



Section J in Action

PACIFIC WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

“I want the women in the Pacific to know their voices are being heard” –
Dr. Anne S Walker, former Executive Director of the International Women’s Tribune Centre



The Beijing Platform for Action: A Visionary Commitment

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

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

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

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

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



During the past decade, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women. Programming that reinforces women's traditional roles can be equally limiting. The world-wide trend towards consumerism has created a climate in which advertisements and commercial messages often portray women primarily as consumers and target girls and women of all ages inappropriately. Women should be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to information technology. This will strengthen their ability to combat negative portrayals of women internationally and to challenge instances of abuse of the power of an increasingly important industry. Self-regulatory mechanisms for the media need to be created and strengthened and approaches developed to eliminate gender-biased programming. Most women, especially in developing countries, are not able to access effectively the expanding electronic information highways and therefore cannot establish networks that will provide them with alternative sources of information. Women therefore need to be involved in decision-making regarding the development of the new technologies in order to participate fully in their growth and impact.

Section J, Beijing Platform for Action, 1995

It began with a Vision of a Women's Media Collective

As Virginia Woolf alluded to in "A Room of One's Own", there is a need to ensure that the necessary resources are mobilized so that women can write their stories, have their voices heard, and their identities represented particularly when it comes to the peace and security sector.

For femLINKpacific, it all began with the Blue-Ribbon Peace Vigil in Fiji in 2000.

A women's media collective emerged, linked to the efforts of women coming together despite the political crisis, with the desire to communicate women's notions of peace and security from their homes and communities to political processes.

It was a vision to amplify values of non-violence, of a determined inclusive and ecumenical approach to communication, and applying feminist, peacebuilding and community media practices to produce and distribute content with, for and about women, including through the sharing of technology from tape recorders to access to the internet as well as through the establishment of Fiji and the Pacific's first women-led community radio network – FemTALK 89FM.

femLINKpacific continues to demonstrate our commitment to support the implementation of Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action including to support women to hold governments to account by sustaining a regional women-led media network that mobilizes resources for women of all diversities, including young women, women with disabilities and LGBT allies to produce and broadcast radio programmes. In a very practical way, women are supported to define and communicate their peace and human security priorities.

Women and Radio

Strategic objective J.1. of the Beijing Platform for Action: Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication

"It's giving us an opportunity to open up and give our views, our solutions to the problems that we are facing and we see that this (community) media is the only one that is taking the views of the woman and girls in the community."
Shakuntla Permal, Lomolomo Advisory Councilor, Lautoka

"We believe using radio in Tonga is very effective to disseminate the messages especially on... women, peace and security because everyone participate(s)."
Vanessa Heleta, GPPAC Pacific Chair and founder of Talitha Project, Tonga

"I have been working in community media for the last seven years and I really enjoy it because it allows me to be creative and to hear women's voices and concerns. Sometimes rural women do not know the power of their voice and this is where community radio comes in to be the link between the women and the policymakers"
Sulueti Waqa, femLINKpacific

Section J: Women and the Media

Governments to:

..... promote and ensure women's equal access to all areas and levels of the media;

... review existing media policies with a view to integrating a gender perspective;

..... Promote women's full and equal participation in the media, including management, programming, education, training and research;

.... Encourage and recognize women's media networks, including electronic networks and other new technologies of communication, as a means for the dissemination of information and the exchange of views, including at the international level, and support women's groups active in all media work and systems of communications to that end;

... Guarantee the freedom of the media and its subsequent protection within the framework of national law and encourage, consistent with freedom of expression, the positive involvement of the media in development and social issues.

FemTALK 89FM

What started in 2004 as a mobile “suitcase” community radio with young women in-school volunteers from Saint Joseph Secondary School, conducting monthly “weekend” broadcasts with a 100W transmitter, is now bringing more than 800 hours of content bridging the gap between rural women and the capital city of Fiji, as well as broadcasting content produced with and by correspondents and contributors from Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

In 2015, the technical expansion of FemTALK 89FM Suva was funded through a grant from the Australian Government, as part of its Pacific

Women program, built on femLINKpacific’s successful demonstration of the role of community media, particularly community radio, in addressing the under-representation of women and young women in decision making and political leadership at local and national level.

“I am very happy when women use media as tool to communicate their issues. Radio is an information tool. When women script and produce programs, they don’t just produce any random content, these issues are real to them. This is their life.” **Frances Tawake, femLINKpacific**

The Generation Next Project (2005 – 2011)

Primarily, much of the work of the “suitcase” radio was to bridge the rural-urban information and communication divide and the complex inter-generational gap that is exacerbated when young women engage with new Media and ICTs! (Information, Communication and Technology)

Community radio provided a vital opportunity to teach young women broadcast skills reaching across to older women, share their views - often after years of being told to be silent.

