries.

To empower women, the disabled and the under-served communities through the use of appropriate and accessible media and information-communication technology and processes.

To advocate for policy changes that reflect women's reality at all levels.

To develop, produce and distribute a range of media and communication materials.

To enhance a community of practice through enhanced networking and collaboration.

**We exist to empower women and communities by giving them a voice to fully participate in decision making for equality, development and peace**



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*In addition to the collation and publication of our Monthly Women, Peace and Human Security Reports, FemLINKPACIFIC continues to amplify the call for decision making structures to be inclusive and accountable to the diversity and resilience of women, as well as ensure compliance with international conventions and treaties*

## Linkages to the Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security:

As an organisation which has contributed to the development of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, FemLINKPACIFIC's policy initiative for 2012 demonstrates FemLINKPACIFIC's commitment to make visible the women in order to enhance women's participation in conflict prevention (including the prevention of the resurgence of conflict) which is an essential element of resolution 1325.

The launch of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security on October 18, 2012 demonstrates the potential to bring together a series of high level regional commitments into viable national programme and strategies on women, peace and security including supporting women's spaces to continue to mobilize and develop civil society strategies.

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### Focus Areas of the Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

Global experience of developing National and Regional Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security has resulted in four core goals for advancing implementation of UNSCR 1325:

- i) **Prevention:** Prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations;
- ii) **Participation:** women participate equally with men and gender equality is promoted in peace and security decision-making processes at local, national, regional and international levels and;
- iii) **Protection:** Women's and girls' rights are protected and promoted in conflict-affected situations and; iv) **Relief and Recovery:** highlighting the need to meet women and girls specific relief needs and to ensure that women's capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery are reinforced in humanitarian crises and conflict and post-conflict situations.

The Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for the Pacific will focus on three strategic pillars:

*Focus Area 1: Gender mainstreaming and women and young women's leadership in conflict prevention and management, political decision-making and peacebuilding and peacekeeping*

*Focus Area 2: Gender mainstreaming and women and young women's participation in security sector oversight and accountability*

*Focus Area 3: Protection of women's and girls' human rights during humanitarian crises and in transitional and post-conflict contexts*

# A Focus on UN Security Council Resolution 1325



*The Fiji Women’s Forum co-convoked by the National Council of Women Fiji, Soqosoqo Vakamarama I Taukei, Fiji Women’s Rights Movement and FemLINKPACIFIC amplifies the call for inclusion of “1325” in Fiji’s democratization process*

***The United Nations Security adopted resolution 1325 on women, Peace and Security on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2000.***

*The Resolution calls for:*

1. *Participation of women in peace processes.*
2. *Gender training in peace building operations*
3. *Protection of women, and girls and respect for their rights.*
4. *Gender mainstreaming in the reporting and implementation systems of the United Nations relating to conflict, peace and security.*

***A Security Council resolution is a commitment made by the United Nations and Member states to take action on Particular issues. States are expected to comply and work towards making the commitments a reality in their own countries***  
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## **Policy Brief: Security through Women's Eyes**

**By Sharon Bhagwan Rolls and Emile Anise**

As the world gathers this March for the 57th session for the UN Commission of the Status of Women FemLINKPACIFIC asked members of our rural women's community media network what needs to be done to prevent violence against women and girls and enhance a culture of peace and security:

Through outreach consultations in rural centres in Fiji including in Tavua, Ba, Nadi, Labasa and Nausori as well as through our monthly "1325" network meetings 254 women leaders from diverse background, representing on average 2540 members of networks and local clubs, have reaffirmed that women and children must live a life free of violence. The prevention of violence needs economic security in homes and husbands and wives making financial decisions, deciding on income and expenses together. The prevention of violence also needs men and women sharing in decision making in our community, our town and also in our country.

At the regional level, according to the Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (RAP-WPS) the nature of security has evolved considerably for the Pacific region since the first coup in Fiji in 1987 and the civil war in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea in the 1990s. Our region has witnessed and continues to be affected by armed conflict, civil unrest, tribal fighting, and local level conflicts over resources, increasing violent crime and political crises.

It is recognised that the impact of forced migration and displacement, as a result of climate change, the issue of poor management of natural resources will have serious implications on regional peace and stability of Pacific Island Countries and Territories. These political realities heavily disrupt the lives of women and their families and increases the risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

However even at time of instability and insecurity because men, women and children experience conflicts differently they also have a significant role in contributing to preventing and managing conflict and sustaining peace in communities and at the national and regional level.

The RAP-WPS reaffirms the need for gender-specific approaches to conflict prevention initiatives.

### **Recommendation:**

Enhancing efforts to prevent all forms of violence requires the full implementation of key global commitments to women's human security and human rights including CEDAW, UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the MDGS and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Prevention strategies must include investing in women's peace and security by ensuring women can inform and influence decisions which affect their lives including through equal participation in local and national governance. The efforts of community based women's movements must also be recognised 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.

### **Actions at Regional Level:**

We call on all development partners and member states to commit to the full implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security by supporting:

Gender mainstreaming and women and young women's leadership in conflict prevention and management, political decision-making and peace building and peacekeeping by:

- Strengthened capacity and networking of women and young women leaders from government, civil society and private sector in mediation, dialogue, peace negotiations and constitutional reforms
- Enhanced capacity of governments to adopt measures to increase women's representation at all levels of leadership and decision-making.
- More effective participation of women leaders in the context of the Biketawa Declaration and Good Office role of the Secretary-General of the Forum Secretariat.
- Women, Peace and Security commitments are reflected in participating country peacekeeping policies.
- Gender mainstreaming and women and young women's participation in security sector oversight and accountability by:
  - Ensuring Women, Peace and Security commitments and obligations are incorporated in the development and implementation of national security, defence and justice policy
  - Enhanced mainstreaming of Women, Peace and Security in the Forum Regional Security Committees priority setting and decision-making.
  - Improved mainstreaming of Women, Peace and Security within the work of the Secretariat's Political, Governance and Security Programme and Regional Law Enforcement Secretariats.
- Protection of women's and girls' human rights during humanitarian crises and in transitional and post-conflict contexts
- Ending Violence against Women (EVAW) policies ensure women and girls' access to health, psychosocial, legal and protection in times of humanitarian emergency and in reconstruction and rehabilitation after conflict and crisis
- State parties are better able to meet their obligations to protect, respect and fulfil women's and girls' human rights during transitional, conflict and post-conflict situations

**Actions at National Level, governments must integrate UNSC Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) in national policies and legislation to:**

- Enhance Personal Security by addressing threats which include domestic violence, violent crime, torture and detention by a citizen's own state, and military invasion by a foreign state. Personal security aims to protect people from physical harm by violent individuals, criminals, and the state, and promotes safety from domestic abuse and predatory adults.
- Enhance Community Security including by protecting people from the loss of traditional relationships and values and from sectarian and ethnic violence. Minority ethnic groups are often threatened.
- Enhance Political Security - Within these broad areas of human security are the critical issues being experienced in different ways and grappled with by Pacific women, who are working to place their recommendations for change on to the various state and regional agendas. When women feel secure, peace is possible. When women feel secure enough to resist war and organise for peace, expressed through theatre, public demonstrations and civil disobedience, peace is on its way.

Pacific women want their leaders to use quiet diplomacy, mediation, sanctions and other measures as conflict-prevention measures rather than deploy force after the outbreak of conflict. By consulting routinely with women technical experts, the security sector can improve its policies and regulations to provide security for all.

Women's 'security' is pervasive, not just related to armed conflict, and affects every area of women's lives, nor is just about 'domestic violence'. It is about the welfare and status of women, human security issues, and the impact of decisions in relation to the form and functions of the military, police, and broader security sector on women.

**Background:**

*According to the Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security despite facing violence, instability and conflict women and young women have also played an important part in conflict prevention, management and recovery in the region:*

*Direct and indirect impacts of armed conflict in the region have not only included injuries and deaths but have violated fundamental human rights and international law. These include human rights tools of sexual and gender-based violence alongside the displacement of groups and individuals.*

*Even though the casualties resulting from violent conflicts across the region may seem small by global standards the reality is still shattering. In the Bougainville crisis 10% of the population were killed while an additional 60,000 people were displaced. For the conflicts in the Solomon Islands threats, abductions and destruction of property saw over 300 lives with some 50,000 individuals being displaced.*

*Conflicts within the region have also led to the decreased access to vital basic services. These include health and education services, and the mental stress those affected go through as reflected in the total social and economic costs of such conflicts, particularly at the household level.*

*The impact of Pacific conflicts are also having an impact on a generation of young women, men and children who ultimately affected not only physically and mentally but taking the form of a distorted future awaiting them.*

*The protection of the human rights of women and children is required as a critical response to the ongoing harmful traditional and cultural practices as well as during times of humanitarian crises.*



*FemLINKPACIFIC acts at local, national and regional level in Fiji and the Pacific, giving voices to women across the region through a rural and regional media and policy network. Established following the “Blue Ribbon” Peace Vigil in 2000 as a response to enhance the availability of information about and communicate women’s rights issues in Fiji and the Pacific, FemLINKPACIFIC’s mission therefore is to create enabling environments for rural women, young women and women with disabilities. The organisation is a leading advocate on UNSCR 1325; communication rights and community media; and of women, peace and human security concerns. The organisation operates a women – led community radio network “FemTALK 89FM” and promotes change by developing appropriate media and communication materials, advocating for policy changes that reflect women’s reality at all levels and enhancing a community of practice and network*

## **Communicating Women, Peace and Human Security**

**By Emeli Anise**

The Regional Action Plan- Women’s Peace and Security recently acknowledged at the regional level reaffirms gender specific approaches to Human Security. Over a decade of dedication in working on UNSCR 1325, CEDAW and the Beijing Platform, FemLINKPACIFIC has engaged from the micro level to the macro policy level to advocate and educate on these issues. Through the monthly 1325 consultations, the Household Income and Expenditure Surveys to the community radio productions highlight, indicate and act as a safe space for women to voice out opinions and issues that concern them the most, these engagements continue to provide substantial data, information and credibility to the realities of women documented in our publications and advocacy efforts.

A decade into work on Women’s Peace and Security saw outputs as the Nadi Women’s Peace and Human Security Action Plan emerge. Such work entails concerns communicated by women that are linked to global commitments to which the present government must oblige. For instance Economic security in 2010 was centred on the inability of women to holistically cater for individual families. Education coupled with the rising living standards had been indicated to be core contributor to economic insecurities of women. Similar economic insecurities continue today as highlighted in present and lately published WPHS reports. **“Many of the families in our communities are struggling to pay the school fees for their secondary school and that is why we are seeing a high level of drop outs especially from form 5 level up. . .”** published in the May 2012 Reports implying that economic security issues of women play out the same although years have lapsed that has unfortunately not realised by policy makers.

Standing firm on global conventions and resolutions as CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, Beijing Platform for Action and the recent Regional Action Plan – Women’s Peace and Security clearly outline the inherent right of every individual to fundamental human rights. On addressing women’s peace and security what is important

to note is taking back information to these women. It is through this that women are empowered to embrace feminist initiatives and core principles .

***“There is also a need to address the existing information “divide” between the capital city and rural centres must be addressed. Government officials especially those working in rural communities need to be better equipped with the gender analysis skills not because they are the first point of contact for local communities whether it is infrastructure development, land use planning, as well as economic development”*** said Executive Director Sharon Bhagwan Rolls in her reflections from a recent visit to Labasa for a round table discussion with our rural networks.

Gender inequality has been recognized as a major obstacle to achieve sustainable development and wellbeing across the Pacific region that seems to persist a great deal locally. In this light political security of women will only become a success with a proportional representation of each half of the population at all levels of decision making.

