



# Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action



## +25 Fiji Progress Report



May 2019

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## **+25 Fiji Country Progress Report**



*May 2019*  
Suva, Fiji

# ACRONYMS

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<b>ARH</b>	Adolescent Reproductive Health
<b>BPfA</b>	Beijing Platform for Action
<b>CBA</b>	Competency Based Assessment
<b>CCDRM</b>	Climate Change Disaster Risk Management
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CHW</b>	Community Healthcare Workers
<b>CLGF</b>	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
<b>CMRIS</b>	Consolidated Monthly Return Information System
<b>CPR</b>	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate
<b>CRVS</b>	Civil Registration Vital Statistics
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>DFAT</b>	Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade
<b>DoW</b>	Department of Women
<b>DV</b>	Domestic Violence
<b>DVRO</b>	Domestic Violence Restraining Order
<b>FEMIS</b>	Fiji Education Management Information System
<b>FLT</b>	Financial Literacy Training FNCDP - Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons
<b>FNCDP</b>	Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons
<b>FPSF</b>	Fiji Program Support Facility
<b>FPPS</b>	Fiji Parliament Support Project
<b>FRHADDC</b>	Fiji Human Rights Anti-Discrimination Commission
<b>FWCC</b>	Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
<b>FWRM</b>	Fiji Women's Rights Movement
<b>GESI</b>	Gender Equality Social Inclusion
<b>GFO</b>	Gender Focal Officers
<b>GII</b>	Gender Inequality Index
<b>GRPB</b>	Gender Responsive Programme Budgeting
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>HPV</b>	Human Papillomavirus
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
<b>M4C</b>	Markets for Change
<b>MEHA</b>	Ministry of Education, Heritage & Arts
<b>MHMS</b>	Ministry of Health & Medical Services
<b>MIDA</b>	Media Industry Development Authority
<b>MMR</b>	Maternal Mortality Rate
<b>MWCPA</b>	Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation
<b>MSP</b>	Medical Services Pacific
<b>NCD</b>	Non Communicable Diseases
<b>NCSMED</b>	National Centre for Small Medium Enterprises Development
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NMW</b>	National Women's Machinery
<b>OMRS</b>	Open Merit & Recruitment Selection
<b>OSS</b>	One Stop Shop
<b>PRRP</b>	Pacific Risk Resilience Programme
<b>PWSPD</b>	Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development

<b>RFMF</b>	Republic of Fiji Military Forces
<b>SDP</b>	Service Delivery Protocol
<b>SOGIE</b>	Sexual Orientation Gender Identity & Expression
<b>SPBD</b>	South Pacific Business Development
<b>SPC</b>	Pacific Community
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual Reproductive Health Rights
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering & Math
<b>TEST</b>	Technical and Employment Skills Training
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution
<b>WG</b>	Working Group
<b>WID</b>	Women in Development
<b>WPA</b>	Women's Plan of Action
<b>WPS</b>	Women, Peace & Security
<b>WWW</b>	Women's Weather Watch
<b>ZTVFC</b>	Zero Tolerance Violence Free Community

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# INTRODUCTION

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The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2020 has provided an opportunity for the Fijian Government to conduct a comprehensive national review towards this universal commitment to women and girls.

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The review process involved a wide range of stakeholders from Government sectors, civil society organisations, the private sector, regional and international organisations and has been successful in establishing a whole of Government, whole of society effort towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The process provided the opportunity to highlight the instrumental role of the National Women's Machinery (NWM) in Fiji in driving a collaborative approach towards meeting Government's commitments to women and girls outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2017 - 2021 and aligned with the global Sustainable Development Agenda (SDG). The NWM for the advancement of women and gender equality in Fiji is the Department of Women (DoW) that sits under the Ministry of Women Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) who also host the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and the Poverty Alleviation Department. The MWCPA is responsible for social protection programmes for families, children, elderly and people living with disabilities. The BPfA has been catalytic in strengthening the NWM in Fiji and has

provided the framework to orient and guide the path forward for equal rights and equal opportunities for women and girls through a Women's Plan of Action, which has five areas of concern (Formal Sector Employment and Livelihood, Equal Participation in Decision Making, Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children, Access to Basic Services, Women and the Law)<sup>1</sup>. The first Ministry of Women in Fiji was established in 1998 in direct response to commitments to the BPfA. Over time the Ministry of Women took on additional portfolios but have maintained the role of being strategic advisers to government in gender equality and women's empowerment.

This report provides an overview of the achievements and challenges towards the 12 critical areas in the BPfA, (Women & Poverty, Education & Training, Women & Health, Violence Against Women, Women in Armed Conflict, Women & the Economy, Women in Decision Making, Institutional Mechanisms, Human Rights of Women, Women & the Media, Women & the Environment, The Girl

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<sup>1</sup> Womens Plan of Action Volume 1 1999 – 2008, Volume 2 2010 - 2019



*Hon. Mereseini Vuniwaqa, Minister for Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation (Republic of Fiji)*

Child) with a focus on the last five years 2014 – 2019, since the completion of the Fiji's Beijing plus 20 Progress Report. The report reviews the commitments made in 2014 and assesses the progress made within this 5-year period towards the commitments and draws attention to the emerging issues specified in the NDP that is aligned with the SDG's.

In the preparation of the Beijing Plus 25 Progress Report, the NWM led a participatory process that involved two organised consultations with representatives from government and Non-Government Organisations (NGO) and the formulation of a Working Group (WG) which included representatives from civil society, women's rights organizations, government agencies as well as faith-based organizations. An advertisement in the daily newspapers invited interested members of the public to be part of the process in line with the commitment for an all of society approach. Representatives from the WG lead the collection of data and information for each section of the report and provided this information to. A representative from the

NWM supported the WG members for each section supported to ensure access to data and information as outlined in the Guidance Note. The process clearly strengthened the relationship between the NWM and civil society and provided an opportunity to learn and draw from each other's expertise. Fiji has a strong and active civil society who expressed appreciation and gratitude to the NWM for the engaging and participatory process, though there were concerns about the short timeframe allocated. The NWM recognized the value in the collaborative all of society, whole of Government approach stressing that while this is the first time for this level of collaboration with the Beijing Progress report with the processes to be formalized to guide a similar approach for upcoming progress reports. This reaffirms the role of the BPfA in strengthening and boosting the strategic role and visibility of the NWM in working with all relevant stakeholders toward achieving the goal of gender equality.