The expansion of the “suitcase” radio and all of its growth since 2008 has only been possible through years of work and dedication by teams of young women producer-broadcasters.

The Generation Next Project was femLINKpacific’s flagship project for young women throughout the Pacific region, funded by the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA) which supported young women to become community radio producers and broadcasters.

Following the launch of femLINKpacific’s mobile women’s community radio station in 2004,

femLINKpacific developed a series of training programmes for young women in Suva, Fiji that built on the role of in-school students who assisted in our monthly “weekend” community radio broadcasts.

The Generation Next project emerged from these training initiatives with a vision to develop a core group of young women from diverse backgrounds and experiences, to be the producers and broadcasters

Initiated in Fiji in 2005, the project has since enabled a cadre of more than 100 young women to take to the airwaves and use information and communication to bridge the divide between urban and rural women and their communities and national and local governance structures.

The Generation Next project also has served as an entry point for young women into femLINKpacific, as several of them have become members of femLINKpacific’s core team at the community media centres in Suva and Labasa.

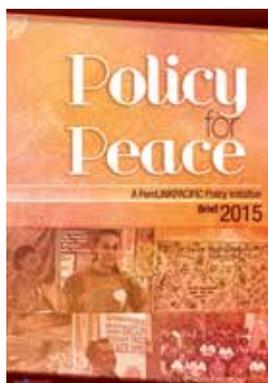
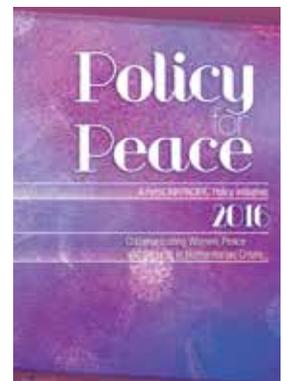
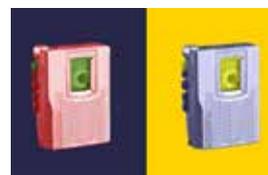
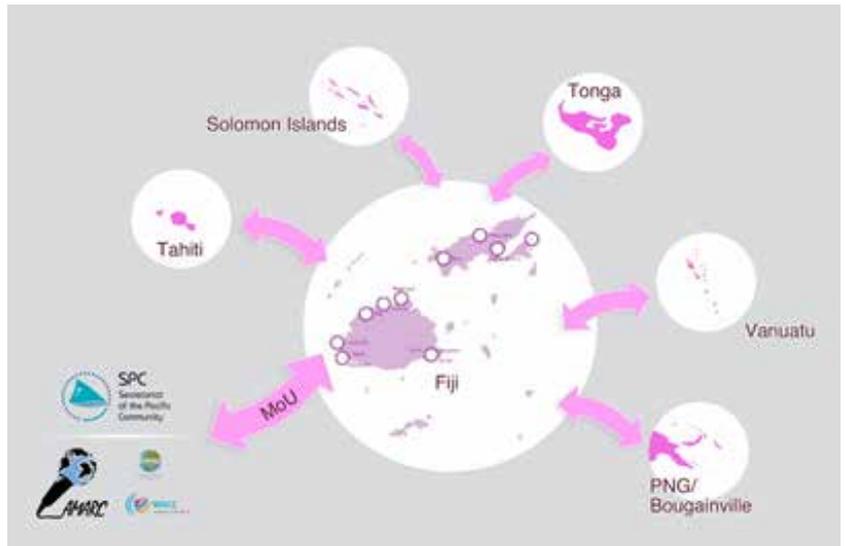
A Regional Media Hub

New media technology, particularly the internet and digital radio production, has enabled femLINKpacific to develop into a regional media hub connecting networks of Pacific women commitments to advancing gender inclusive peacebuilding practice in the Pacific.

FemTALK 89FM Suva remains an important broadcast hub of regional priorities raised by our network partners with 40% of airtime dedicated to regional content produced during regional network meetings, and by teams of correspondents and contributors who belong to the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Pacific network.

Media content includes short films, the Pasifika Peace Talanoa magazine as well as podcasts.

femLINKpacific and her partners are demonstrating how Pacific women-led regional media network is using appropriate and accessible ICTs in line with commitments in the Beijing Platform for Action in terms of content creation as well as monitoring the news.



Women's Weather Watch

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

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

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

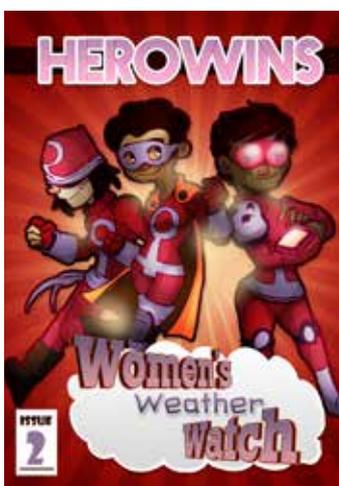
Radio, especially community radio, has proven to be an effective tool for disaster management because it is an efficient way to give information suited to the needs of the community, packaged in local language. It has been used to disseminate information and early warning messages.