A common desire rested in this notion. Women across our rural networks emanated this concern which in turn was translated into the WPS and Human Security Action Plan that continues to be documented in our reports and transcripts today. ***“... in my community we women and men are not participate equally due to our culture we women are not allowed to speak voice our concern.... we must have equal access in decision making process and women should attend more workshops to broaden their knowledge and understanding”*** shared by Joitivini Naqai from Labasa portrays this trend of ongoing injustice in the scales of gender at decision making level constrained by existing cultural and traditional structures.

Therefore it is important to note that while FemLINKPACIFIC has been working on WPS within the region and locally the realities are that existing traditional and cultural structures contribute to the Gender inequalities in decision makeup. Nonetheless, we still strive to provide that safe space for women to voice matters that concern them the most while engaging in activities and taking on initiatives that will take back information to these women in rural areas.

Being the first in the region to take on media initiatives as the suitcase radio, community radio broadcasting is a cause of its own entrenched in feminist work looking at empowering the women and young women of Fiji, particularly those in the rural areas alongside efforts in continuing to bridge that information divide.

and security what is important to note is taking back information to these women. It is through this that women are empowered to embrace feminist initiatives and core principles

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## **Peer Review of UN Women E-learning Training Course on Women, Peace and Security for Asia and the Pacific**

**By Sharon Bhagwan Rolls**

There is a need to build the capacity of the key stakeholders in peace and security and so Bangkok is the venue of the Peer Review of UN Women E-learning Training Course on Women, Peace and Security for Asia and the Pacific.

The meeting which was held from January 22 to the 24 brought together a range of women, peace and security practitioners from across Asia (Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, South Korea, Indonesia and Thailand) as well as Timor Leste and Fiji (Pacific) for two days to gain expert inputs into the finalization of the content of this module, and to ensure that the final product is high quality.

According to Roberta Clarke, the Director of UN Women's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific this was collaboration between the regional office as well as UN Women's WPS cluster in New York together with the UN Training Centre in the Dominican Republic:

"This meeting is to review the global training materials and adapt accordingly for Asia-Pacific in line with the standards and norms enshrined in the UNSC resolutions on women, peace and security

Responsibility for implementation lies primarily with UN member states, she said, but it is also important to include regional and national level players and this e-learning course is designed for policy makers and practitioners including in civil society to integrate WPS in their daily work and to support the implementation of the UNSC resolutions at multiple levels by promoting the resolution as well as building capacity towards the development and implementation of national (and regional) action plans.

Participants brought their expertise, experiences and solutions in many complex conflict or peace and security realities and in the two days of meeting the working group will endeavour to reflect these realities in shaping the responses for the toolkit in order to promote the peace we are all looking for.

UN Women has a mandate to support and strengthen the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010) at regional and national levels. As part of this mandate, UN Women has undertaken capacity development initiatives, including the development of an e-learning course on women, peace and security, to further understanding and awareness of the women, peace and security agenda.

The e-learning course consists of a common module which provides general information about the United Nations and its intergovernmental architecture for the women, peace and security agenda, and region-specific modules that address the nature and impact of conflict per geographic region. UN Women has collaborated with the UN Women Training Centre to recently contract a consultant to draft a regional module on Asia for the e-learning course.

**Focusing on Prevention, Participation and Representation, Protection as well as Relief and Recovery are the thematic issues being addressed in the e-learning course which connects with the four pillars of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security launched in October 2012.**

There is also clearly a need to critical ensure a preventive action and human security approach so that there is a greater focus on the prevention of violence and conflict.

While the ultimate goal of the mandate of UN Women is to promote national and regional implementation of UNSCR1325 (and subsequent resolutions) the Peace Operations Training Institute (POTI) is managing the delivery of the training course which is made available free. While UNSCR1325 was adopted in 2000, 13 years on we are still talking about the implementation despite the multiple efforts of advocacy and even though there has been the adoption of national and a regional action plan.

This course is designed to respond to the need to advance implementation and knowledge through accessible literacy materials which can explain the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

The course consists of a common module and regional modules so that trainees are able to enhance their understanding of the normative frameworks and standards accepted by the UN member states and to assist them in implementation and accountability at national level in line with the normative/legal framework of the UN which has progressed since the adoption of the priority of Women and Armed Conflict in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action but also UNSCR 1325 and subsequent security council resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960). These resolutions are consistent with CEDAW as well as Geneva Conventions.

Women and gender equality in the peace and security agenda is therefore no longer simply a thematic priority, especially as we progress a human security agenda in the context of national and international security.

The development of the implementation began in 2007 in the Latin America and Caribbean region and it began with an advocacy approach with government ministers and interest snowballed into other regions, in particular from the African continent with a high level participation as well as national women's machineries and government officials involved in national security and defence.

**Pedagogy for Women, Peace and Security: Connecting to e-learning modules needs to ensure accessibility for diverse connectivity**

The Peace Operations Training Institute (POTI) is managing the delivery of the training course for UN Women which is available for the content and made available free through funding from the Australian Government as well as Canada, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

According to Harvey Langholtz the Director of POTI, the training on women, peace and security is not just limited to women. In fact, in 2012 there have been a total 2003 men and 432 women in the African continent and 1565 men and 312 in LAC and that means a total of 4312 or 12 people a day have accessed the training on UNSCR1325.

The 1325 training population is broad from military and government personnel, academics and women leaders it is available worldwide and free to everyone: The current e-learning course and how it is facilitated and accessed online may be viewed on the Peace Operations

Training Institute website:

<http://www.peaceopstraining.orgdownloads/309/7b9c51480311d72380bd6fc5234df23b/>

It is envisaged that the e-learning course on 1325/Women, Peace and Security is an opportunity to mainstream the training within the public service of member states and to support the implementation of WPS at the national level.

According to Langholtz while students may face difficulties in downloading data, they are able to download one lesson at a time approach is also practical and valid as there is a combination of both high-tech and low-tech delivery.

The teaching process he added, adds up overall to a 50% completion rate, and that is reflected by the number of people who take and pass the final examination and he qualified this by saying that while this is a free course, there would be many people who have accessed the course but may not have sat the final examination.

## **Lessons on Women, Peace and Security: Overview of the Asia Pacific Module**

The evolution of the agenda of peace is inclusive of peace building and peacemaking and not just peacekeeping, and today also includes the Responsibility to Protect.

According to Judith Large, a UN Women consultant who has been involved in the development of the e-learning module, the training is a way to enable practitioners to navigate their way through the women, peace and security agenda.

This includes providing the background to the United Nations and the role of the UN Security Council and Peacekeeping because it is important to provide the background or context in the normative practice, dating back to peacekeeping along the India-Pakistan border.

According to Large, the introductory chapters of the e-learning course addresses the labyrinth of resolutions, institutional overview, as well as laying the foundation of understanding gender equality/equity and mainstreaming, laid out in sense in a number of "UN" documents. Large is optimistic as she suggested that while it has been almost 13 years since the adoption of "1325" there has definitely been progress but at the same time, as advocates of women, peace and security, we need to ensure the benchmark for gauging implementation and also mapping the UN landscape so that the implementation is not just seen to be the role of UN Women.

The training module includes a lesson on Gender Dimensions of Armed Conflict including the impact of war and conflict on men and women and setting the table for peace agreements by also addressing Post Conflict Reconstruction, as well as a specific lesson on the origins of SCR1325 and a lesson on Human Security.

These lessons certainly address the realities of women in the Pacific who have been marginalized from the peace agreement or the process of determining the role of women in (post conflict) peace and security settings including addressing the diverse roles of women during armed conflicts.

## **Enhancing the Narrative of Women, Peace and Security**

The double discrimination of women who live in South Thailand, mediation and dialogue that continues despite the continuation of cold war settings and enhancing women's participation in conflict prevention and human security. Relating the narrative, including the information in official documents and reports requires an investment in women's efforts to document and communicate their priorities within national and regional peace and security structures including through the development and implementation of national and regional action plans forms the basis of input for the group of peace and security activities who meet on the second day of the peer review meeting. The meeting provided an opportunity for everyone to address the challenges as they experience it from their work whether in academia or civil society / women's movement. It was also a valuable opportunity to connect with UN Women to inform its strategies on its global as well as regional and sub-regional women, peace and security pillars.

With meeting including representatives of UN-ESCAP and the UNDP-BCPR this is also an important opportunity to share information and provide input for the broader agenda of peace and security as discussions link to enhancing preventive action, women's participation, addressing protection as well as linkages with humanitarian assistance and disaster risk management.

This links closely to the 4 pillars of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on WPS and so to know that the e-learning module for Asia-Pacific will link to the priority pillars of our regional action plan is definitely welcome news – this will be timely for the type of training I think that civil society and officials together can benefit from.

However there is still a need to ensure the ongoing narrative of women's peace and security remains.

## The Section J Spot



*Through FemLINKPACIFIC's Community Media Network on UNSCR1325 women are using inter-personal and media and ICT tools such as community radio to communicate their collective peace and human security priorities*

# **Inaugural Pacific Islands Community Radio Round Table and Capacity Building Workshop**

**By Suman Basnet**

Community broadcasters and advocates have called for legislative reform and recommended that media policy formulation should involve CSOs and recognize community as a distinct sector especially with regard to licensing, fees and spectrum allocation.

Issues concerning development of community broadcasting in Pacific Island countries were also raised during the inaugural Pacific Islands Community Radio Roundtable held between 11 and 12 February 2013 in Suva, Fiji Islands. The Roundtable was convened jointly by the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC Asia Pacific) and FemLINKPACIFIC in collaboration with the WACC Pacific regional committee.

More than 50 participants highlighted across Asia-Pacific participated in the consultations. The need to place communication rights at the centre of media democratization was highlighted and co-related to the Pacific Islands Forum's Digital Strategy in the context of needs and realities of different Pacific Island countries.

The Pacific Community Radio Round Table has reaffirmed the importance of Community radio as an alternative media that provides a unique platform for the under-represented and marginalized - women, people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) and indigenous people. It discussed and highlighted the value of community broadcasting as a mechanism for poverty eradication and disaster risk reduction.

It has called for working with governments as partners in enhancing community broadcasting but clarified that governments didn't qualify as broadcasters or owners of community radio stations.

The roundtable was held in conjunction with FemLINKPACIFIC's Annual Young Women's Media and Advocacy Skills Training Programme - an important interactive learning and production space for a core team of young women producers and broadcasters drawn from the Regional network on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 as well as other civil society partner networks who are keen to gain practical community-media skills to enhance and amplify the collective call for a peaceful Pacific.

The Pacific Community radio Round Table and capacity building workshops were supported by the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme and New Zealand Aid Programme, IWDA, UNESCO.



## **Key challenges and opportunities facing the community radio sector in the Pacific Island Countries**

*Dr Rajni Chand is the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of FemLINKPACIFIC. In her opening remarks at the Inaugural Pacific Islands Community Radio Roundtable in February, she highlighted that in the Pacific region, where communication is still not harmonised, FemLINK-PACIFIC HAS paved the way on how to overcome this digital divide by community empowerment.*

I begin by echoing the words of the late former Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Greg Urwin, who said “when you get right down to it, this sector (ICT) is after all, about empowerment” (Urwin, 2006).

I will begin by firstly drawing upon the Digital Strategy of the 2006 Pacific Plan, and then discuss the challenges that are in existences or have emerged since 2006 for the Community Radio Sector in the Pacific.