## SECTION ONE

# PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES & SETBACKS



The review of the progress of the BPfA shows remarkable progress for women and girls in Fiji since 1995, with significant changes taking place in the last five years following on from Fiji's Beijing Plus 20 Progress report.

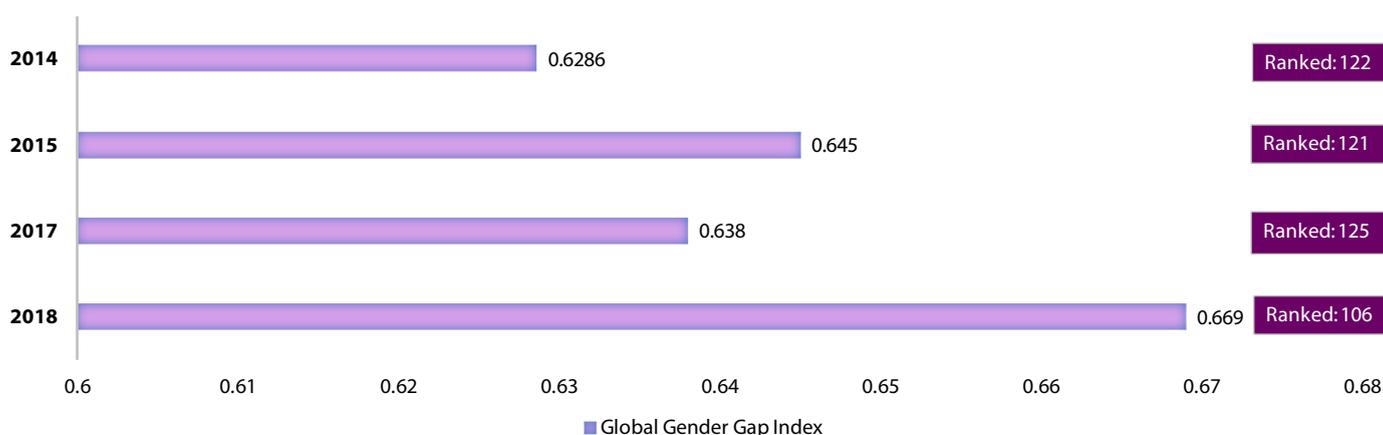
The findings indicate that women's lives have improved and the gender gap has narrowed in areas of education, political participation, access to quality healthcare and services, and in the areas of entrepreneurship and women's enterprises. However, there are still urgent issues that impact women's development such as high prevalence rates of violence against women and girls, coupled with emerging issues such as climate change, the low representation of women in formal sector employment, women's health and women's equal representation at all levels of government and civil society.

The Fijian Government remains committed to addressing these issues as reflected in the Government's 20 year National Development Plan 2017 – 2036 and in the more immediate 5-year National Development Plan from 2017 – 2021. Specifically the NDP is committed to "Empowering women to reach their full development potential with specific strategies to:

- Increase women's participation in formal sector employment
- Increase women's representation at all levels of government and civil society
- Eliminate violence against women and children through responsive policing and coordinated referral networks
- Improve women's access to all social services
- Review of legislation and policies

In terms of overall progress achieved, Fiji's ranking on the World Economic Forum's global gender gap has improved significantly from 2015 shifting 15 places up from 121 to 106 out of 187 countries, in 2018.

**Graph 1:1 Global Gender Gap Index 2014 - 2018**



In terms of overall progress achieved, Fiji's ranking on the World Economic Forum's global gender gap has improved significantly from 2015 shifting 15 places up from 121 to 106 out of 187 countries, in 2018. Fiji is currently the only Pacific Island country to be ranked in the World Economic Forum Report (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2018)<sup>2</sup>. According to the UNDP 2018 Statistical Update, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. Fiji has a GII value of 0.352, ranking it 79 out of 160 countries in the 2017 index. As of 2018, 20 percent of parliamentary seats were held by women, and 77.3 percent of adult women

2 [www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2018](http://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2018)

