

Climate WATCH

SAVE THE PLANET



COURSE COMPLETION

From left: Kesaia Yavala, Salome Belebele, Litia Tovaki, Mere Cagilaba and Senimelia Narimo after the certificate presentation in Rukua Village at B

Women on Mission to Save Beqa



INOKE RABONU
SUVU

Five young women from the Raviravi and Sawau districts on Beqa Island are championing the course of resilience in the face of climate adversities on the island.

Yesterday they were among the 25 participants who graduated from a traditional canoe building and sailing course in Beqa.

Twenty men and five women graduated with certificates to master traditional canoe building and sailing.

The course was funded by the European Union through the Pacific European Union Marine Partnership Programme (PEUMP).

PEUMP partnered with the University of the South Pacific and the *Uto ni Yalo* trust in delivering the course to the 25 men and women.

European Union Ambassador to the Pacific Sujiro Seam officiated at the event and presented the course certificates to the graduates

Course participant Litia Tova-

ki, 24, said witnessing the impacts of climate change on the island inspired her to do something that will minimise its impacts on her village.

"I have seen how tidal waves have forced us to rebuild our sea wall twice just to ensure that water does not get into the village and our houses," Ms Tovaki said.

"We knew we had to stand up for change and this is one way we are championing change for our future generations," she said.

"We opted to learn how to build traditional canoes and most importantly how to sail them, this way we are ensuring sustainable means of transportation to ensure our marine resources are sustainable for generations to come.

"We are proud to be the few young women that are championing this change on the island."

Another participant Senimelia Narimo, 25, from Dakuni Village said the worry of having to pay for fuel to be able to fish and put food on the table was now a worry of the past.

"Every Saturday at 8am we have to go out and fish and to make things

easier for us we have to put in money to pay for fuel to be able to afford to go out and get food for our families," she said.

"This is no more; we will be able to just step out of our homes and paddle our canoes to be able to put food on our table."

Kesaia Yavala, 19, said she took up the course because she wanted to pass on the skills she would learn to members of her family and village.

"It is a proud moment for me especially being one of the young participants," she said.

"I do not intend to keep this skill to myself. I am on a mission to save Beqa from the impacts of climate change and this knowledge will be passed on to save Fiji."

She thanked the European Union and its partners on providing a course that would ensure villagers were resilient in the face of climatic adversities.

The five young women have vowed to be a voice for change when it comes to fighting climate change in the country.

Edited by Jonathan Bryce

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