### ***The Pacific Plan***

Pacific Plan was developed and adapted in October 2005. One of the elements of that Pacific Plan included a Digital Strategy which gave emphasis to ICT (Information Communication Technology), the need to overcome the obstacles that people faced where ICT development was concerned. These obstacles, amongst others included things such as access to ICT in rural and remote areas, and limitations to access due to costs and human resource shortage in the region.

That was in 2006 Digital Strategy in Pacific Plan. Even after 6 years, the obstacles that Pacific Island countries face where Digital Strategy is concerned, has not diminished. In some sense it has increased due to the other obstacles that Pacific Island countries face now and which were non-existent or lesser at that time.

Why was the Digital Strategy of the Pacific Plan developed? Indeed it was due to the neglect of the Broadcasting of Information in the Pacific. It is fair to say that ICT in the Pacific has developed over the years. Now we have faster internet, audio streaming, more radio stations, and digital satellite radio stations. All these provide more coverage and better content. Yet, are we living up to the expectation of the Digital Strategy?

As mentioned earlier, we are now living at a time where we have more obstacles facing our region than in 2005.

### ***Challenges facing Pacific Island Countries***

#### ***Political Challenges and the Woes that come with it***

One of the challenges some of the Pacific Island countries face is the recurrent political problem, the changes to legislature and policies it brings with it. The impact of such problems on the economy of the nation, its people - especially on women and children and those staying in remote areas did not be discussed, since it is well known. When the livelihood of the common are at stake, the simple luxuries that people enjoy are the first to be sacrificed-which can include buying of the daily newspaper, reduction in electricity use thus TV time and internet usage, contemplating buying the batteries for the transistor radio. The impact of non democratic actions on dissemination of information-using any form of media, whether it is print, audio or visual, whether it is community owned or commercial has been well docu-

mented. Media regulations are such move.

### ***Media Regulations***

Tight control, self-censorship, suppression of the 'voices' and the independence, media ownership regulations, and public emergency regulations, all can be called synonyms for media regulations. All in the media industry in the Pacific are familiar with these terms. Even when the regulations are lifted, there is so much suspicion amongst the journalists that many hesitate to openly express their views in fear of dire consequences.

#### *Telecommunication Regulations*

Now coming to the basic needs of radio broadcasting; most Pacific Island nations are still struggling with inappropriate and outdated telecommunications regulations.

I am not sure if Solomon Islands has sorted its telecommunication regulation yet which has been in discussion since 2009.

The ever present licence fee adds to the burden most radio stations face. It is even more challenging for those radio stations that are community owned, resource and skill starved.

### ***Infrastructure***

My profession requires me to travel to several Pacific Island Countries. At times it requires travelling in 3-seater planes, small boats, up and down dirt roads, to places that are remote. One thing that is ever evident is the lack of basic infrastructure. Roads, bridges, clean water supply, electricity, access to medical and education facilities, all come under these. Where the required infrastructure for radio communication is concerned, the commercial radio stations, internet and mobile phone companies may be able to afford connectivity. Where community based radio stations, their outreach and affordability is concerned, it is something that seriously needs to be considered.

Even today most rural and remote communities in the Pacific Island countries lack access to basic communication. Even after the 2006 Digital Strategy, we are still living in a time which has a bigger digital and communication divide. The sheer lack of the basic communication infrastructure has seen slow demise of community radio in the Pacific.

Who should be blamed for this? Is it the community? Is it the nation with its political and economic misery? Is it the lack of technical expertise that the region is faced with? Is it the cost that is involved in the maintenance of such setups?

Prevailing all of these, is the misconception that most Pacific Island nations have that improving the telecommunication services to rural and remote areas is expensive and unprofitable.

### ***Community Radio Stations-why we need them***

One needs to look at the costs involved in setting up 'suitcase radios' to actually estimate the cost involved. FemLINKPACIFIC began small, currently its outreach has gone beyond Suva. It has similar set ups in neighbouring Pacific Island countries as well. Suitcase radios, or radio used for communication is one of the oldest, cheapest and the most reliable forms of communication, since it reaches all beyond the economic and geographical divide.

Another fact that needs to be realised is the type of information community radio stations disseminate? Why does it still have an audience, why does it still have people eager to join in the team of broadcasters, why is it still operating?

The basic fact common amongst all community radio stations is that community radios disseminate information that the community wants to hear. It is seen as an avenue for people's voices, as a platform where people can without fear share their stories, it gives them an op-

portunity to speak on issues concerning them and providing suggestions.

### ***Gender and equality***

Unlike most community radio stations, femLINKPACIFIC is a women's radio station. That in itself is a challenge. In the Pacific, as I have discussed earlier, we are still facing many challenges, old as well as new. The tradition, gender inequality, lack of recognition of women's voices, and views where politics, economy, skills, access to education and medical facilities are concerned, are still huddles that women have to cross. Yet, through the community radio initiative that begun 2000, femLINKPACIFIC's community radio has given opportunities to many women in the region to voice their concerns. FemLINKPACIFIC has provided the opportunities for many women to display their intelligence, techniques in negotiation, conflict resolutions, and confidence that would not have been possible, given their isolation, lack of opportunities and challenges that they face.

### ***Conclusion***

Countries in the Pacific have come a long way where providing basic facilities for its people are concerned. There are still many gaps in the facilities found between those living in urban, with those living in remote or rural areas. There still exist major huddles where political stability, media regulations and policies are concerned. There is still a need to improve the infrastructure in most parts of the Pacific Island countries. Empowerment can only be possible when all people, regardless of their location, class, gender, race, and religious are given equal opportunities. Digital Strategies can only be successful when all have equal opportunities to voice their views and when the government of the day realises that we cannot live in a digital and communication divided society. EMPOWERMENT CAN NEVER BE POSSIBLE WITH DIGITAL DIVIDE.

## Highlights from the Inaugural Pacific Island Community Radio Roundtable and Interactive Learning Workshop

By Nandni Vandhana

*The roundtable and workshop was supported by PACMAS, NZAID, the International Women's Development Agency and UNESCO (Pacific). The 4 day programme at the Fiji National University Raiwai Campus helped reaffirm the vital role of community radio in the Pacific media landscape whether it is about Disaster Risk Management/Responses or the promotion of human rights in the context of diverse identities and building a culture of peace. As Nandni Vandhana, FemLINKPacific's Community Media Officer reports, the opportunity for south-south learning and exchange is certainly an important way to enhance the collective call for gender equality and inclusion as the 36 participants learnt during the 2 day workshop which followed the Roundtable:*

### **It's More Than a Natural Disaster:**

FemLINKPacific's Women's Weather Watch campaign using SMS messages and community media to ensure the inclusion of women's needs and perspectives during Disaster Risk Management processes is part on a broader strategy of community media activists particularly following the Asian tsunami tragedy several years ago.

Through research undertaken by AMARC in Asia, there is a need to focus on the preparedness stage by ensuring vulnerable communities have all the information they need says Prativa Chhetri of the AMARC Asia Pacific Regional Secretariat. This also will assist broadcasters convey correct and relevant information when disasters occur: "(because) when you are reporting, you have to feel the moment and also get a sense of what type of information that the people need and you can accommodate this."

According to Rusila Lautiki of FemLINKPacific's Rural Community Media Network, the Women's Weather Watch reports and SMS information also enables rural women to gather information especially when they may not have access to national media networks.

And that is why priority must be given to equipping women with technical and management skills in community radio and media networks.

For Bianca Miglioretto, who is the Vice President for AMARC's women's international network in the Asia Pacific region the gender policy adopted in 2008 is to assist community radio operators be aware and respond to the under-representation of women in media content as she cited the results of the Global Media Monitoring Project.

That is why, she said it was vital to have community radios designed in a way to suit the needs of women, in terms of the technology and radio stations should also ensure gender policies are implemented.

### **Making Space for Everyone:**

The power of the media to perpetuate stereotypes was on the agenda of the workshop and through the lens of addressing Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) participants were reminded of the role and responsibility of community radio to represent all groups with dignity, respect and within human rights frameworks.

Uha Fifita, producer and broadcaster with FemLINKPACIFIC, and also a member the Rainbow Women's Network (RWN) produces radio programmes on the SOGI community for FemTALK 89FM.

RWN is an organisation which was established in 2009 for the diverse marginalised women targeting lesbians and sex workers. It advocates for the rights of the sexual minorities. Through the partnership of FemLINKPACIFIC and RWN, she said that this has provided her with the opportunity to being thee voice for the voiceless that is for the lesbians(G – girls) and sex workers in her community.

“Getting the G – girls to speak out in the tape recorder was quite challenging at first because of their sexual orientation as most of them are still to come out from the closet”

She said that the young girls are now more open after listening to the older women talking on the radio; it has empowered them and also allowed them the opportunity to continue their education and also find employment.

Maica Lagman, who advocates for SOGI issues in Philippines, said that sexual minorities were always looked down upon and the media plays a huge role in creating stereotypes leading to discrimination in the society.

“What we have to know is that they have equal rights and should not be judged”

She urged producers and broadcasters to do relevant research before talking to SOGI members as sometimes they are not comfortable, and it will hard for them to open up.

### **Making Research Relevant:**

FemLINKPACIFIC works with the rural networks in Fiji in Ba, Tavua, Nausori and Labasa as well as regional partners in Tonga, Solomon Islands, Bougainville and in Papua New Guinea and the baseline of our work is the grassroots research done in the communities we go in. Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Director of FemLINKPACIFIC said that in the Pacific islands where not all the producers and broadcasters have access to books and literature, this is where grassroots research comes in.

A total of 36 participants gathered at the Fiji National University for the Inaugural Pacific Islands Community Radio Roundtable and Interactive Learning Workshop which was hosted by FemLINKPACIFIC in partnership with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters.

Community media practice, she said, is a process of listening and learning ahead of recording interviews or making programmes and so FemLINKPACIFIC has developed a process which informs the content as well as the broadcast process:

“It is about travelling to the communities, getting a sitting on mats and talking with the women, it is more than Google search”

This is when broadcasters get a feel of how the women are living lives, how the village setting is, and what things are most important to the women and what is not.

Emeli Anise, FemLINKPACIFIC's Research Officer said that community narratives including information about their daily lives, development challenges and information as simple as the distance and cost of travel to the closest local centre provides important context for radio programmes and policy briefs.

According to Anise, by including quantifiable information such as the daily time use of women, household budgets, information about club membership as well as the analysis of development gaps in radio programmes will assist policy makers better understand the situation of women in their communities.

Without a licence you cannot operate a community radio station and when operating a community radio station you also want to be protected from media controls.

The Pacific Island needs a harmonized Telecommunication and Media Framework that is in line with Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Information.

For Emani Fakaotimanava- Lui of Niue this means having consistency to enable either traditional or internet radio stations.

According to Imam Prakaso, Vice President of AMARC South East Asia the Principles for a Democratic Legislation on Community Broadcasting is the commitment of States to reduce the digital divide and to involve all sectors in the Information and Knowledge Society, implies the creation of mechanisms to guarantee the access and migration of community and other non-commercial forms of media to the new technologies and other challenges that are envisaged in the processes of media convergence and digitalization.

“In some extent, a lot of community radio in many countries treated in a discriminatory by other media actors as well as the state”

It is also vital to ensure the recognition, promotion and differentiation of community media in the national legislative framework aims at guaranteeing the right to information and freedom of expression, to ensure diversity, media pluralism and the promotion of this sector. Its inclusion in law needs to be accompanied by procedures, conditions and public policies of respect, tolerance, promotion and protection, as safeguards for their existence and development.