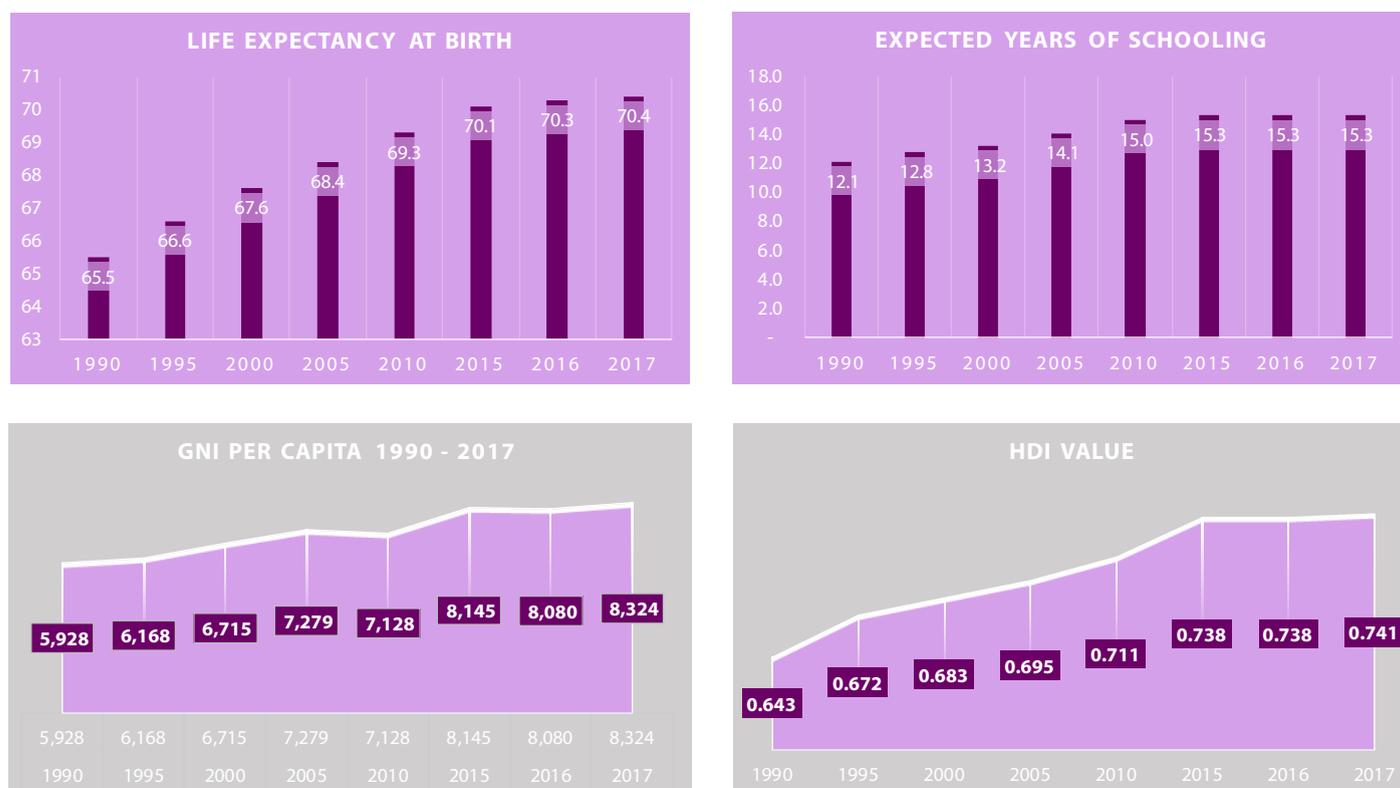
had reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 68.3 percent of their male counterparts. For every 100,000 live births, 30 women die from pregnancy related causes which is below the SDG target for maternal mortality and the adolescent birth rate is 43.9 births per 1,000 women of ages 15-19. Female participation in the labour market is 40.8 percent compared to 75.4 for men reflecting huge gender differentials in this area.

**Table 1:2 Fiji's HDI Trends based on Consistent Times Series Data**

Years	Life Expectancy at Birth	Expected Years of Schooling	Mean Years of Schooling	GNI per capita (2011 PPP\$)	HDI value
1990	65.5	12.1	8.4	5,928	0.643
1995	66.6	12.8	9.8	6,168	0.672
2000	67.6	13.2	9.6	6,715	0.683
2005	68.4	14.1	9.2	7,279	0.695
2010	69.3	15.0	9.6	7,128	0.711
2015	70.1	15.3	10.8	8,145	0.738
2016	70.3	15.3	10.8	8,080	0.738
2017	70.4	15.3	10.8	8,324	0.741

Source: UNDP Statistical Update, 2018

**Graph 1:3 Trends in Fiji's HDI Component Indices 1990 - 2017**



Moreover, Fiji's Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2017 is 0.74 which places the country in the high human development category, positioning it at 92 out of 189 countries and territories<sup>3</sup>. Fiji's HDI value increased from 0.643 to 0.741, an increase of 15.2 percent between 1990 and 2017. Table 2 reviews Fiji's progress in each of the HDI indicators. Furthermore, between 1990 and 2017, Fiji's life expectancy at birth increased by 4.9 years, mean years of schooling increased by 2.4 years, expected years of schooling increased by 3.2 years and Fiji's GNI per capita increased by about 40.4 percent.

3 [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/FJI.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/FJI.pdf)

Comparisons between men and women reveal that women have longer life expectancy than men, they have slightly more mean years of schooling but their estimated gross national income is significantly lower with women earning almost half of what men earn. This is also reflected in female labour market participation identifying unequal opportunity in access to employment. (Source: UNDP Statistical Update 2018).

In the past 5-years there has been significant progress in the strengthening of the NWM and in the relationship between Government and CSO with stronger collaborative efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment. There has been a considerable increase in the budget allocation for the NWM who received a 42% increment in 2015 when compared to the previous budget year. Despite this increase, the total budget allocation acquired for the past 6 years is still less than 1% of the overall Government budget allocation and the ministerial allocation for the Department for Women has not exceeded 6% in the past six years.

The Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty alleviation has received as a whole a total of 12% budget share from the National Government Budget over the past 6 years. From 2012 till 2015, the Ministry received less than 1.5% of the National Budget however from 2015 the allocation increased and in 2017/2018 budget Ministry received the highest percentage, an allocation of 2.6%.



Since the BPfA was agreed in 1995, Fiji sustained its advocacy and other measures that resulted in major policy gains and improvements in many areas with regards to women and girls' rights, prominent of which are in education and their participation in politics and decision-making. The period also saw the development and strengthening of institutional mechanisms that support gender mainstreaming in Government at national and local levels through the development of the Women's Plan of Action and the National Gender Policy.

In 2018, commitments by the Fijian Government to EAW through responsive policing and improving referral networks was boosted through the launch of Fiji's National Gender Based Violence (GBV) Service Delivery Protocol (SDP). The SDP provides for a multi-sectoral response to ensure that appropriate, timely, quality services are provided to the survivors of GBV and is a result of extensive consultation with existing service providers including civil society and faith-based organizations. A domestic violence helpline was established in 2017 to provide free 24 hour counselling to women.

The Fijian Government also recognises that we must provide women and girls greater access to justice in combating violence against women. As such, the Fijian Government ensured that the Legal Aid Commission (Commission) consistently opened new offices in all major towns and cities in Fiji. The Commission provides free legal services to those Fijians who can afford to engage private solicitors in a variety of legal areas some of which are criminal matters, family matters and other civil matters.

An Online Safety Act was passed in 2018 in response to the high levels of sexual exploitation of women and girls on online.<sup>4</sup> The Act protects women and girls from online exploitation across any electronic communication including and not limited to online mainstream media channels and websites. The Act was primarily introduced to promote online safety and prevent cyber-bullying and abuse inflicted online. The Act also supports the establishment of the Online Safety Commission to oversee the implementation of the Act.



