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"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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FemLINKPACIFIC PRESS RELEASE

As officials of Pacific Forum member countries prepare to gather for the annual Forum Regional Security Committee meeting in Suva next week a regional woman's community media network on UN Security Council resolution 1325, will also be meeting in Suva to strategize for greater inclusion of women in the peace and security sector and launch their first quarter Women, Peace and Human Security report for 2009.

The meeting, coordinated by femLINKPACIFIC, brings together 19 Peacewomen from Bougainville, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Fiji under the umbrella of the network's "Peace Talks" project. The meeting has 26% representation of young women, most of who are actively involved as correspondents of the women's community media network.

Participants include project partners include Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency (Bougainville), Vois Blong Mere (Solomon Islands) and Ma'a fafine mo e Famili (Tonga) and National Executive members of the National Council of Women Fiji, and the President of the Catholic Women's League Fiji, Susana Evening.

"The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is an affirmation of the important role of women in conflict prevention and Peacebuilding. The resolution is expressly aimed at increasing the participation of women in conflict management at all levels of decision making, including prevention and post conflict reconstruction and our first quarterly Women, Peace and Human Security report for 2009 and its recommendations reflect the voices of women and we hope this will serve as yet another reminder for leaders, policy makers and peacebuilders to ensure a more gender inclusive approach in our communities and countries will use this report as a way to ensure a more gender-inclusive approach to peace and security realities," says network spokesperson and femLINKPACIFIC Coordinator, Sharon Bhagwan Rolls.

According to Bhagwan Rolls the network hopes that the first quarter findings once again serve as further call to action for the greater integration of and compliance with UNSCR1325 as well as CEDAW in the 4 countries where network members live as well as at the regional level, including at next weeks FRSC meeting:

"We continue to strive as Peacewomen to bring about a transformation in decision making in the peace and security sector - whether it is addressing security sector governance issues, ensuring feminist analysis when address strategies to ensure economic security, defining and contributing to Truth and Reconciliation processes, or ensuring the equitable participation of women in Transitional Governance processes, including Constitutional reform."

"Our work is more than just about telling stories," says Lisa Horiwapu of Vois Blong Mere Solomons who is femLINKPACIFIC's regional correspondent in the Solomon Islands:

"We are also analyzing the issues and presenting them to the policy makers such as in a human security framework which we believe can assist them in improving policies which affect women's peace and human security. We are also highlighting the common experiences of women in our four countries and this can greatly assist decision making at the regional level."

Last year, on the eighth anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (October 31st) the network launched its first policy initiative, which serves as a guide for governments and civil society organisations to assist in the implementation of this ground breaking resolution.

"Women, Peace and Security: Policy Responses and Solutions for our Pacific Region":

- Represents the collective voices of women and recommendations were drafted based on an analysis of interviews conducted by correspondents of our media network based in Fiji, Bougainville (PNG), Solomon Islands, and Tonga.
- Contains key policy references, aimed at policy makers to comply with the gender equality standards such as CEDAW and 1325 as well as understand the gender dynamics in our collective work of the prevention of conflict
- Serves as an easy reference guide for peace builders who want to ensure a more gender inclusive approach to peace and security in our region.

The policy document addresses a series of critical areas of concern such as *Transcending Violence and Transforming Conflict - Responses, Survival, Healing, Women's Budgets for Conflict Prevention & Economic Security, Democratizing Security Decision Making, Disarmament and Reintegration - more than weapons disposal, Security through Women's Eyes, Women Communicating a Culture of Peace.*

"Our first quarter report of 2009 builds on our initial regional policy initiative and serves to highlight critical women, peace, and human security issues once again drawn from our regional women's media network documentation as well as the work of members of our rural women's media network in Fiji. Interviews are featured in our monthly ENews bulletins as well as in our press releases and community radio broadcasts. Stories produced by our regional correspondents based in Honiara and Buka are also featured on local radio stations. Vois Blong Mere Solomons hosts a 15 minute radio programme on Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation. Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency also has a weekly programme on Radio Buka.

Additionally, femLINKPACIFIC continues to systematically monitoring 2 daily news papers. Aside from applying a quantitative analysis, we have also reviewed the news stories using a qualitative women, peace and security lens. Key issues in the first quarter of 2009, relating to women, include reports on violence against women including rape. Women's perspectives have also been reported in relation to the impact of the rising cost of living. The police reports in the news media continue to also highlight crime rate in the country. Women's perspectives have been featured as individual reports or featured as part of stories including in photographs, and also as stories which highlight the initiatives and responses of women's human rights groups and other NGOs," says Bhagwan Rolls.

The report will be available on femLINKPACIFIC's website from next week or requests for electronic copies can be sent to policy@femlinkpacific.org.fj

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