## **FemTALK: Community Radio – Communicating, Learning and Sharing**



Twenty-two community radio producers and broadcasters, project managers and programme officers from Nausori, Labasa, Suva, Solomon Islands and Tonga gathered at FemLINKPacific's community media centre February 9 - 10 for the annual "Young Women's Media and Advocacy Skills" training with the support of the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) and UNESCO ahead of the inaugural "Pacific Islands Community Radio Roundtable and Workshop" which was from February 11<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup>.

The young women and wo' mentors are strategized on their advocacy input for the upcoming meeting as well as collaborating on a series of radio programmes.

According to workshop wo' mentor, Lisa Horiwapu, radio program producer for Vois Blong Mere from the Solomon Islands, women's radio strategies in the Solomon Islands are critical in the post conflict reconstruction phase and the organisation continues to use the radio programmes to tell women's stories in order to create awareness on the status of women and to bring an end to the daily injustice women face including poverty and violence.

Slueti Waqa from Ba has been a producer and broadcaster with FemLINKPACIFIC since 2008, said that through the community media process, that includes consultations and radio programme production at community level, rural women, such as those from the Ba HART community where she comes from, are able to understand information and issues better, "as through the information given through radio broadcasts and publications, we are able to change attitudes and behaviour".

In her introductory remarks, Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Director of FemLINKPACIFIC, said that the work as a community media producer and broadcaster is a political process because it does not simply state a problem but it actively engages to support women from the local communities to address the root causes of the problem and advocate for change linked to conventions and treaties such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and CEDAW: "Through the radio programmes we are able to say "here are the women" from civil society as well as rural women who are empowering other women in their communities as decision makers".

She stressed that community radio is not just about technology but is a broadcast platform to address the imbalances in media content and through membership in media networks such as AMARC, FemLINKPACIFIC is also giving visibility to the situations of Pacific Island women.

In May 2004, FemLINKPACIFIC launched Fiji and the Pacific's first women-led community radio station. Today, there are similar projects led by women for their communities in the Marshall Islands and Tonga.

Since 2010, FemLINKPACIFIC's Annual Young Women's Media and Advocacy Skills Training Programme has been an important interactive learning and production space for the core team of young women producers and broadcasters drawn from the Regional network on UN Security Council Resolution.

Through this programme the activities were designed to assist participants:

- Better understand the role of FemLINKPACIFIC as a feminist community media organisation and the role of community radio in our work from the local community level to global networks
- Identify the potential of community radio to communicate on behalf of women and young women in our communities
- Contribute to the development and presentation on behalf of the "Generation

Next” project at the Roundtable session on Community Radio: A Communication Space for Equality and Diversity.

- Build solidarity and understanding of your role as Community Radio Producers/Broadcasters .
- Discuss and share programme ideas as Pacific Island young women (and their mentors) which can be developed as content for upcoming community radio broadcasts as well as other community media initiatives coordinated by FemLINKPACIFIC and the Regional Women’s Media and Policy Network on UNSCR1325 to support the participants who also attended the Capacity Building Workshop for Community Radio (13 and 14<sup>th</sup>)

According to Louise Anne Laris from Bougainville, this was a “golden opportunity for her to enhance her skills in community radio to voice the most important and yet neglected issues affecting the communities in the Pacific region.

*“The best part of the interactive radio roundtable was on how to use community radio on Disaster Risk Management and Responses. I have never been in any disaster ‘Risk Zone’ before except a few alerts on tsunami warnings. I am very much thankful that I was able to attend this roundtable as I have learnt a lot from the experiences shared by our Asia and Pacific islanders. What I learnt from this workshop has been an eye opener for me especially how community radio plays a vital role. In Bougainville through our years of experience, media has played a major role in bringing warring factions together. It has helped to hold groups accountable for their actions. We have used print media and radio to disseminate correct information to communities on the relevance of women, peace and security. Communities who lack information or those who lack access to literacy programmes can be empowered with information through radio. Community Radio I believe reduces lack of trust for one another and it builds links and builds peace and stability. It has a positive impact on peace. Radio provides space and opportunities for dialogues. It helps in the campaign for peace and security. It provides basic information that helps sharpen strategies to address violence”*

Lisa Rebiara Horiwapu, radio program producer with Vois Blong Mere in the Solomon Islands said that being part of the workshops was important to her organisation as it is the only women’s media organisation in her country and its primary role is to act as a mouth piece for the women.

*“The roundtable taught me a lot of things I did not know about community radio. While listening to the various presentations from the speakers including the Forum and the Secretariat of the Pacific community, I was wondering how best I could apply what am hearing in my own context as a local women’s radio program producer as well as how best I can apply what I heard with the current reforming of our Telecommunication act, another of the new things on the menu but very important to my work”*

*“I was interested in regulations governing the community radio network, knowing very well that Solomon Islands are still to have one established. It was my first time to know too, the various works done in our region in community radio and the communication technologies available in each of our countries that could be useful in advancing our work as women broadcasters and programmers”*

*I learned a lot from FemLINKPACIFIC’s experience as the first women’s community radio in the region, working and surviving somewhat under difficult circumstances. I am constantly reminded about the effectiveness of information dissemination to our women being the number*



*one priority of my organisation through community radio”*

As community radio represents the community, whether it is a large section of the society or the marginalised groups, producers and broadcasters have to keep in mind the language used so no one is offended. Horiwapu said that learning about the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) group was a topic which she found difficult to identify with.

*“I tried to keep an open mind on sensitive issues such as advocacy for the minority or marginalised groups and the terminologies or the appropriate language one should use on the radio for that matter or in other forms of mediums. This was my hardest session, personally to me it is a process that one takes for a good period of time, and getting used to it and making it work in our own work places”*

Alisi Matai, FemLINKPACIFIC’s Labasa correspondent, who was trained to use the community radio in 2010 and is now a producer, broadcaster for FemTALK 89FM said that through the workshop, she understood the role of FemLINKPACIFIC as the first community radio station in Fiji and the region.

*“I understood the work that AMARC does in the Pacific, the way of approach that we do in the community, and also the language and how we can sustain the community radio and the importance of networking. Community radio creates an important platform in the community. I was also interested in the group discussion on how we can create some programme on the disaster risk reduction, how the community can be informed about what they have to do or how to prepare themselves before, during and after disaster”*

For Rusila Lautiki, FemLINKPacific’s Labasa Correspondent and a producer broadcaster for femTALK 89FM, the workshop gave her the opportunity to know about other community radio stations around the world and the importance of research before making a radio program.

Lucille Chute, FemLINKPacific’s Labasa Correspondent and also a producer broadcaster for FemTALK 89FM echoed similar sentiments and was interested in the Peoples Communications for Development Research which FemLINKPACIFIC had been involved with and how radio is a very important tool for women especially at grass root level.

*“I got to know the role of about the community radio and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management. What interested me was on the community radio and poverty alleviation, disaster Risk Reduction Through these sessions I have learnt about how community radio can help in alleviating poverty, and also how to prepare myself before and after a Disaster when broadcasting through our community radio”*

According to Ana Rakacikaci, who is one of the Pioneer members for the Generation Next project and at present is the Programme Administration Officer for FemLINKPACIFIC said of how there is a need for legislations and policies to be in place for community radio and for media legislations and telecommunications regulations to be updated as community radio plays a vital role in serving the needs of the communities in the region.

*“For us here in Fiji, I find that it’s really a tool for the community and especially for women because it’s a way of telling/sharing their stories and also informing those in the rural communities. I feel that community radio is so powerful and when taken to the rural communities the women feel empowered and they feel proud when they are on the radio. It’s cheap and accessible as they don’t need to travel to a broadcasting station to get that message across”*

Sian Rolls, who is a producer broadcaster with FemLINKPACIFIC for FemTALK 89FM also said that community radio in the Pacific is fighting to be recognised by policy makers and some of the wider public. This recognition should not simply be a nod at the station or its producers and broadcasters but there is an ever growing need for policies and legislation to recognise community radio.

*“This should allow for fair allocation of the spectrum, for simple registration procedures and fees to make it possible to have community radio stations because, very simply put, the Pacific needs them.*

*They need them because there needs to be democratization of the airwaves and freedom of information to allow those who may not be in privileged positions or live the capital cities. We are a region of great disparities and community radio holds the solution for some of those disparities.*

*My pride in my participation in programmes like the Generation Next project was also reaffirmed over the week. Generation Next gives young women the space to bridge those disparities, to be that link that feeds the information where it needs to be and bring the issues to those who need to know. At the end of the training workshop, with my technical skills strengthened, I felt invigorated knowing that while community radio depends on the communication, as a producer I do need to be very aware of how I create a story.”*

*“It is no longer about just reporting or broadcasting an interview. I need to allow for the analysis and critical deconstruction that mainstream media does not do. While one should not force ideas, community radio allows for the alternative, to be the one who will bring in the opposing voice into the process to transform their thinking because it is not about me or my story; it is about the people I produce for and the process of education and communication that makes community radio great”*

**Lavenia Selupe**, who represented the next generation as Producer and Broadcaster for CR 98 FM LE’O ‘O E KAKAI run by MFF shared that their organisations role was to promote community radio as platform for women, young and old within the communities to have space to share and tell their stories without restrictions. *“It is about giving voice to the voiceless in my community”*

It is also an important aspect of linking issues from the marginalised communities and the disadvantaged to International Conventions and Treaties such as Convention on the Elimination of all form of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and informing the communities about these as well. Emile Anise, Research Officer for FemLINKPACIFIC based in Suva said that through the workshop, it has enabled me to not only link up my briefs and reports to the international UN Resolutions and conventions but to the Pacific Digital Strategy and the Pacific Action Plan.

*“I have come to be more critical of policies that are devised as gender mainstreaming is one that should be considered when it does come to drafting policies. Workshop sessions on the diverse SOGI individuals enlightened me on the language used in working with these individuals and the diversity amongst this community”*

**Chantelle Doerksen who was an UNDP Intern with FemLINK-PACIFIC shared this;**

“Margaret Mead, the famous anthropologist, once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” I was reminded of this quote several times during the Pacific Roundtable and AMARC Workshop this past week. As an intern with FemLINKPACIFIC, I am privileged with the opportunity to meet participants from over eleven different countries, working on issues pertaining to social justice, peace, human security and gender equality through community radio. No other forum, in my opinion, is able to reach such a wide audience in the same manner as community radio. Print and internet media, while important, require immediate access and resources not readily available to all communities. TV broadcasts, while useful, often require equipment and airtime also not often available in many rural areas. In contrast, community radio is a more transferrable medium of communication; transcending barriers with its ability to reach those who are listening throughout their work day. Literate and non-illiterate individuals alike are able to participate and engage relevant stories through radio. Myself and other women, whom may be working at home, in transit or in an office setting, can still tune into radio broadcasts for local news and information.

Community radio and its success stories as shared by participants at the Inaugural Pacific Roundtable have proven Ms. Mead’s statement to be true. In spite of funding challenges and the remoteness of communities served, community radio is a growing tool to increase awareness and advocate for change. Committed citizens, both local and regional, are inspiring and empowering their communities’ one broadcast at a time.