The NWM has continued to support the economic empowerment of rural women through building new Women's Resource Centres and Extension Centres in villages, which provides a space for women to set up businesses or produce handicraft. Since Cabinet endorsed the construction of women resources centre in 2010, the Ministry has opened over 30 new women resource centres, 26 women extensions centres and established networks with over 1500 women's groups.

The Fijian Government through the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation administers various social

4 Hon A.Sudhakar – 15th May 2018 – Fiji Parliament Hansard

protection schemes that have directly benefited thousands of women. Some of these schemes are directly targeted at women beneficiaries and over the last five years the MWCPA has improved the way the schemes are administered taking into account various gender considerations. One example, the Standard Operating Procedures, which guide the Poverty Benefit Scheme has been amended to not limit the title of head of households to men but allow for women to also be identified as the head of households. In 2017, 55% of the beneficiaries of the Poverty Benefit Scheme were women, with 45% men.

In 2018, the Employment Relations Act reaffirmed and recognized the value of unpaid care and parental leave by including provisions to recognize 5 days of paternity leave, 5 days of family care leave as well as an increase in maternity leave from 84 days to 92 days.

The Fijian Parliament in 2018 also approved the Succession, Probate and Administration (Amendment) Bill which guarantees inheritance rights to all men and women living in de facto relationships. This ensures that women are not unfairly discriminated against in relation to the inheritance of property.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act was passed by Parliament in 2018 following the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2017. The legislation covers issues of discrimination on the basis of disability and rights of persons with disabilities and is to be adopted at all levels of society and the education system. The rights of persons with disabilities is also enshrined in the Fijian Constitution and enforcement of these rights can be done by way of Constitutional Redress against State actors or individual actors. The Fiji National Council for the Disabled Persons is a focal point for the area of disability in Government and is governed by the FNCDP Act 1994 that provides for the facilitation of Government grants to fund operational activities.

 Extreme weather events and climate change represents one of the biggest threats to sustainable development in Fiji. Specifically, destructive weather patterns have hindered the island's economy and uprooted thousands across the island nation. In February 2016, a Category 5 Tropical Cyclone ravaged Fiji, taking the lives of 44 Fijians, destroying homes, uprooting families and inflicting serious damage on the nation's sugar crop, a foundation of the Fijian economy. The Prime Minister declared a 30-day state of emergency. With winds recorded at 185 miles per hour and gusts up to 200 miles per hour, Cyclone Winston took its place as Fiji's worst recorded natural disaster and the strongest storm to ever to make landfall in the Southern Hemisphere. Damages from the storm totalled an estimated \$1.4 billion, which represents more than a third of Fiji's GDP.

According to Fiji's National Climate Change Policy (National Climate Change Policy, 2017), global sea level changes will more than double by the end of the century. Since 1993, Fiji has recorded a 6 millimetre (0.2 inch) increase in its sea level per year, larger than the global average. The rapid rise in sea levels and the resulting saltwater intrusion that stems from the increased ferocity of coastal floods have made portions of the island nation uninhabitable. Principal 10 on the Fiji climate Change Policy stipulates in recognizing that men and women face different social, economic, and environment situations, gender issues are to be considered in all planning and implementation processes. A better understanding of the vulnerabilities and capacities of different gender groups to deal with climate change is to be promoted (National Climate Change Policy, 2017). Fiji's future depends on countering the impact of climate change with the inclusion of gender in all process.

 Women's representation in Parliament is now at 20% following the 2018 general elections, reflecting the highest percentage of women in parliament since Fiji gained independence in 1970 and an increase from 16% in the September 2014 general elections and 11% in the 2006 general elections. Of the 10 women Members of Parliament, 5 are in Government and 5 are in the Opposition. Of the 5 Government Members, 3 are Ministers and the other 2 are Assistant Ministers. The boost in numbers has been attributed to the leadership of Fiji's first ever female Speaker of the House, the late Honourable Jiko Luveni who was sworn in as Speaker in 2014 and Fiji's first ever mock

Women's Parliament that was conducted in August 2016. The mock Women's Parliament provided an opportunity for 50 aspiring women leaders from various backgrounds to learn about Parliament, be briefed on important development issues and build their policy skills.

The commitment of the Office of the Speaker of Parliament to gender equality has also been integrated into the operations of Parliament with a requirement for Standing Committees to conduct gender analysis when scrutinising legislation or undertaking their oversight functions. A practical toolkit has been developed to guide Members of Parliament (MPs) to do this with the toolkit also providing guidance to committee staff assisting Parliamentary Standing Committees during the Parliamentary process. The toolkit was developed with the assistance of the UNDP Fiji Parliament Support Project (UNDP FPSP).

More than 3000 market vendor association members have been empowered to participate equally in decision making processes in market management and infrastructure as a direct result of the Markets for Change Project (M4C) facilitated by UN Women in partnership with Ministry of Local Government. The M4C Project started in 2014 with 6 market vendor associations and now works with 12 market vendor associations and over 3500 market vendor's association members. Nine out of 12 market vendor associations are at present led by women and women occupy 50% of leadership roles in all.



## SECTION TWO

# PROGRESS UNDER THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

[Six (6) overarching dimensions that highlight the alignment of the BPfA with the 2030 Agenda]



## INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK

### A. WOMEN IN POVERTY

- i. Social protection policies and systems play a critical role in transforming women's and girls' lives by addressing life cycle risks and transitions, increasing access to services and infrastructure and promoting women's and girls' voice and agency. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasises the central role social protection plays in addressing poverty and inequality, including by recognising and valuing unpaid care and domestic work in the pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. At a young age, girls face barriers to quality education, including through their involvement in domestic work. Adolescent girls are at risk of early pregnancy and as a result drop out of school. Women are more likely than men to work in precarious, informal jobs, shoulder a greater burden of unpaid care, and face interruptions and inequalities in paid work. These life cycle vulnerabilities accumulate, increasing vulnerability in old age and resulting in gaps in social protection coverage across women's lives. Within this context, the initial steps in moving toward gender equality in social protection entail the need to accelerate women's access to the formal economy by increasing opportunities and upgrading skills for women engaged in economic activities.
- ii. The Fijian Government's commitments towards poverty alleviation are clearly articulated in the 20-year National Development Plan 2017 - 2036. Inclusive Socio-Economic development is one of the two approaches of Government towards "Transforming Fiji" within the next 20 years towards a more progressive, vibrant and inclusive society. Under this approach Government is committed to leaving no one behind regardless of geographical location, gender, ethnicity, physical and intellectual capability and social and economic status.
- iii. As a result of the rapid economic and social development in Fiji over the last decade, poverty is now on a declining trend. The overall incidence of poverty dropped from 35 to 31 in the 5-year period from 2003 – 2008 and to 28 in the following 5-year period.<sup>5</sup> Government is committed to eradicating poverty and hardship and improving wellbeing for all with a goal of further dropping the poverty incidence rate to 25 in 2021 and to 10 by 2036.
- iv. Government is introducing a new measure of poverty that incorporates relevant and measurable social determinants to guide improvements to service delivery. A multi-sectoral approach, sustainable growth, better access to social services together with targeted social protection initiatives to empower Fijians to shift out of poverty.
- v. For the 5-year period 2017 – 2021, Government is committed to maintaining social inclusion programmes such as the poverty benefit scheme, welfare graduation programme and social pension scheme. A major focus will be to support MSME's and other self-employment initiatives to fulfil the realisation of socio-economic rights for all as articulated under the Fijian Constitution.

<sup>5</sup> Fiji Bureau of Statistics – Key Statistics: September 2018; HIES; 13.4; Incidence of Poverty

## ► **Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements**

- vi. In the last 5 years the Fijian Government has continued to implement and progress these broad objectives through the provision of social protection programs and employment and livelihood schemes that directly benefit women and the most vulnerable including rural pregnant women. In particular Government has introduced or strengthened unconditional cash transfers, non-contributory social pensions and reformed contributory social protection schemes to strengthen women's access and benefit levels. One example of this is the amendment of the Standard Operating Procedures to recognise women as heads of households. The Social Protection Programs are unconditional cash transfers however are subjected to means test, age and peoples special needs. All the programs assist vulnerable individuals or families to access basic needs.
- vii. A recent assessment noted a total of 50 existing social protection schemes centered towards reducing poverty and vulnerability amongst specific target groups i.e. rural, pregnant, ageing, employed and unemployed women including girls and younger people. The schemes are under five thematic areas; education, health; economic & livelihoods, legal provisions and other essential services.<sup>6</sup>
- viii. Government increased its support to social protection monthly allowances to all recipients by 15% in 2017 and doubled the monthly allowances to pensioners to enable elderly citizens to access basic health care, food and other necessary services.
- ix. As of January 2019, over 26,000 households had benefited directly from the Poverty Benefit Scheme that includes an allowance and food vouchers. The scheme targets poor households and is proxy means tested. A little over 55% of the recipients of this scheme are women with over 56% of those who received assistance from the Social Pension Scheme that targets old persons above the age of 65 with no source of income also women. The Fijian Government's food voucher program for rural mothers that was announced in the 2018 budget and handed out for the first time in 2019 benefited 1611 mothers. Bus fare concessions were provided to over 4000 female elderly recipients and 218 females living with a disability. The numbers reflect the higher percentage of women accessing the social protection schemes in Fiji, also a likely reflection of the larger numbers of women living in poverty.
- x. In direct response to the impact of Tropical Cyclone Winston in February 2006, Government introduced the Social Protection-Winston Rehabilitation Program. The Cyclone affected an estimated 62% of the population and destroyed more than 30,000 homes. The program included a cash top for all recipients under the Social Protection Program who received one lump sum payment to assist them to recover from direct impacts of the disaster and the post disaster effects as the entire country went through rehabilitation and recovery.

Social protection program recipients living in targeted priority areas defined by the cyclone path were provided with food voucher top ups for two months following the cyclone to contribute towards daily basic food items as they went through the recovery process.

- xi. An insurance scheme has also been introduced by the Government in 2018 for social protection program recipients across Fiji to provide a cover for accident/harm or loss of shelter through fire. The provision of life insurance and funeral benefit ensures that the dependents and other beneficiaries are able to rebuild their lives and also promotes and encourages the participation of families and caregivers towards care of vulnerable persons. Recipients also have access to transport vouchers to a top up value of \$40 per month.
- xii. The DoW supported a total of 264 projects operated by women's groups in from 2014 – 2019 in 4 divisions, under their livelihood grants. This covered a total of more than 3000 women members of the groups not including those communities and individuals who were supported by the income generating projects led and managed by women.

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6 FWRM Factsheet (February 2019)