Women's Weather Watch is femLINKpacific's inter-operable communication platform. At the heart of this system is community radio, linking a network of women leaders and correspondents to real-time information via SMS alerts (mobile phone and bulk system) as well as a Viber group and Facebook. The system is a two-way information system enabling the network members to also provide real-time situation updates which are used for media and podcast productions.

The system is coordinated from femLINKpacific's regional hub based at its Suva community media centre and activated in the disaster preparedness stage and is also used as a disaster impact assessment tool. It can be operated from a desktop or mobile device.

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

Women's Weather Watch documents the lived experiences of women in disaster affected communities and supports the leadership of women to ensure more gender-inclusive preparedness and humanitarian response during times of disasters – storms and cyclones, droughts and floods as well as tsunamis, as well as in the recovery stages post-disaster.



Women Led Communications for Development

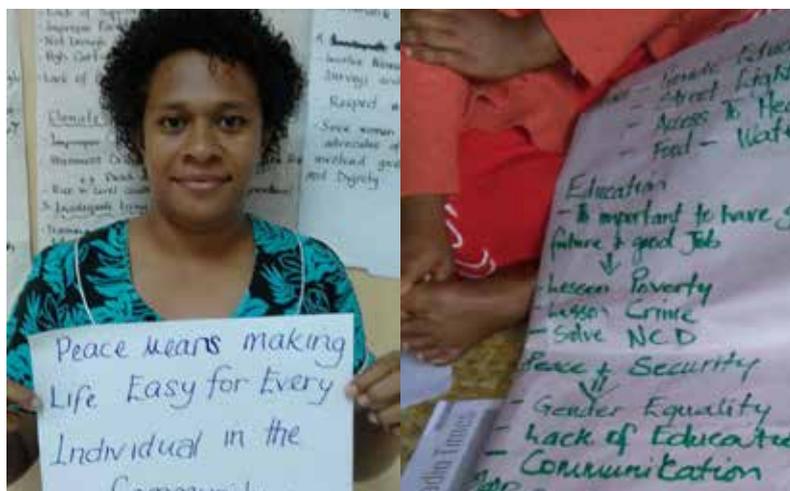
Strategic objective J.2.

Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media

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

Lanieta Tuimabu, Pacific Disabilities Forum

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



Section J: Women and the Media

Governments to:

... Promote research and implementation of a strategy of information, education and communication aimed at promoting a balanced portrayal of women and girls and their multiple roles; Encourage gender-sensitive training for media professionals, including media owners and managers, to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotyped, balanced and diverse images of women in the media; Encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities, rather than presenting them as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of the process of development; Promote the concept that the sexist stereotypes displayed in the media are gender discriminatory, degrading in nature and offensive.

A Rural Women Leaders Network – A Source of Information

Too often the media asks, “where are the women?” and that’s why to demonstrate the role of community media, especially as a participatory medium employing solution based journalism, femLINKpacific has established a network of correspondents who produce radio programmes and interviews through a dedicated network of Rural Women Leaders.

Through this network, we are able to regularly report on development priorities and track the changes or the gaps in progress from the vantage point of women in their communities – many being heard from beyond the broadcast transmission range of FemTALK 89FM transmission range.

By contributing to the radio programmes and media features, which are published in the free women’s newspaper, The Community Radio Times as well as featuring in our Radio with Pictures series, the women are empowering members of their own local clubs and becoming strong communicators for their communities when speaking to government officials.

Mainstream media partnerships

Community media processes are empowering but are limited in their influence on wider societal change. Thus, femLINKpacific continues to invest and focus on strengthening media alliances by producing and contributing features and advocacy messages to regional media allies. In addition, at the national level, we have forged partnerships with Fiji Television, producing 3 seasons of Radio with Pictures, as well as Digicel Fiji, conducting a series of SMS campaigns as well as learning on the use of the SMS platform available to enhance our Women's Weather Watch (WWW) alerts and information-communication systems.

Because of our media initiatives more local women leaders are appearing in national media especially Radio with Pictures on Fiji TV and the FemTALK 89FM Suva broadcasts and quoted in Op-Eds.

Influencing the mainstream, commercial media platforms means that they are finally starting to reflect the diversity of women and legitimise their leadership. We are connecting women human rights language into policy action, enabling women to share their visions of peace and human security as leaders in their homes, communities and the country.

The Global Media Monitoring Project in the Pacific

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

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

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

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

However, the GMMP Pacific 2015 report findings revealed that in the last 10 years of data that women are still in the minority of news topics reflecting the gender inequality in the formal structures of decision-making and power of Pacific media outlets. In the Pacific region women make 25% of news subjects indicating that there has been no improvement in the presence of women in Pacific news in a decade.

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

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

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