The lessons I learned about community radio are lessons I will take back with me in my head and my heart. Rural areas in my home of Nevada, USA, face desert conditions very different from those of the islands in the Pacific. Yet, community radio’s ability to unite small communities surrounding shared concerns and issues, despite the large distances of land between them, is a lesson that transcends cultural and language differences. Similarly, the workshop participants from the 11 countries were able to identify commonalities and concerns facing the region. Such concerns are given a space for dialogue to occur through community radio broadcasters working on a grassroots level to establish a greater network through AMARC’s assistance and coordination in the Pacific. Such workshops will be useful in serving the Pacific region in the years to come”

## 16 Days of Community Radio & Creative Expressions



### **Young Women’s Interactive Learning: “Creative Expressions: Communicating the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence” through Community Media).**

Ahead of FemLINKPACIFIC’s Annual 16 days of Community Radio Campaign, 22 Young Women Producers and Broadcasters from Suva, Nausori and Labasa created messages to communicate linkages with the Fiji Women, Peace and Human Security Campaign and the global campaign dedicated to ending violence against women. It was all through a 3 day Interactive Learning Programme which connected global commitments to women, peace and security as well as feminist approaches to communications which was co facilitated by team leaders from of FemLINKPACIFIC’s Generation Next project and Dr. Vanessa Griffen and Shirley Tagi. This is the fourth training initiative undertaken by FemLINKPACIFIC through its “Generation Next” project for Young Women Producers and Broadcasters in 2012 with the support of the International Women’s Development Agency and the European Union:

“The interactive learning programme supports young women’s leadership capacity as well as provides space for young women themselves to discuss and develop messages they feel are important as well as identifying a range of community media possibilities in order to communicate the theme for the global campaign which once again is “From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let’s Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women!” says FemLINKPACIFIC Executive Director, Sharon Bhagwan Rolls.

Currently through FemLINKPACIFIC's "Generation Next" project 19 young women based in Suva and Labasa are producing a range of radio programmes as well as operating 2 suitcase radio stations known as FemTALK 89FM. They are also supported to produce cartoons, digital stories and indie-media productions such as the "Sian and Tamara Show" for distribution through social and independent media channels.

"The interactive learning will challenge the participants to think about the impact they want to make on their audience. It will assist in amplifying young women's voices through the 16 days campaign," says Bhagwan Rolls adding that the Interactive Learning will also enable 10 young women to access and learn about the practical operations of the suitcase radio station in Suva and contribute to building a cadre of community radio broadcasters based in Fiji.

## "Economic security linked to national budget decisions"

By Nandni Vandhana

The simple tape recorder is the way in which we continue to document women peace and human security (WPHS) issues today at the Ba Senior Citizen's Centre with the 49 participants who joined FemLINKPACIFIC's Special Broadcast at the Ba Senior Citizen

"Education nowadays is expensive and for us poor people, it is very hard to afford sending children to school" said 38 year of Nazmin Nisha of the Ba Zanana League "External exams should be re introduced in the school calendar as one assessment for my child cost us \$40 to \$50"

Meanwhile, as decisions regarding the 2013 state budget trickle down to seniors attending the broadcast, some like Salote Vuki feel that the new "pension programme" should apply from 60 years. 70 year old widow Ganga Mata of Vatulaulau, Ba is one such senior who would rely on such a penion".... and 70 years is too much and most of us may not live up to that age. **Creating Spaces, Communicating Women's Peace and Security on FemTALK 89FM** "The 16 days campaign is important in advocating for a stop for violence against women as women deserve much better"

According to Irene Kumar of the Tavua Gold Foundation, FemTALK 89FM is supporting members of their Women's Action for Poverty Alleviation to raise their local development priorities and women's solutions to the challenges they face. The radio programmes she said also continue to highlight women's capacity for leadership and the broadcasts are an empowerment platform for women to continue to demonstrate their leadership especially at club level. Nausori had a 2 day "Creative Expressions" consultation before the three day broadcast from November 8-10 and this really helped the women to understand of the 16 days campaign and how their message can be portrayed in the form of Art. Paulin Fong Chaudhary, the Nausori Convener also said the creative expressions that came out of these sessions were really empowering to the many who attended. "I was truly amazed to see the partnership between all the participants and the clear message that came out was stop.

## Here are the Women



*Through FemLINKPACIFIC's rural networks in Ba, Tavua, Labasa, Nausori, Nadi, the organization identifies and recognizes women leaders in the local communities. These women leaders also attend monthly rural 1325 consultations every month.*

## Here are the Women

By Sharon Bhagwan Rolls and Nandni Vandhana

Women in the South Pacific have the world's lowest participation rate in Parliament with women on average making up five percent of the entire legislature. As of 2012, the sub-region also had the distinction of containing four of the six countries worldwide that do not have any female lawmakers.

Historically, South Pacific governments, organisations and political parties lack female representation and, they say that they cannot find the right women. It is said that women do not present themselves for election or appointment or as candidates for public office. It is also said that there is a lack of 'suitable' women for such nomination.

FemLINKPACIFIC has released its 6<sup>th</sup> annual, "Policy for Peace in Our Pacific Region: 2012 A FemLINKPACIFIC Policy Initiatives". This policy document highlights women who have been empowered and actively working in their communities to challenge the status quo.

For the next two years, Pacific Island nations with whom FemLINKPACIFIC works with will be seeking women to represent their communities in a series of important events; the National Elections in Tonga, this year, the National elections in Fiji and the Solomon Islands in 2014, the Referendum in Papua New Guinea's Autonomous Region of Bougainville in 2015 and the selection of special envoys for the regional action plan of the South Pacific Forum. In the Solomon Islands during its 30 years of independence there has only been one female Member of Parliament. In Tonga in 2010 the election which was conducted under a new Constitution also failed to elect a single female representative.

At this point in time when throughout the region, governments, organisations and political parties who are historically claiming the suitable women leaders cannot be found are again asking "Where are the women?"... Well here are the Women....

We know hundreds of women who are dedicated to community development, gender equality, the elimination of violence and peace building. We know women who are competent decision makers, politically experienced and highly accomplished at bringing together diverse elements of the community to resolve conflict and cooperate for mutual benefit.

FemLINKPACIFIC knows these women leaders and the women who will make competent leaders in the wider public sphere because we work together, using our network to inform, inspire and assist our sisters to seek their human rights, gain the support and services to which their families and communities are entitled, to contribute their skills and talents to appropriate development for their own villages, settlements, wider community and the nation.

This 6<sup>th</sup> annual policy publication has been supported by International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)

**Po Lin Fong** is a FemLINKPACIFIC focal point and rural convener for Nausori, Fiji. She comes from a family of five children, raised by her widowed mother. She is a certified early childhood Educator who has three sons. "Women only want peace; they have a right to a peaceful life. FemLINKPACIFIC is empowering the women in Nausori and women feel that it is the only NGO that comes back month after month to provide them the space to participate; and they feel protected that they can do this in our safe space with no fear."

**Nanise Cakau**, 61, is leader of the bati (warrior) clan that has responsibility the chief from any disturbances in Nausori village, Nausori. She is also the President of the Nausori Community Health Workers association and heads her clan in the Soqosoqo Vakamarama women's organisation in the village.

**Francesca Semoso** won the North Regional seat in the 2006 Bougainville elections, ahead of five other women. She is well aware that many of the social sector programmes will be reliant on external funding assistance: "We are starting from scratch, the most important thing being that whatever kind of law the women need has to be there, the men will have to give us the respect and say yes, women have to be reckoned with in Bougainville."

**Ella Kauhue** was the General Secretary of the Solomon Islands National Council of women in 2006 and reflecting on the Women's election campaign that year admitted that quotas for women is one way to ensure gender equality in Parliament: "Looking at it now, I think it is the only way in a country that is male dominated, that the parliament has to offer a number of seats to women"

**Luisa Kamenio** is Vice President of the Catholic Women's League in Central and Eastern Region of Fiji, an organisation with 35 branches around the country which has one of its presidents serving as vice president of the Asian Pacific Region of the World Union of Catholic Women's organisations. "My role is to plan for the organisation and empower leaders in different parishes to empower women in their parishes"

**Mere Satakala** is a 26 year old psychiatric survivor who is a student at the Fiji National University, a Youth Peace Facilitator and Volunteer for Youth Champ for Mental Health. In 2005, Mere went through deep depression and shut herself from family and friends after she did not do well as she wanted in school. She says that during this time, there should be support from people around you when you are struggling and Mental Health is a Priority.

**Weiyamma Swamy** is National President of the Women's Wing of the TISI Sangam Fiji .She was a school teacher at the time of her retirement in 2009. She also works with the Satya Sai Institute as well as Sangam on education in human values and civic education workshops."In our organisation, we can have women members coming up to district and national level and we look forward to that being further developed...it is time consuming to be in the executive body but our women are slowly taking an interest and in time they will work at the National Level.

**Lidia Waiqalicaki**, 58 years is the leader for Peace building and Security sector for women in Peace with the Catholic Women's League here in Nausori. She is a widow with 8 children and 6 grandchildren. She has retired from the Ministry of Health and lives in Davuilevu which is 5 kilometres from Nausori.



*"I have been given to be the president of the Nausori Pioneer total abstinence for the NAUSORI area by our priest and I'm glad that I would work with those who would like to refrain from alcoholic drinks ways so I in that case I'm being giving other leadership roles like in the liturgy , community reps so I can look after the church celebrations for our mass every Sunday so I think it has helped me a lot and I'm trying to give that out to other women so that they can stand up and be decision marker in whatever committees or organizations they are in I have seen that most of the women have stood out and become leaders in whatever roles they have been given"*

*She is asking for more women to come out and speak out, raise their voices telling what they want to see in this country and break through the barriers*

*"it is very important because most of the time she feels in a village setting women are constantly put in the kitchen to cook, clean, and wash and there is no other place for them"*

**Roshni**, a member of Akriti Mother's club and the treasurer, and also sew to help in her family finances, says that they need good leaders as most of the leaders get appointed and do not visit the area regularly. "We need to train and prepare a leader in such a way that they are of service to the people". When women who stay home and become women leaders they will have time to come and ask us about our issues, what are your needs, what are the solutions? I have been married in this village for 21 years but I don't even know who the advisory? I have never seen who our advisory councillor is because of no visits. We need more women"

**Mereani Senivonokula**, the president of Wasavulu women's club is 34 years says that one of the difficulties of getting members to come on a regular basis as most of them are married and find it hard to come to the meeting but she says, as a leader, she will not give up. "A good leader is someone who should set examples like having faith in you, listening to your group members and understanding because is a hard job". She said women are not encouraged by men in the villages to be leaders and is one of the reasons why women are not in decision making structures.

**Sivina Dauna**, 42 years, is the President of the Catholic Women's League in Nausori. She says that traditions are a barrier form allowing women to be leaders in their communities. Traditionally, women are supposed to say at home, cook and look after the children but this should not be the case. She encourages physical exercise and good eating habits for elder

## **Employ *thisability***

### **by Moushmi Narain**

It is time we recognise the abilities of persons living with disabilities, we need to acknowledge that they are humans and need means of employment to support themselves and their families.

Employ *thisability* initiative which will be conducted from funds from the Human Rights Grants Scheme (HRGS) is an initiative by the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation (FDPF) and its four affiliates, united blind persons with Fiji, Fiji association for the Deaf, Spinal Injury Association of Fiji and Psychiatric Survivors association will

There is a taskforce established and it will look into possible areas of employment for persons with disabilities. The World health Organisation estimates that there are more than

120,000 persons living with a disability in Fiji.

Many persons with disability are denied employment through the discontinuation of education following the acquiring of their disability. Many lose employment following the acquiring of their disability. This is the result of not only diminished self-confidence but the lack of transport to the workplace, proper access within the workplace and social stigmas associated with disability by employers provide a constant barrier to employment. Lack of personal income contributes to increased health issues through poor quality affordable foods, un-affordability of medical supplies and treatments especially for women with disability the issues they face in terms of hygiene and cannot afford proper care for themselves they turn to purchase cheaper product which is more harmful. Families of those living with disability have limited resources to equip persons with disabilities with the tools for employment. The monthly government payment from the Family Assistance Scheme (FJ\$60-FJ\$90 per month) is inadequate to cover the necessary daily expenses to attain the qualifications or certifications for employment. There is no forum for persons with disability currently in the workforce to provide insight and guidance on how they have secured their employment and how they have overcome specific workplace challenges.