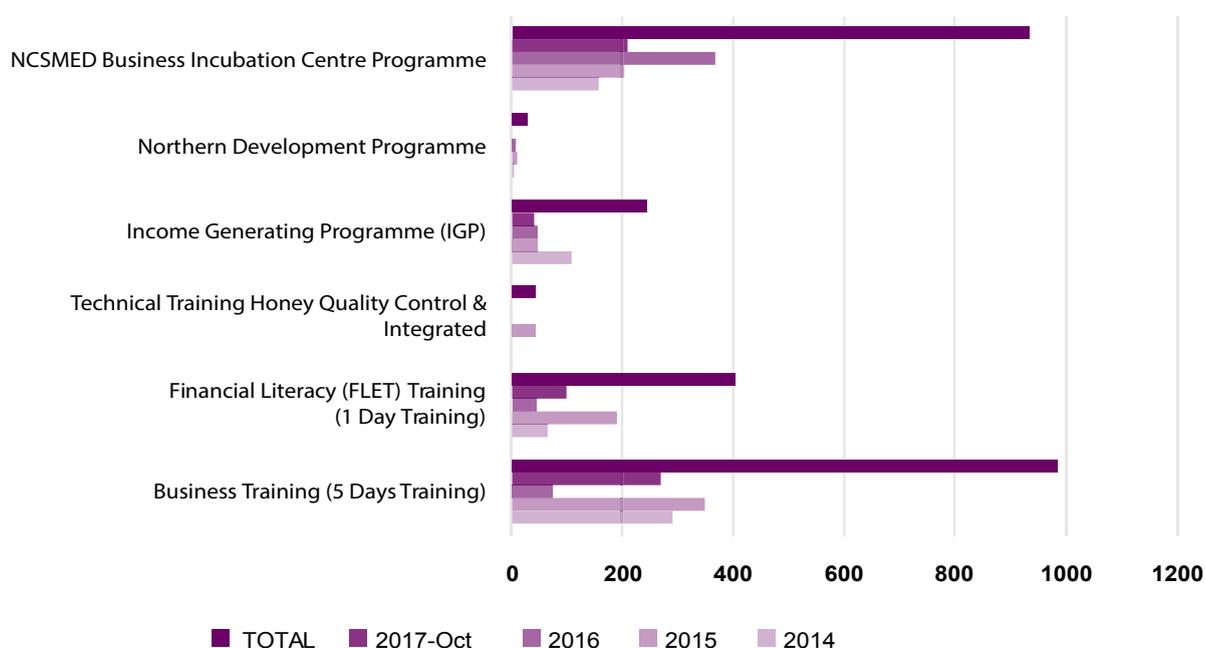
- xiii. The DoW launched the Fiji Women’s National Expo in 2014 to recognize and celebrate the talents of Fijian women artisans. The Expo intends to improve the economic position of women by providing a national platform to showcase their products, connect to the market, collaborate and co-create. In 2017, the initiative provided 340 women artisans with the opportunity to refine their design and business management skills through product quality control, packaging and labelling, certification/licensing and financial literacy assistance. The Fijian Government recognizes that empowering Fijian women artisans across handicraft value chains present a unique opportunity to create business value and strengthen women’s economic empowerment. The Fiji National Women’s Expo has been a flagship program of the NWM with extensive participation from rural women across the country. While the overall participation of women has decreased since the program started, sales continue to grow alongside the anticipation and excitement for the annual event.

**Table 2:1 Women’s Expo Participation and Sales**

Division	2014 Total Participants	2015 Total Participants	2017 Total Participants	2014 Sales	2015 Sales	2017 Sales	2018 Sales
<b>Eastern</b>	269	178	100	46,129.00	117,640.70	145,992.00	164,717.00
<b>Central</b>	477	152	142	13,137.00	68,687.80	65,679.75	63,683.00
<b>Northern</b>	392	120	97	39,795.00	61,188.00	61,573.40	75,151.50
<b>Western</b>	378	120	136	34,019.00	47,137.60	67,789.80	47,492.00
<b>Outside Sales</b>	-	-	-	-	19,479.10	61,434.40	87,652.70
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1516</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>\$133,152.00</b>	<b>\$314,133.20</b>	<b>\$402,469.35</b>	<b>\$438,696.20</b>

- xiv. To facilitate the graduation of beneficiaries from Poverty Benefit and the Care & Protection Allowance, the DSW established a programme with the National Centre for Small and Micro Enterprises Development (NCSMED), which provides them with one week of business training – “Start your own business” – and support to develop a business plan and budget. Funding of \$2,000 provided to NCSMED for each beneficiary. From this allocation, \$400 is retained by NCSMED to cover the costs of their support. The grant is used to purchase capital items required for the beneficiary’s business. The progress of the participants is monitored for the first three months, and when NCSMED considers the business sustainable, it informs the DSW and the C&P Allowance is stopped.<sup>7</sup>

**Graph 2:2 National Centre for Small & Micro Enterprises (NCSMED Statistics on Women, 2014-2017)**



<sup>7</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Child-Sensitive\\_Social\\_Protection\\_in\\_Fiji.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Child-Sensitive_Social_Protection_in_Fiji.pdf)

- xv. Since 2014, over 2000 women have been assisted through the provision of the micro- credit loans through the National Centre for Small and Medium enterprise who provide business advisory services through business incubation centres for women and men. Figure 2:2 illustrates the programmes by NCSMED from 2014- October 2017, indicating that from the total number of women assisted 37.23% of women were assisted for a five days' business training, 35.30% assisted under the NCSMED Business Incubation Centre Programme in the form of business advice, business registration, support letters, filing forms, mentoring & monitoring of business, linking to other Dept./Ministries, etc.,15.32% of women attended the one-day training on financial literacy, 9.35% of women assisted under Income Generating Programme (IGP) which is a government initiative Seed Funding through the DSW, 1.70% attended Technical Training in Bee Farming and 1.10% of were assisted under the Northern Development Programme. A total of 2,643 of women were assisted from 2014-2017.
- xvi. The South Pacific Business Development (SPBD) initiative is empowering women in rural villages by providing opportunities to start, grow and maintain sustainable income generating micro enterprises. From the period 2014 – 2018 a total of 6900 women had accessed SPBD support towards micro enterprises. SPBD provides unsecured credit, training, motivation and guidance to help women start, grow and maintain micro businesses, build assets and finance home improvements and children's education. The company is intending to grow to 10,000 women entrepreneurs and to further disburse loans of up to \$15million in 2019. SPBD is looking to launch the Fiji Business Acceleration Program to help women entrepreneurs bloom into women-run SME's and to launch partnerships to enable women farmers to improve their productivity, income and post-harvest facilities.

### ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- xvii. A major gap that has emerged is the tracking of the impact of social protection programmes on women and girls. The MWCPA publishes annual reports that indicate an increasing majority of women are accessing schemes such as the poverty benefit scheme; care and protection allowance and the social pension scheme, however there is need for a comprehensive review to illustrate the effectiveness of the schemes in transforming the life women and girls.
- xviii. Despite the major progress made in the provision of social protection schemes with over 50 schemes in existence, the general awareness of these schemes and the benefits it provides for women and girls is reported to be limited. There is a need for more systematic dissemination of information to ensure women and girls across the country have access to the support provided.

