

Dr Lako: Celebrate and acknowledge women in our society

A senior academic at the Fiji National University (FNU), Associate Professor Food Science, Dr Jimaima Lako believes everyone needs to celebrate and acknowledge the immense contribution that women have made and continue to make in society.

Sharing her views in the lead up to International Women's Day (IWD), the College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST) Associate Dean Research said women have sacrificed a lot towards social, academic, economic and political development at local and international levels.

Dr Lako said from keeping the household running on a daily basis to leading powerful countries, the leadership of women should be celebrated globally and at our homes.

"The global campaign theme #BalanceforBetter is fitting because for me personally, it means encouraging gender balance in science and engineering," Dr Lako said.

"During International Women's Day on Friday (March 8), I will be dedicating the day to my late mother who was my role model and mentor."

"She has instilled in me the passion and determination to defy the odds and overcome the challenges that come my way and on this day I will remember her for her wise counsel."

Dr Lako recently represented FNU and the Government of Fiji at the International Symposium on Understanding the Double Burden of Malnutrition for Effective Intervention in Vienna, Austria.

In her presentation on Major Policy and Programme Gaps and Improving Agri-Nutrition Outcomes in Fiji, Dr Lako highlighted the prevalence of double burden malnutrition, with 98 percent of the population at moderate to high risk of developing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, stroke, heart attack, asthma, and diabetes.

She also made key recommendations for improving policy and governance, research and product development, education, outreach and partnerships.

According to Innov4AGPacific, these recommendations have previously been endorsed during multi-stakeholder consultations and are reflected in Fiji's government policy such as the Fiji 5-Year National Development Plan 2017-2021.

The 54-year-old from Mabula, Cicia in Lau also acknowledged her father, who was a male figure that constantly supported her and became a pillar of strength after her late mother passed away.

"He taught me not to rely only on a career for survival but to also utilise the land and resources available to me," she shared.

"I learnt to pray when faced with challenges and share my wealth with those in need."

Dr Lako said women needed to respect each other and work towards achieving their goals in order to succeed professionally.

"I have also struck a balance between being a working woman and caring for my family and I admire and acknowledge other women who are doing the same."

"I also believe that in order to achieve gender balance in our institutions, communities and our nation, females need to be motivated and encouraged to rise to the challenge of leadership."

Her final message to everyone on International Women's Day is "Leave the world better than you found it".



Dr Jimaima Lako (right) and Dr Tamata duing a NTPC workshop.