Article 27 of the Convention on Rights for Persons with Disability (CRPD) states that every person has the right to employment and that includes Persons living with Disability. This program will assist many to exercise this right. Direct benefits will be placement in employment and access to job specific education specifically for PWD. Additional benefits will be a more integrated approach to education and employment opportunities Persons with disabilities.

Mere Rodan, the Treasurer for FDPF, uses a wheelchair. As a member of the task force for HRGS she says that their key focus is on look into the legislations and the laws of Fiji for employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

“This task force is a working committee trying to find employment for persons with disability not only looking at the legislation but others since this committee is formed by a all the DPO (Disabled People Organization) and they look into like one DPO looking at the education and another one awareness, we have our own principal that we look into and we come together as a collaborative project”

Moushmi Narain, a producer and broadcaster with FemLINKPACIFIC and she has been with the organisation for five years says that persons with disabilities have special needs, for example, travelling in buses is a challenge for those that are physically challenged and have to resort to travelling in taxis which is expensive.

Rodan said that the task force is in place for 3 months and has employed persons with disabilities who are receiving allowances.

Getting \$ 25 a day and from which \$20 is going to your transport and you are left with \$5 now this task force is employing persons with disability and based on the rights of persons with disability, end of the week you will be taking \$125 home from which \$100 is just transport”

What would you think about it now since you understand the importance of employment and what is out there when it comes to employment for persons with disability and the challenges involved.

# Campaign News: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally



*FemLINKPACIFIC works in 5 rural networks in Fiji and women in these centers are making change and connecting their security priorities to International Treaties and Conventions*

## Taking CSW on the Road

By Sharon Bhagwan Rolls

Ahead of International Women's Day, FemLINKPACIFIC is taking Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to our rural networks in Tavua, Ba, Nadi, Nausori and Labasa. The Need to Advance Gender Equality in Planning, Policy and Service Delivery to women in local and rural communities has been one of the reasons for FemLINKPACIFIC's Rural "1325" Community Media Network and at the first network meeting for the core team of 11 rural women leaders in Labasa who are champions for gender equality within the maze of government networks and systems they have to negotiate through. As they discuss and define their peace and human security priorities each month they are highlighting the gaps in policy planning and service delivery and while some are working to ensure infrastructure development, many are focusing on addressing the economic security priorities of their members.

It is clear from the stories shared that while this core group of women leaders who live and breathe the gender inequalities in their communities, are empowered to understand and use the developing planning process, there is a critical need for greater capacity amongst government officials.

There is also a need to address the existing information "divide" between the capital city and rural centres must be addressed. Government officials especially those working in rural communities need to be better equipped with the gender analysis skills not because they are the first point of contact for local communities whether it is infrastructure development, land use planning, as well as economic development.

Government officials also need to be able to seek out the rural women leaders who they can work with to ensure more women are informing the decision making process.

Additionally micro-enterprise programmes for women such as the recently introduced "sewing machine hire purchase programme" of the Department of Women, and also financial programmes need to ensure that they are not increasing the burden of loans onto women from the informal financial sector. Programmes need to equip women's groups with financial literacy and management skills, co-operative management skills and understanding as well as ensuring that women are also aware of their consumer rights and are able to negotiate on repayments etc. Micro-enterprise programme recipients, for example, should not have to bear the burden of repayment faults etc when they have not given seed grants for production and distribution of their products or training to make the most of the equipment they are being encouraged to buy.

# Here are the Women for whom Gender Equality matters to their Peace and Human Security

By Sharon Bhagwan Rolls

## Vunicuicui Multiracial Women's Forum:

When she first started participating in FemLINKPACIFIC's "1325" network meetings in 2009, Nirmala Sharma the Secretary/Treasurer of the Vunicuicui Multiracial Women's Forum (VMWF) had her heart set on improving the infrastructure in her community including bringing electricity to the Nasoni Community Settlement where she lives.

This is a legacy she has inherited from her mother, she says, a woman who only spoke the itaukei and Hindi languages but as a member of their local district advisory council in Bua, brought water to the community of 20 families.

Since 2010 through programmes she has attended in Labasa and Suva with FemLINK-PACIFIC Nirmala has developed the communication skills and the confidence to approach government officials to articulate the priorities of her community, knowing all along that she has the support of the "1325" network members and using the community radio programmes to continue to raise her issues and concerns.

This has resulted in the improvements to the Nasoni community feeder road in 2012 and progress in her own rural electrification campaign for the 16 families in what has been a "black spot" in the Vunicuicui community:

"I have done all the work for the community including negotiating with the FEA for the reduction on the initial quote of the costs from \$195000 to \$42000. I then approached the Department of Energy and learnt that our community would only have to pay 5% of the cost because it is less than \$60,000."

It turned out that the cost for the 16 households was going to be \$3219.25 but this was still a large amount for the mainly farming community. And so following an approach to the Fair Trade Unit, the community's bill has been paid, the government allocation has been paid and the next step is for the FEA to begin its work.

Electricity is not only important for the families in the community but also for the Vunicuicui Multiracial Women's Groups co-operative shop which was opened on January 25, 2010.

Without electricity the women were unable to expand the range of products such as frozen goods and set up the internet café for students in their area but they have worked hard to pay off the initial \$6000 through shop sales as well as a food security programme that has involved the sale of seedlings. Subsequently the women's group has been involved in the development of 10 new varieties of kumala and they plan to sell the plants as part of their loan repayment scheme. As of January 2013 they have \$629.94 to pay off.

The women's co-operative store has also become a model for other women's groups. The women of the Nabunikavula Village who have joined the VMWF have also been able to develop a canteen project and are currently awaiting additional assistance from the Department of Women who have committed to providing \$5000 worth of stock for the canteen once the women have built the canteen.

## Bulileka Mothers and Young Girls Club

Ruffina Ratulele is now the President of the Bulileka Mothers and Young Girls Club. She has been attending FemLINKPACIFIC's rural network meetings and activities since 2009 and says that this has enabled women leaders to learn from each other, including across the racial divide.

Previously the club was known as the Bulileka Women's Club but the name change reflects the commitment of the "1325" network to support the development of young women who

are also attending the club meetings and programmes including the community radio broadcasts:

“We have been able to voice our concerns and raise these concerns to the government officials,” says Ruffina.

In 2010 access to safe and clean water was a priority for families of Bangladesh squatter settlement in addition to the lack electricity.

By the end of 2012 the community was looking forward to the plans for subdivision of the land which should contribute to infrastructure improvements while for the Boca Road community the “Urata hanging bridge” has been repaired and maintained. However repairs are pending for the Bangladesh/Mani Road still needs improvement including bridge upgrade especially for the primary school students. The Bulileka Bridge which is the main access to the village is also in dire need of repairs:

“The monthly consultation is a source of empowerment for us. We have participated in financial literacy training workshop in Mataniwai and this has enabled women to run small businesses either in subsistence farming to save money for the family or earn a living through the market.”

The club members have also been able to access information and contribute to the constitution making submission process.

### **Naleba Multiracial Women’s Group**

According to Adi Makitalena the group which was formed in 2010 with the intention to link women together within the community bridging the gap between women who belong to the landowning community and the women from the families of cane farm labourers:

“Now in 2013 all the women in the club can speak more confidently in English. (the consultations) have encouraged and educated us.”

The group leader has been supported to continue to source information and undertake budget planning for their poultry project.

While the group has established a poultry farm in 2011 she has had to negotiate with a range of government departments and officials.

The negotiation for the rural women like Adi Makatalena and Nirmala means travelling long distance and find ways to negotiate around what is sometimes not very responsive to women however there is still the need to see a change in attitude towards women.

However persistence pays off as she reports that the Ministry of Women officials will be visiting the project tomorrow (17/1)

“We want to go forward and earn money for our families future,” said member Harsh Mani.

### **Vatulutu Women’s Club**

“I can talk and I can fight for my rights says Lusiana Matai as she shared that her motivation to develop her club is to bring women together from her “mataqali” (family units) to work together to support their children’s education costs including at the tertiary level particularly to access rural girls’ education.

Since 2010 she has been advocating within her village community for the need for families to save money to support education costs especially as with the limited number of village scholarships is only valued at \$500 per year.

As a market vendor, she has been able to participate in UNDP training for market vendors and this reaffirmed the information she gained through the “1325” network on how to access information and service and improvements to the market especially the improvements to the market shelter:

“We are now ready to form the market vendors union and I have said I am ready to represent

the women vendors through our association.”

### **Labasa – Association of Anglican Women (AAW)**

The Vice President of the Labasa AAW Anshoo Kumar is connecting FemLINKPACIFIC’s work with the 35 active members in the AAW in 5 rural centres in Labasa and the AAW Labasa is a broadcast partner for FemLINKPACIFIC’s Community Radio station (FemTALK 89FM) since it was launched in Labasa in November 2011.

As a result of this partnership, the members of the AAW-Labasa have been able to renovate the hall which is their main project and it is enhancing their financial independence and negotiating skills within the church community:

“Before we used to rely a lot on the vestry meeting decisions but now we have financially independent.”

In November 2012 the House of Sarah programme which began as an AAW Suva project and she is now a member of the referral committee to provide support and advice for women who are unable to access information and services, particularly ensuring legal advice and community interventions.

“By coming through the consultations I am more vocal and I am able to share the information to our members as well,” she said as she looked forward to sharing the information through the House of Sarah Project through the community radio broadcasts.

### **Naqai Women’s Club**

Jotivini Vuanilotu leads 35 active members “(but) there are 40 women in our community and we look forward to them getting more involved as we develop our projects ...attend the meetings we hold” who established themselves in 2012.

10 members of the club have recognized that they need to work together to paying off their sewing machines they acquired through the Department of Women’s hire purchase programme.

Like the members of the Bulileka Mothers and Young Women’s Club the members of Naqai Women’s Club have raise \$280 to pay off their sewing machine bill over the next 12 months for the \$3360 hire purchase bill.

“The burden of the loan is now on the women,” said Ruffina, “who is hopeful that the store they have the hire purchase account could extend the repayment option to at least 36 months.”

Especially as Jotivini adds “as most of the women are unemployed and we hoped the sewing machines who helps them with their family’s finance, in addition to what they are saving by planting vegetables and root crops.”

### **Vunimoli Arya Women’s Club and Vunimoli Multiracial Youth Group**

Prem Lata Bhan the Secretary of the Vunimoli Arya Women’s Club shared how since 2010 they have completed a water tank project for their community hall which also serves as an evacuation centre as the community is close to the Nakorotari River.

The multiracial youth group is a response to the settlement by cane farm labourers who have chosen to remain in Vunimoli. The youth group provides recreational activities as well as communication and confidence building programmes. The group is also planning to expand their livestock programme while the women’s group members are planning to develop a virgin coconut oil production project.

women’s market during the 2nd weekend broadcast of each month.

It is anticipated that the market will assist the women generate income from their various income generating projects.

# Communicating Women Peace and Security

By Paradise Tabucala and Frances Tawake

Making the change to ensuring more gender responsive policies and practices including service delivery means we need to ensure 50% representation of women in decision making positions right from national parliament to sub national governance structures including local advisory councils.

