

# Women2030 Monitoring and Review of the Sustainable Development Goals and Development Justice



# Fiji

Prepared by Fiji Women's Forum

## Country Background

Fiji is an archipelagic nation comprised of 332 islands, and home to an approximate population of 885,000. Fiji has made strides toward promoting development, and advancing the status of women, but progressive legislative reforms are far outweighed by existing and entrenched barriers to truly achieving women's human rights and gender equality. Strong patriarchal practices dominate decision-making structures with little to no participation of women. Women's share of formal employment is significantly lower than men's, and women remain relegated to the low-wage end of the labour market. Rural women face significant barriers to accessing, controlling and owning land as traditional institutions allow women limited rights to inherit land, own property, or access financial and legal services to purchase land. Corporate capture of land and resources continue to harm the environment and threaten the livelihoods of local people. Gender equality and sustainable development are also impeded by the climate crisis, as it is women who bear the greatest burden of the impacts of climate change.<sup>1</sup> Further, Fiji's tumultuous political situation in recent decades has left a legacy of militarism that continues to stifle the participation of civil society in decision making processes.

## Architecture for SDGs Implementation

The Ministry of National Planning established an SDGs Taskforce in 2015 which included the participation of various civil society organisations, though the Taskforce has yet to reconvene. Fiji has both a 20 year development plan (2017-2036) and a comprehensive five year plan (2017-2021); both of which were set up to outline pathways to achieving global commitments including the 2030 Agenda on the sustainable development and the Paris Agreement on climate change. However, to ensure that the government successfully integrates the SDGs into national planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting processes the government must reinvigorate its commitment to providing clear and transparent processes for the participation of civil society, with adequate resource allocations and equitable representation of women's rights groups and networks. Implementation of the SDGs is to be financed primarily through Official Development Aid.



<sup>1</sup> Women are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change and disasters, as catastrophic events under climate change lower women's life expectancy more than men; more women are killed or killed younger by natural disasters; and women have a harder time recovering after extreme weather events that affect infrastructure, jobs and housing. See Halton, M. (2018). Climate change 'impacts women more than men'. BBC. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-43294221>

**Country population:**  
905,500 (2017)

**GDP per capita:**  
5,589.39 USD (2017)

**Palma ratio:**  
1.6 (2017)

**UNDP Gender Inequality Index Value:**  
0.352 (2017)

**UNDP Gender Inequality Index Rank:**  
79 (2017)

**Government budget expenditure:**

**Military Expenditure:**  
FJ\$103.3 million (2018-2019)<sup>1</sup>

**Health Expenditure:**  
FJ\$334.9 million (2018-2019)<sup>2</sup>

**Education Expenditure:**  
FJ\$535.4 million (2018-2019)

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/f228b9fe-ffcb-4237-a3f5-2157657a7ac9/Budget-Estimates.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/f228b9fe-ffcb-4237-a3f5-2157657a7ac9/Budget-Estimates.aspx>

✓ **Are CSOs included in the mechanisms for developing the national plan and implementation of the SDGs?**

✓ **Are women's rights organisations included in the mechanisms for developing the national plan and implementation of the SDGs?**

✗ **Is the information/ data accessible?**

## Women's Priorities: Findings on selected targets and/or indicators

While some progress towards achieving the SDGs has been made in Fiji, much work remains in advancing development policies that reflect and respond to the needs of women and other marginalised groups. The current status of the government of Fiji in implementing Goals 5 and 16 is presented as follows:



### Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all women and girls

The Fijian Government is yet to formally include gender responsive budgeting in to legislation for line ministries to adopt and practice. Work around this area is slow but progressing.

The UN Women under its 'Markets for Change' initiative organised a five days gender responsive budget workshop for its Pacific regional partners.

In May 2014, the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation produced the Beijing National Review. The report highlighted the overall need for greater collaborative work across all government ministries so that the promises of Beijing are kept.<sup>1</sup>

To address the high percentage of women in the care economy and in the informal sector, the Fijian Government invests in income-generating projects for women living in rural communities with the aim to boost livelihoods through a sustainable source of income, which can be looked after by women within their local communities. Women's unpaid care work in Fiji is severely under-recognised.

The state is not yet meeting its 30 per cent commitment to women in decision-making bodies at the national or sub-national levels, nor it is expressing ways in which it will fast-track the meeting of this commitment.

[1] Fiji National Report on the 20-Year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Retrieved from: [http://www.unescapdd.org/files/documents/Beijing20\\_national\\_review\\_Fiji.pdf](http://www.unescapdd.org/files/documents/Beijing20_national_review_Fiji.pdf)



### Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

The 2013 Constitution of Fiji contains some anti-discrimination provisions and significant gaps in how those provisions are integrated into laws and policies.

Government processes lack mechanisms to ensure inclusive participation from the public, including women. In the first 10 months of 2016, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) reported that:

A total of 424 cases of sexual violence were filed in Fiji's High Court - this included 269 counts of rape; 12 of attempted rape; 10 of indecent assault; 12 of defilement and 94 of sexual assault.

There were a total of 205 victims of the reported sexual violence including 125 under the age of 18, with 33.7% of the accused perpetrators being partners or family members.

The Police often treats violence against women as a domestic issue to be dealt with privately in the family. Also, the police lacks adequate funding to cover the geographical distance between rural communities and town centres.

Public access to information is limited, as the State retains control over Fiji's media landscape which limits press freedom and the ability of journalists to provide independent reporting.

## Recommendations

In order to achieve meaningful implementation of Goals 5 and 16, the government of Fiji must:

- Strengthen and clarify the process of the SDGs Taskforce;
- Strengthen collaboration with key stakeholders, namely civil society organisations (CSOs) including women's rights organisations, in the implementation of the SDGs; strengthen the engagement, collaboration, and participation of CSOs in existing working groups or task force; and
- Establish a website where the public can access high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, geographic location, disability and other forms of vulnerabilities.



Established in 2012, The Fiji Women's Forum brings together diverse groups of women with a shared vision of increasing women's equal participation in leadership and democratisation processes. The Fiji Women's Forum believes that the under-representation of women is directly linked to many of the challenges that Fijian women face, including women's struggles with conflict and democratisation. The full representation of women at all levels is a fundamental ingredient in the prevention of the resurgence of violence, and the long-term sustainability of peace and democracy. Contact: [nalini@fwrw.org.fj](mailto:nalini@fwrw.org.fj)



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