



Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development

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Media Release

International Women's Day Celebration

If women wish to engage in decision making they need to step up and take initiatives to build their own capacity. This was a key message at International Women's day celebration at FRIEND HQ in Tuvu on 8th March 2017.

Dr Pramila Devi, director of USP Lautoka Campus spoke about importance of education for good decision making. She emphasized that most women now have access to ICT tools especially with access to mobile phones and these could be used constructively as a learning tool for advancement reiterating that if women are educated than entire families and communities will be educated.

Dr Devi said that it's never too late to gain education and there are short courses, higher qualification and lifelong learning available. She shared that in the previous year a 70 year old woman graduated with Chinese language indicating that age is not a barrier for learning.

Adi Litiana Sovasova, Radini Tui Vitogo encouraged women to step up and take initiative and use the many learning opportunities available around them to learn to be good leaders. Ms Josefina Yee Joy spoke about importance of budgeting and saving to achieve dreams and Ms Maureen Penjueli, the coordinator of Pacific Network on Globalisation discussed the need for policy to be relevant to the communities.

The forum attended by participants from the west, Rewa and Tavueni was followed by the Annual General meeting of FRIEND. Ms Josefina Yee Joy is the new President of FRIEND as Dr Pramila completed 10 years of her leadership as President of FRIEND. Adi Litiana Sovasova is the new Vice President and Maureen Penjueli is one of the seven board members.

End

Attached Dr Pramila's notes

Importance of Educating Women – International Women’s Day 8th March at FRIEND HQ in Tuvu Lautoka

- “When you educate a woman, you educate her whole family” – women are involved in the basics of our life/living. This is why educating women is very important!
- --- Look at - What opportunities are available, are our women ready to take advantage of these opportunities! Where does education fit in to this?
- Buzz words – knowledge economy, information society, lifelong learning, etc..... in this port industrial model, information society is the key word where a lot of emphasis is given to ICT – information communication technology –
- Wide range of literature and research on ICT and its benefits. While one section questions ICT in regards to creating digital divide, others encourage communities to take the opportunities provided by ICTs and reap the benefits to the maximum.
- That ICT is connecting marginalized including women. We can see our own example – most people including women have mobile phones, have access to TV, even have access to Internet!
- How many have mobile phones? Have FB membership?
- How are we utilizing how technology that we have access to?
- Literature – that ICT is bringing the opportunities but the big question being asked is whether our women are ready to take the advance and reap the benefit provided by ICT. Associated with ICT is the concept of lifelong learning – which provides learning opportunities for people including women at different levels – formal or non-formal!
- Other than ICT, there are many educational opportunities – for formal education and non-formal education.
 - Formal – form 4, 5, 6 – university – ECE, caregivers, - form 5 – preliminary, form 6 – foundation, and skills based qualification in numerous areas
 - Non-formal – workshops, seminars, to upskill yourself
 - TV. Radio, social media – many things to lean about – are we utilizing it appropriately?
 - FRIEND – does many trainings? Make use of it. – In partnership with USP – office/skills training for youths from sugarcane sector – 200 youth in the Western division were trained.
- Once women are educated and appropriately trained, I am sure they will be ready for leadership role, decision making role. One can only make a good and sound decision if one is education and has information to make a sound decision. A good decision is an informed decision. Women can only make informed decision if they are educated to understand issues affecting them.
- I know – on this day, a lot of speeches will be made and all will encourage women to take up leadership roles, etc. taking this opportunity I wish to emphasize that educating women is very crucial. By educating, I mean building capacity to ensure women can take the challenge of leadership, decision making and be an equal partner in development. If women are not educated enough, they can be dragged into development but they will not perform as an equal partner! It

is important that opportunities are made available for women to build capacity, have leadership training, how to make well and sound decision before they will be able to participate equally in development. At the same time, women have to be ready to reap this opportunity, make all effort to educate themselves, upskill themselves and be able to make informed decisions, serve their communities and participate in development as equal partners!

- Finally, I take this opportunity to wish to all a happy and peaceful International women's day!