FemLINKPACIFIC rural community media consultations in Tavua, Ba and Nadi in January, with support from the European Union and the International Women's Development Agency, has used the production of radio programmes for our community radio network to bring together 20 local club leaders representing a collective membership 350 in Ba and 26 leaders from across Nadi collectively representing more than 1000 women to address the 2013 theme for the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

In Ba (31 January), FemLINKPACIFIC heard from women meeting at the Ba Seniors Centre many women are still unwilling to report cases of domestic violence.

From 73 year old widow Utram Wati to 47 year old Sainiana shared how one common experience for so many women is that they have experienced violence but do not know where and how to access their legal rights. Many admitted that too often they did not report violence because they feared retaliation.

In Nadi (01 February) 48 year old Losana Derenalagi of the Nawaka Womens Club who regularly attends the provincial network meetings of the Ba Province Soqosoqo Vakamarama emphasized the need to address the huge gaps between policy commitments to eliminate violence against women and actual protection, support and services by the state especially at local level.

According to 68 year old Lavenia Misimisi a retired school teacher and member of the Yavusania Womens Group political and personal security for women is closely connected to women's access to their rights and freedoms including an understanding of state policies and laws.

Women's groups need to be supported to participate in community police programmes such as "crime watch" groups especially as the community needs to stand up together against violence and also have the confidence to report cases.

20 year old Avikali Buliasewa a member of Badrau Womens Club in Ba said that a very pressing issue in rural Fiji was the lack of information to assist women asserts their rights.

According to the National President of the TISI Sangam women's network, discriminatory practices in the community impact on women's access to justice including for victim-survivors of violence against women.

She added that there was also a need to to enhance the delivery of women's health services in rural centres



## Women talk CSW in Ba and Tavua

By Frances Tawake and Paradise Tabucala

Ahead of the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which will be convened in March at United Nations Headquarters UNHQ FemLINKPACIFIC is taking the 2013 priority theme to women in rural centres connected through our Rural Community Media Network with assistance from IWDA and the European Union.

The 2013 session of CSW will focus on the priority theme "Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls"

Following the recent 16 Days of Community Radio Campaign 24 rural women leaders met around FemLINKPacific's tape recorders at the Tavua Gold Foundation to respond to the theme.

This was an opportunity to break the barriers of silence according to 33 year old Karalaini Tamani of Balata Multiracial Group who said that too often women remain silent because conditions within the home and community do not support women to speak out especially as there is a climate of fear.

60 year old Arieta Naloqi a volunteer at Tavua Gold Foundation said there was a need to ensure police services provide the protection and support for women who need to break out of the cycle of violence.

Apart from the daily struggle to achieve gender equality in the community many women in the consultation shared that this is closely connected to their economic security which means being able to earn \$100 - \$150 a week.

What is needed is investment in the implementation of policies and laws which will uphold women's rights while also ensuring rural women have greater access to their legal rights and information. At the same time according to 28 years old Anjani Singh from Yasiyasi even when there might be laws in place the transformation of laws to uplift the status of women is not be experienced at the community level. This she said requires greater participation of women in decision making:

"(We need) more women representation in Parliament, more interactive and women advisory councillors," adding that strengthening women's local networks can also assist women collaborates and collectively communicates their development and human security priorities. 67 year old, Satya Wati Nand the secretary of Yasiyasi Multiracial Club said that the change was needed because of the continued gap between what policy makers said and what happened at the grassroots level.

Losalini Tabua a 47 year old market vendor at Tavua market also said that by increasing women's participation in decision as well as policies could become more responsive to women.

She added that police training should also include specific training addressing Women, Peace and Human security (WPHS).

# Pasifika Peace Talanoa



*Making Peace and News through creative expressions*

## Looking to the Future

By Veena Singh Bryar

Since the adoption of the UNSCR1325 Regional Action Plan (RAP) and launch of The Human Security Framework for the Pacific 2012-2015 in 2012, GPPAC Pacific now looks forward to the Pacific leaders, working towards its implementation and sensitizing leaders and political parties on the main issues that the RAP and The Human Security Framework advocates for. The Regional Action Plan provides a framework at the regional level for Forum Members and Pacific Territories to enhance women and young women's leadership in conflict prevention and Peace building, mainstream gender in security policy-making, and ensure women and girls' human rights are protected in humanitarian crises, transitional contexts and post-conflict situations. It also sets out a regional mechanism that will support regional and national efforts. Further to this, "The goal of the Human Security Framework is to have a Pacific where communities, families and individuals are secure and safe from threats to their well being and dignity and enjoy political stability, sustainable economic development and social fulfilment in the context of the region".

Though the implementation of UNSCR1325 agenda is the responsibility of the national governments together with the UN ; and the Human Security Framework is not a change in policy or direction but rather it provides guidance on principles to consider and suggested types of interventions as a network we should continue to push for the Pacific leaders and governments to realize the implementation of UNSCR1325: women, peace and security agenda and the Human Security Framework because they can mobilize different government machineries which is often the result of the combined efforts of government and civil societies.

There is a need to advocate for the support of the UNSCR1325 RAP and for the Human Security Framework RAP and they both should be regarded as living documents that will address challenges and incorporate new lessons through regular M&E reviews. As a network, we need to mobilize the media especially community media by participating on talk shows and talk publicly regarding the RAP and the Human Security Framework and its importance.

As a network we will continue to advocate for the increase in women's representation in all decision making bodies and ensure that governments recognize the importance of their participation and their roles in conflict prevention and peace building. While we stress the importance to enhance women's participation and decision making in conflict prevention, we also note that recent community, political and ethnic tensions in many countries in our region target the most vulnerable in particular women and children.

To assist in the implementation of the Regional Action Plan, we call for allocation of resources for our network to continue to provide women's spaces for dialogues and peace and trust building activities, including through the use of community media and campaigns.

We also reaffirm our commitment to build partnerships to strengthen the conflict prevention architecture through the development and launch of the human security framework.

We therefore call on development partners and Pacific Island leaders to strengthen their collaboration to advance Peace and Human Security in the Pacific.

The Pacific Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Network consists of organizations and individuals who are working towards the prevention of armed and violent conflicts and have dedicated most of their time towards peace building in their countries and communities.

# Human Trafficking

By Veena Singh Bryar

There is emerging evidence that the Pacific Island region is vulnerable to the crime of trafficking in persons. The recent case of domestic trafficking of persons here in Fiji is not only an indication that domestic and transnational crimes are at an increase but the vulnerability of people during times of political instability and conflict.

The islands especially Fiji have also become a transit point for other people trafficking operations as crime groups take advantage of weak laws, corruption, and inadequate border controls and documentation. Human Trafficking is a serious concern, not only here in the Pacific Region but globally.

There has been an alarming rise of human trafficking that has emerged in the Pacific Islands, and these have also been linked to transnational crime groups also involved in narcotics and other major crimes.

Human Trafficking has been considered to equate to modern day slavery and involves shocking breaches of fundamental human rights. "Traffickers breach an individual's rights to liberty, human dignity, their freedom of movement and the right to be held in slavery or involuntarily servitude".

They can breach the right to life, through the possibility of disease including HIV, but also often because of the conditions in which a person is held. Not only does trafficking threaten the rights of its victims, it is also a crime that has been seen to increase global health risks, fuel growing networks of organized crime and sustain levels of poverty and impede development.

Not only have there been reports in trafficking of women and children here in Fiji, but also in the Solomon Islands, Bougainville and Papua New Guinea. In most of the cases women and children are trafficked and are commercially sexually exploited. Trafficking mainly for sex predominantly victimizes women and children. It relies on the exploitation of female poverty and the impunity of male demands for commodified sex.

As a network we recommend that advocates get informed on the political positions about sex trafficking especially when working with anti trafficking programs. More research about human trafficking systems, operations and women's trafficking experiences needs to be conducted here in the Pacific Region especially during and after violent conflicts and political instabilities is needed. Based on the research, a set of indicators should be developed detailing the conditions and factors leading to post-conflict trafficking.

This could be used as a tool for post-conflict rebuilding programmes to identify trafficking risks and to develop anti-trafficking activities. Further to this, Preventive anti-trafficking measures based on a women's human rights approach and the inclusion of local as well as international actors should be integrated into all post-conflict rebuilding programmes.

# **Bougainville Peace and Security Action Plan underway**

## **Women in Conflict and Post conflict Bougainville**

**By Louise Anne Laris**

Date Story Filed: 13 February 2013

Following recent discussions around the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 among the Autonomous Bougainville Government stakeholders as well as the Civil Society in Bougainville, the process of developing a Women, Peace and Security Action Plan under the UNSCR 1325 is now underway.

On the 21st of February to the 23rd and which continued on to the 26th-27th a stakeholder's meeting on developing a WPS Action Plan was conducted in collaboration with the Bougainville Administration, Division for Community Development in partnership with UN-Women delivering as one in PNG.

The purpose of the Bougainville Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security is to develop a shared platform to better understand gender and development challenges and concerns in post conflict Bougainville. This will be a process that will:  
 raise awareness on key women, peace and security issues;  
 provide space for discussion and commitments to gender equality in Bougainville  
 provide a platform for key stakeholders to come together and gender related; and  
 issues and identify priorities and strategies to address those issues.

This discussion was brought about by the then Minister for Community Development, Women, Youths and Churches Hon. Rose Pihei following the experiences of women from the Bougainville conflict and the recent Konou unrest which 'must not left out on the discussions.' "We want the role of women to be visible, women to be heard and protected by our own laws. Our own separate Bougainville Action Plan will ensure just that.'

The long term process involved NGO representatives, women leaders, Bougainville Women's Federations, UN- Women, Church reps, Police, Law and Justice Sector, UNDP and a handful of government officials and the Office of the Vice President of ABG.

The process included awareness of the UNSCR1325. According to the United Nations Technical Advisor to the Autonomous Bougainville Government Mr. Anthony Agyentha ' This process is very relevant for women of Bougainville and while we are on this discussion on Women, Peace and Security will feed into the ABG's annual budget and so what is outlined by the United Nations Security Council 1325 will be called for , ' he said.

"This particular discussion will feed into a broader plan for Bougainville and what we call roadmap for Bougainville. Women Peace and Security is very relevant in the Bougainville Context because in every post conflict area the role of women should not be on the receiving end but also looking at the capacities, what stands and what women did to end conflicts. Women, Peace and Security (UN 1325) captures women's involvement in conflict resolutions and the reconstruction, 'Anthony said.

It was noted that for 20 years women of Bougainville have been left out on many legal processes of decision making including the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA). Today many of the women leaders in light of the formulation of a Women, Peace and Security Action Plan women are hoping their voices will now be heard at the top levels of decision making.

During the training on the UNSCR 1325 the participants identified the core principles of resolution 1325 and that women are not just victims of war, but they should be and are active players in bringing about a lasting and sustainable peace. Their voices must be heard for two reasons;

women are full and equal citizens and therefore should have equal access and participation in any peace building/reconstruction processes and due to the different gender roles and traditions, war and subsequent peace processes and reconstruction processes impact women and young women differently

As women emerged from conflict and large-scale destruction, societies faced considerable challenges in laying down the groundwork for transformation to peace time. Security Council 1325 calls for the incorporation of a gender perspective including considerable of the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post conflict resolution. In particular the resolution emphasises the planning for DDR programmes and calls for women's participation in mechanisms developed as a part of peace agreement.

Over the three days of mapping out relevant pillars of security the discussion included 4Ps that is Prevention of conflict, Protection of women and girls, Participation of women in conflict prevention and decision making, and Promotion of women.

It was also pointed out that CEDAW should be incorporated into the Bougainville constitution to ensure women participate fully in legal processes concerning peace related meetings, resolution and the reconstruction.

