

Sustaining Peace is Inclusive and Inter-Generational

by *femLINKpacific*

It's time to make the table bigger if we want to build on the legacy of the women's movement in sustaining peace in the Pacific. This means bringing in young women and empowering them to step into leadership spaces that haven't always been welcoming to women in general.

"Creating the space is the key for young women," says Vanessa Heleta, Executive Director of the Talitha Project.

"Bring them all together, mobilise them and then give them the necessary knowledge. Let them come up with the solutions, because only they know what they're going through and only they can create solutions," Heleta explains.

Other times, space can look like a quiet meeting room filled with young women who often reach out to other young women.

"If you want to create a space, for example, where young women can just come and talk to somebody, we need to pay for that space," says Adi Vasulevu, Executive Director of Transcend Oceania.

In the few 'spaces' that are open to women, young women are almost invisible.

"I think the changes that are really needed are for young women's voices to be really heard," says Sabrina Brown, Secretary of the Vanuatu Young Women for Change (VYWC).

But with women-led efforts in the peace-building journey often going unnoticed, how do we then bring young people into the movement to understand and be part of the work of conflict prevention?

"Informed choice is what the voice is all about, to enable women to have those relevant and informed choices that will enable them to make those informed choices and also to empower the young women media in my country to be able to have the skills and knowledge to be the voice also for our country on those goals," says Josephine Teakeni, the Executive Director of Vois Blong Mere Solomon Islands.

The Pacific Regional Action Plan was progressive in its identification of the nexus between peace and development, as well as United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and humanitarian action, given our reality of dealing with the impact of the slow onset of climate change, particularly the nature of intensifying



disasters, which affect food, water, health and other insecurities.

However, despite the adoption of the plan, the lack of dedicated resources to the women, peace and security agenda - in particular prevention, dialogue and mediation - has resulted in the envisaged collaboration between a Pacific regional network of women peace builders with government

officials including in regional inter-governmental processes.

Additionally, while women, peace and security action plans have been adopted in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, it is not clear whether resources are available to integrate the plans into security sector and foreign policy plans or to provide the resources needed to ensure women's civil society networks can contribute to implementation as well as being the much-needed accountability oversight for such plans. But we continue to drive a transformative agenda for gender inclusive conflict prevention and human security.

Women's peace activists with civil society partners through the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Pacific network, for example, have continued to shed a light on the resolution as well as work to localise the commitments in practical ways.

We continue to highlight the nexus between gender equality, peace, human security, development and humanitarian response with a focus on Participation for Prevention – not just simply preventing the occurrence of violence at the domestic front or within communities but tracking the indicators and root causes of violence particularly in situations of fragile peace and in response to the impact of growing environmental insecurities including intensifying disasters.

And as young women support the work that's been done within the movement, the knowledge sharing must continue.

"For me being here it's learning from other women, it really helps me a lot in the work that I do in getting to help other young women," says Brown.

"Engagement is the way forward for us, more forums and platforms that will enable us to advocate and move on the issues of peace building and conflict resolution," concluded Teakeni.

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