



“Empowering Communities through Information”

Fiji Training Workshop and Demonstration Broadcast
addressing Freedom of Information, Freedom of
Communication/Media and ICT for Development

*July 12 – 15, 2006, femLINKPACIFIC Community Media Centre, Suite 4,
14 Pier Street, Suva*

We the participants at **“Empowering Communities through Information”** Fiji Training Workshop and Demonstration Broadcast addressing Freedom of Information, Freedom of Communication/Media and ICT for Development (ICT4D), staged at the femLINKPACIFIC Community Media Centre in Suva:

Acknowledge the role of UNESCO and femLINKpacific in bringing us together and giving us the opportunity to gain an initial insight into these three policy areas and to have hands on experience in conducting a suitcase radio broadcast on femTALK 89.2FM;

We thank all the policy session speakers from the Solicitor General’s Office, the Fiji Human Rights Commission, the Citizens’ Constitutional Forum, the Ministry of Information, Communication and Media Relations, Fiji Media Council, Fiji Media Watch, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Fiji Disabled Peoples Association and the United Nations Development Programme for sharing their knowledge and expertise with us;

We recognize that Freedom of Information, Freedom of Communication/Media and ICT4D are important means of ensuring the practical implementation of international human rights commitments as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW, the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the values enshrined in the Constitution of the Fiji Islands

We acknowledge that our government is committed to Good Governance and Sustainable Development for the achievement of Economic Growth, as well as ensuring gender equality in the Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration, which was adopted by Pacific Forum Leaders, including our Prime Minister, in Papua New Guinea in 2005

We reiterate that democratic information and communication channels, including mainstream and community media forms have the potential to make a positive impact on our lives and can assist in peace-building, the promotion of human security and good governance, which all contribute to building a positive environment for the development of all communities in the Fiji Islands

And in this regard we emphasize the important need for all stakeholders to recognise and incorporate the distinct needs of rural communities, especially women and young women, as well as persons with disabilities in order to ensure they are able to participate actively in all aspects of development towards the social, economic and political reconstruction of the Fiji Islands

We therefore:

Recommit the role of community broadcasting as a democratic channel for information and communication, and call on the Fiji Government to continue to support community broadcasting efforts of groups such as femLINKpacific

We urge the Fiji Government to incorporate the principles of the Biwako Millennium Framework to ensure the information-communication needs of persons with disabilities are incorporated and supported in national development planning, in particular the National ICT Plan;

We further call on stakeholders to ensure all communities are able to fully utilize appropriate and accessible information, communication technology, such as the “suitcase radio” so that rural and remote communities are not forgotten in the further development of the broadcasting and telecommunications sectors;

We urge our women's civil society partners, in particular the National Council of Women and Soqosoqo Vakamarama I Taukei networks to join us in our collective advocacy and lobby efforts to ensure gender equality in the formulation of policy, programmes and initiatives, in the ICT sector, as well as to ensure more women are informed about the purpose and benefits of the Freedom of Information Act, and the draft Broadcasting and Telecommunication Acts, as these are critical means of ensuring women's active involvement in all information and communication channels

We call on the Pacific Forum Secretariat to continue to support broadcasting initiatives in the Pacific Region, including community radio broadcasting, as a cost effective ICT, and to provide relevant technical assistance to enable non-profit broadcasters to enhance their capabilities to incorporate new digital technologies to strengthen their community empowerment efforts;

We call on development agencies such as UNDP to utilize appropriate and accessible ICTs, including community radio initiatives, as a critical tool to empower Fiji Islanders and other Pacific Islanders, to learn about and therefore play a more active role in the incorporation of the Millennium Development Goals in national development plans for the benefit of all communities;

We call on civil society partners such as Fiji Media Council and Fiji Media Watch to continue to collaborate with women's networks and other civil society groups, so that Fiji Islanders will be able to effectively harness the benefits of the media in order ensure a more democratic, peaceful and prosperous Fiji Islands.

We say this, knowing that it is not only our legal right to be provided with information, and to be able to communicate our viewpoints, but because better decisions can be made for our country, when all Fiji Islanders are empowered to be actively involved in decision making for sustainable and equitable development, for peace.

July 14, 2006