Areas highlighted in relevance to the Bougainville context includes; Ensuring increased participation of women at all levels of decision making, implement strategic plans of action calling for an increase in the participation of women at divisional heads provide training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights and particular needs of women calls upon all parties in armed conflict to respectfully international laws applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls as civilians calls on all parties in armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse

UNSCR resolution 1325 recognises the importance of women as political and community actors in ensuring sustainable and lasting peace in any conflict. SC resolution 1325 demands that all parties to conflict respectfully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls and that they take special measures to ensure women and girl's protection from all forms of gender based violence.

'So in order for any peace process to endure, or for a reconstruction and rehabilitation programme to have sufficient and long term impact, women's voices, concerns and priorities must be included,' said Agyenthat.

Group discussions based on the role of women Organising for Peace, Rehabilitation and reintegration and reconstruction, Justice and legislating equality, Post conflict and political participation which participants based their inputs.

During the meeting a review was also done on the Solomon Island's Action Plan as an example that Bougainville could take to formulate its very own Action Plan apart from Papua New Guinea and that will be called BAP.

The UNSCR 1325 has been recognized as very important tools in ensuring women participate fully in any decision making processes relating to peace. CEDAW was also the focus of discussion which many participants noted it should be incorporated into the Bougainville legislations. "Both CEDAW and 1325 are both linked together calling for equal participation and so we have to incorporate it into the peace and security framework," said Agyenthat. 'Bougainville is now obligated by two international laws and that is CEDAW and UNSCR 1325.'

Meanwhile the Bougainville Action Plan will feed into the review of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, Planning Division, Landowners forum and ABG administration, Development Partners such as AUS AID and NZAID.

Un Women is acknowledged in leading a UN-Delivering as one in PNG as one process to provide technical assistance supporting the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security, on gender and works to build capacity through its BRIDGE programme-women in leadership.

## **POLITICAL WILL NEEDED TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

By Suzanne Jimbul

Date story Filed: February 13 2013

Political willpower is needed to address gender based violence in Bougainville,' says Helen Hakena Executive Director of Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency.

During the Christmas and New Year Festive Season a lot of Violence against Women has been experienced in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville with a high number of women and young girls were admitted to the Buka General Hospital with serious wounds and injuries as a result of violence.

Jenny, 30, from Selau, (not her real name) sustained severe knife wounds to her body done by her husband on Christmas night. Whilst the family was preparing to attend the Christmas mass at Hantoa Jenny's husband bashed her up then slashed her up with a knife for reasons that she did not prepare his dinner before they left. She was rushed to the Buka General Hospital for she almost bled to death.

During a brief interview she reported, this was a cover up for her husband was having an affair with another woman. Extra marital affairs are becoming an emerging issue in Bougainville, families are divided, and children are mostly affected therefore disturbing them from attending school according to Hakena.

Hakena said that the Autonomous Bougainville Government must support by passing appropriate legislation and taking an interest in the issue as a step forward to address gender based violence in the region.

'I don't think the ABG is doing enough to address the issue. A lot of effort is needed to be put in. In 2008, during the launching of UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security, President James Tanis during his speech assured women and youth that he would include 1325 in the ABG's Parliamentary Committees in order to implement 1325 in the Autonomous Region, and so he did. Mr. Tanis was an advocate for women's rights and always supported women.

Since the change of government in 2010, the Momis government has not included 1325 in its agenda; more so, the ABG has no Security Policy. I encourage the government of the day to

put legislation in place to help address gender based violence in Bougainville therefore implement 1325 – Women, Peace and Security. She also highlighted that 1325 is an affirmation of the important role women have in conflict prevention and peace building. The issue of personal security is closely linked to Violence against Women and the threat to women. An extra marital affair is high on the agenda amongst some of the very real threats that the women of Bougainville are living under. UNSCR 1325 is relevant in the broad campaign to present VAW from the domestic sphere to the public space.

“Women’s security is pervasive, not just related to armed conflict or domestic violence. It is about the welfare and status of women, human security issues and the impact of decisions in relation to the broader security sector on women. The ABG must support women’s organizations to provide information for women’s peace and security that recognizes and addresses stereotypical gender roles which perpetuate unequal power relations between men and women,” says Hakena.

## **Pacific Island experiences: when communication matters (Solomon Islands, Bougainville, PNG and Tonga)**

**By Veena Singh Bryar**

*Veena Singh Bryar spoke on the importance of communication and challenges faced by Pacific Islanders at the Inaugural Pacific Islands Community Radio Roundtable on February 12 as the Coordinator Regional Programmes and Policy for femLINKPACIFIC and as the Regional Liaison Officer: GPPAC Pacific based in Suva.*

*Veena shared her experiences and also personal experiences of working with the networks that she works with the two organizations and her core work is highly dependent on Communication and Information and Conflict Prevention.*

Managing of our regional programmes means- writing of reports (this I cannot do without information and communication), I have to circulate updates (this I cannot do without information and communication), I have to update stories and upload stories onto the peace portal (I once again need information for this and I also need to be able to communicate this and get the network members to be able to communicate their stories and priority issues to me). Most of the work that I do, whether it be writing a report, developing frameworks, trying to see whether we have achieved any goals, collating of outputs and outcomes, writing and sharing stories or planning for a project or event, I need to be working very closely with the networks and in most cases this is done over the phone, via email or fax, or meet annually in person. And trust me, when we do meet in person, we make sure that we have everything that we want to discuss for the year, is crammed up into that one week meeting and it is discussed there and then.

Most of you, who have travelled from overseas, would have experienced the long hours of travelling and how costly it was to come here, well for even for even most of us locals to even travel within the region is very expensive and can be very time consuming.

I am very dependent on the information from our network partners and in most cases I can't proceed with most of the planned activities without them communicating their plans to me.



Some of you may be wondering, why can't she just pick up the phone and call...well let me tell you, I have done that I have tried...someone else may ask, why can't Veena just email them, that's faster in this day and age, I must say I have tried...how about faxing? How about calling their mobile phones...well my answer to that is that I have done so...there have been moments when I would call, and then I am given another number and then I call and the list just continues, or situations where I find myself screaming on the phone because they can't hear me on the other end.

If this isn't bad enough in relation to my mundane work of reporting, outcome mapping, etc, one can imagine the consequences in situations where communication really matters... So when does communication matter the most? The networks I closely work with are based in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Tonga and Fiji. All the countries that I have mentioned have either gone through violent conflicts, is still going through violent conflicts or know that in the future, that there will be some form of violent conflict. Being able to access telecommunication and Internet services is very important during such times and is truly vital.

Communications are vital for preventing violent conflict in such situations. Why it is that in this day and age, to communicate or access information digitally seems to be quite difficult? Shouldn't it be made easier at least, why is it that here in the Pacific Islands that it seems like communication is made difficult despite the fact that every second person has a mobile phone (by the way that is my own observation and not based on any research), however trying to get the work done through digital lines and online seem to be very difficult so what options do we have? I do not have any technical background on ICT's or media but I sure do know that there is a need to improve the services and infrastructure provided for information and communication systems and the need to overcome power inequalities that exists within our communities and societies.

Realities of limited telecommunications and Internet services delivery are putting a restraint on expectations of major impact from new media in the Pacific nations (Duffield, et al 2008). The Networks that I work closely with are from the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Tonga and Fiji. In the countries that I have stated do not have good Internet access and in most cases they have limited, to little access to the Internet. More traditional forms of media, such as radio broadcasting stand to deliver quite well if developed well, however most of what goes on radio and television is selective and is commercial or dictated by who owns it or dictated by the political realities of a country.

Further to this, community radio through our experience with FemLINKPACIFIC has been able to deliver, however we would need a good team to manage the radio station and we would need a greater reach to the communities within these countries and we would need money to be able to buy the tools and equipments and for servicing and maintenance work and this definitely is achievable, we are doing it here in Fiji, we have already have started in Tonga, now we just need to expand to other partner countries here in the Pacific.

Through my work as well, i have found the importance of involving young people to be key in accessing and sharing of information. Most young people are quite digitally smart and they know information and communication technologies, they are able to send and receive information despite the realities of telecommunications and Internet. This mostly has been the case of Bougainville, Tonga, Solomon's and Fiji. We would have our regional and rural correspondents sending us information from Internet cafes or using mobile phones to get and

send information. There is a need to also organize small community radio groups and networks- to address the challenge with information & communication access, but in order for that to happen, we would need to make sure that community radio networks have their set of frequencies, and to reduce their broadcasting fee, as I personally feel that it's quite a lot that we pay as a community radio network...furthermore, by having small community radio groups we are bridging the digital divide between the rural and urban...in a way we could actually state that community radio overcomes inequalities.

This is the first step...the second step...is to improve the services for telecommunications and Internet. But till then...I will continue to phone/fax/and use the snail mail (post).

## **Tribute - Acknowledgement to Women Who Paved the Way: Dorothy Kearsley 1916 - 2012**

Dorothy Frances Kearsley died in Suva on Friday 3rd August at age 96. She was born on 13th March 1916, in Suva, the eldest daughter of William and Constance Kearsley. She was from one of Fiji's old European families, her great-grandfather, Captain Petrie, having arrived in Fiji in 1880. Her grandfather, Herbert Ambler, was Town Clerk in Suva at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Her mother, Connie Kearsley, was born in Suva in 1892 and died here in 1972. Dorothy is survived by her two younger sisters, Joyce and Elima, who live in the United States, and by her brother, Peter, who lives in Auckland.

In the 1920s and 30s, young Dorothy went to Suva Girls Grammar where she excelled academically and was top of her year, receiving a gold medal as dux of the school. Her father worked as a telecommunications engineer for Amalgamated Wireless Australasia, which became Cable & Wireless, and the family lived at wireless stations at Vatuwaqa, outside Suva, Vaturekuka, outside Labasa, and at Waiyevo on Taveuni. For part of her schooling, Dorothy stayed in a boarding hostel in Suva and only saw her family during school holidays. On a boat journey home from school to spend her Christmas with her family on Vaturekuka Hill, when she was only fourteen, the CSR vessel she was on, the "Rani", lost radio contact at sea in a hurricane. Her very worried parents had to wait two long days before hearing that the "Rani" had run aground on the west of Ovalau and all on board were safe.

After leaving school, Dorothy trained with Mrs Kermode in Suva as a stenographer and court reporter. She worked as such for the first half of her career, first in Suva with Morris Headstrom and then with the Government, before she left for England, where for a time she worked for the ballerina, Margot Fontaine, and in Tanganyika (now Tanzania), where she served as a Hansard parliamentary reporter and latterly in the private office of the independence leader, Julius Nyerere. She returned to Fiji in her forties and became the WHO office manager in Suva.

Dorothy was an accomplished artist throughout her life, painting mainly in oil. She was awarded various prizes for her art, including the Fiji Arts Club annual prize sponsored by Carlton Breweries. In her retirement, she lived in Suva Point, in the same house that her parents had lived in and not far from the wireless station and home where she had grown up with her four sisters and brother, Betty Gurd (deceased), Joyce Scherrer, Nancy Thomson (deceased), Elima Higgins and Peter Kearsley. In her old age she had been lovingly looked after by her carers, Akosita Seniyevu, Elena Rawataneiveitarogi-Whiteside and Joanna Alania and her neighbours, Anne and Bob Harnesses.

Her funeral Service was held at St Luke's Anglican Church, Suva Point on 8 August. The Bishop of Polynesia, The Most Rev Dr Winston Halapua gave the address and readings were made by her nieces: Susan McLean, Mary Nuttall-Smith and Nicola Thomson.