### ► **Way Forward**

- xix. The collection, analysis, and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data is essential to ensure gender considerations in designing, implementing, and monitoring social protection programs. It is important to support monitoring of social protection programs through regular household income and expenditure surveys. Furthermore, independent impact evaluations of social protection programs, including monitoring gender impact, are critical for developing informed policies.
- xx. The National Gender Policy highlights the measures that need to be implemented to address women in poverty, which included the integration of gender analysis in National Poverty Reduction Strategies, and Social Sector Investment Programming, including utilization of sex and age disaggregated data, and gender aware approaches to promote gender equity in the distribution of resources and poverty alleviation to all marginalised groups.
- xxi. It is important to strengthen the implementation of gender responsive budgeting programming in relation to rural women, women from marginalised groups and women living with disabilities.
- xxii. It is essential to enhance consultation with communities, and with civil society, on the identification, coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction initiatives, from a gender perspective.

- xxiii. Comprehensive and coordinated efforts are required to ensure the development and implementation of specific initiatives targeting elderly women, widows, and single mothers who are highly vulnerable to social economic pressures or disasters with limited access to resources and services.

## **B. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY**

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- i. The Constitution of Fiji protects the right to full and free participation in economic life and includes the right to choose one's own work, trade, occupation, profession or other means of livelihood. It requires the State to take all reasonable measures within its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation of the rights of every person to work and to a just minimum wage and the right social security schemes.
- ii. The Fijian Government's 5 year NDP recognises that the potential of women in Fiji needs to be fully harnessed for the benefit of the entire nation. The NDP commits Government to providing equal opportunities for all, including the participation of women in education, leadership and overall economic development. The National Gender Policy outlines a number of measures to be taken to ensure that the enabling environment to ensure women's equitable participation in the economy is fully realised. These include an evaluation of existing labour laws, gender equity measures in hiring, promotion, and other conditions of work and the commitment to gender balance in power and decision-making positions at all levels and all sectors. The core role of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment is to pursue the attainment of decent work standards. The Ministry has completed various reform programmes that address critical issues inclusive of the rights of women in employment.
- iii. However, the unemployment rates for women in Fiji in 2017 have remained at 7.8% since in 2011 in comparison to 2.9% for males. The number of women in paid employment has declined steadily over the years from 39% in 2002 to 33% in 2011 to 31.3% in 2017. Studies conducted within the last 5 years indicate that indicate that employment for both men and women is mainly in the informal sector, with extensive subsistence activities, high underemployment rate and a large number of working poor. Figures show significant gender differentials in the labour force participation rates with 76.4% for males compared to 37.4% females. Only 19% of businesses are registered to women and most of those are micro and small businesses. A large number of women's economic participation is inclined towards low paying jobs within precarious informal sector including agriculture where female farmers mostly cultivate land of one acre or less with limited access to financial and technical services, which inhibits their levels of agriculture production.

### **► Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements**

- iv. As a result of the direction in the National Gender Policy, the Family Law Amendment Act 2017-2018 was instituted on the provision of partner rights and the increase of maternity leave by 14 days from 84 days initially to the current 98 days. The introduction of Family Care Leave applies to all working Fijians who will be able to use this to attend to family emergencies and also to care for their sick loved ones. Paternity leave will be for all fathers to take five (5) days either three (3) months before the birth of their child or three (3) months after the birth to support their wives during pregnancy and delivery.
- v. Fiji's Beijing Plus 20 Progress Report highlighted the introduction of the first National Minimum Wage of \$2.00 an hour in 2013. The Fijian Government increased the NMW to \$2.32 per hour in July 2015 and to \$2.68 in 2017 in a move that has significantly benefited women who work as housemaids and house helpers and those who work in garment factories, restaurants, supermarkets and private and small companies.
- vi. In terms of campaigns or awareness raising activities to encourage the participation of men and boys in unpaid care and domestic work, the MWCPA in collaboration with the Fiji Women's Crisis Center have conducted gender awareness sessions on the division of labour with male and female privileges as an essential component of the training. A total of 50 trainings altogether (2014-April 2019- source from Annual Reports).

- vii. In its quest to provide economic and employment opportunities for disadvantaged women especially rural women, the MWCPA opened 30 new resource centres, 26 women's extension centres and established networks with 1702 women's groups to encourage income generation programmes. The resource centres provide a designated space for women to produce handicrafts or set up businesses, while also providing a space for capacity building activities and training. The vision is for certain centres to operate with 'one centre one core product' concept to ensure quality and consistency of supply of the products for sale. The facilities have proven to provide a great incentive for women to work together and contribute to the development of their communities.
- viii. In Fiji, Market vendors are predominantly women, and marketplaces offer important venues to effect women's social and economic change. A key initiative to empower women market vendors commenced in 2014 facilitated by UN Women in partnership with Ministry of Local Government. The Markets for Change Project (M4C) has contributed to significant improvements in the lives of women market vendors, equipping them with the ability to negotiate effectively with their municipal administrators for their best interests. The Project has also seen the development of infrastructure in markets across the country to specifically cater for the needs of women market vendors known to travel for days via, boat, horseback, other hired transportation including walking along roads for miles to reach the markets. The women would sleep under the market tables and open pathways and on many occasions have been subjected to abuse and theft. A key component of the project is to provide women's accommodation centres in the markets for the convenience of rural women to have a safe and good night sleep. The accommodation centres serve dual purposes as its used for sleeping at night and as a training centre for the women vendors in the day time. Through the consultative and inclusive approach of the Project, women market vendors have been exposed to opportunities and are able to work together with the duty bearers to plan, design and manage the markets. The Fijian Government contributed over \$19 million to the project.
- ix. Other initiatives that have contributed to women's entrepreneurship are the microfinance program by the Fiji Council of Services Microfinance Unit, whereby 80% recipients of the program are women.
- x. Over 6,900 women currently have active loan accounts with the South Pacific Business Development (SPBD) Microfinance Ltd (Fiji) that was launched in 2010 with the objective of making available microfinance benefits to low-income and disadvantaged women. SPBD has become the largest micro finance institution in Fiji. In addition over 9,000 savings accounts have been opened with total savings of over \$1.8 million. For the next five years SPBD are expecting to service at least 21,000 women by providing them with unsecured loans (for business, home improvement and education with affordable interest rates, training, savings and insurance facilities. The company aims to help the women improve their earning capacities, develop leadership qualities and skills in managing business and finances for an overall better quality of life.

## ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- xi. The list of barriers to women's economic empowerment is long and multifaceted: greater burden of unpaid household and care work; concentration in precarious, casual, low wage, informal employment; lack of control over income and assets; greater levels of violence against women; lower levels of education; restricted mobility; lower levels of financial literacy; greater levels of financial exclusion; lack of access to, or control over/tenure of, land and other natural resources; lower levels of access to market-related information; lack of access to training and extension services; unequal pay; or discriminatory attitudes toward women in general, and toward their economic participation in particular.
- xii. From street vendors and domestic workers to subsistence farmers and seasonal agriculture workers, women make up a disproportionate percentage of workers in the informal sector. Working in this informal, or grey economy, as it's sometimes called, leaves women often without any protection of labour laws, social benefits such as pension, health insurance or paid sick leave. They routinely work for lower wages and in unsafe conditions, including risk of sexual harassment. The lack of social protections has long-term impact on women.

- xiii. It is essential to strengthen the systems and mechanisms to allow smooth transition of women from the informal sector to the formal sector, considering women's challenges to meet the entry requirements to register as a formal business.
- xiv. While a number of women are involved in cultural industries, the links to the markets is a challenge with quality and the consistency of supply a serious concern. The effect of climate change on the raw material in the cultural industry and the agriculture commodities supply chain is also a factor contributing to inconsistent supply.
- xv. Women and children continue to be at risk in open market spaces with a need for policies to protect them in these environments, when they are trying to earn a living and engage in productive activities.
- xvi. There is a lack of data available on the specific impact of Government's supported employment programs on women no specific gender indicators linked the monitoring of these initiatives.
- xvii. There is a lack of social protection to cover women in the informal sectors including care givers and domestic workers who are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

### ► **Way Forward**

- xxviii. Conduct a study to better understand the risks informal workers face, the ways in which different forms of protection can help to prevent or mitigate against those risks and assess the costs informal workers incur in the absence of adequate social protection. The study is to highlight the barriers informal workers face in accessing existing social protection schemes and document good practice examples of extending social protection to informal workers.
- xix. Raise awareness and build the capacity of informal workers to advocate for improved social protection for themselves and their families, and to develop linkages between policy makers, social protection experts and informal workers.
- xx. Public policy analysis should examine and consider invisible unequal gender relations between men and women in the private sphere in terms of access to assets, utilization of property, inheritance and decision-making. More emphasis needs to be put on the positive aspects of sharing work between women and men, such as unpaid domestic work and caring for children and the elderly.
- xxi. Introduce public private partnerships (PPPs) as a key strategy for promoting green growth and entrepreneurship among women. (Regulatory frameworks need to be adjusted and more research is needed to identify appropriate opportunities for PPP).
- xxii. Conduct research to explore the links between the child care responsibilities and income earning work of informal workers, looking at best practice and ongoing practice in this area. Child care is one of pillars of the social protection programme -if women informal workers are to secure an income, and improve their own well-being and that of their children.
- xxiii. Address the unequal unpaid domestic and care work burden of men and women to enhance women's human capital.
- xxiv. Increase women's access to the assets and resources that enhance agricultural and rural livelihoods, e.g., land, labour, and human and financial capital.
- xxv. Support women in diversifying and commercializing subsistence agriculture and increase off -farm economic activities.

- xxvi. Support a business enabling environment that recognizes women's specific constraints and increases women's access to assets and resources that enable business development and expansion. This is to be done in partnership with public and private providers of business services, including micro-finance institutions (MFI), with support for business services for women-owned MSMEs, including financial services and financial literacy.
- xxvii. Support growth of wage employment opportunities and improve working conditions for women, through stronger enforcement of revised laws and regulations and access to training for women.
- xxviii. Enhance MWCPA and line ministry capacity to design and implement gender responsive plans/gender budgeting to promote women's economic empowerment.
- xxix. Support the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development in the introduction of a quota system for women as a means of Temporary Special Measures to promote women's economic empowerment.
- xxx. Strengthen the implementation of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), with a focus on green jobs and employment opportunities for women.
- xxxi. Ensure that all accommodation centres in markets facilities across the municipality councils in Fiji are safe and secure for the protection of women and children and meet the quality standards. Provide sanitary and dignity packs for all women entrepreneurs who have access to the centres. Implement minimum standards in the market accommodation centres.
- xxxii. Call for the review of policies and process governing the Municipal Councils to take into account the inter sectional realities of rural women entrepreneurs. This is directly related to the ongoing work of the M4C project.
- xxxiii. Evaluate DoW programmes, for example the National Women's Expo, Income generating projects, Financial Literacy training (FLT) with the findings to inform ongoing work in this area including the development of a Formal Sector Employment and Livelihoods Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms, establishment of a task force for the review of labour laws and maintaining the formal sector and livelihood projects database.
- xxxiv. In the area of Women in Fisheries, the Ministry of Fisheries Strategic plan 2018-2022 has a strategy to increase gender and youth participation in the fisheries sector and by funding women's groups for coastal fisheries income generation activities such as mud crab fisheries and Mother of Pearls and to also increase the participation of women in managing communally owned fisheries reserves and to increase fishing licenses held by women.
- xxxv. Cooperate with line ministries to promote the formation and operation of women's business associations and producer groups, and encourage women's membership in other business network.
- xxxvi. Advocate for revising and increasing existing resource allocations at Women Resource/Extension Centres to invest in the promotion of innovative skills development, including entrepreneurship and monitoring and evaluation.
- xxxvii. Advocate for gender-sensitive impact monitoring of budget allocations/expenditure on employment generation in line ministries.

## **C. HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

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### **► Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements**

- i. The Fijian Government is firmly committed to advancing and protecting the fundamental principles and values of universal human rights enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights whilst cultivating an ethos

of a responsible human rights culture. Fijian Constitution has a robust Bill of Rights chapter which guarantees not only civil and political rights but for the first time, socio-economic rights. The application of these right in Fiji is no longer simply confined to their vertical application in other words application against the State only, but also horizontally and is thus also enforceable against private actors within our society. These rights are enforceable through the Judiciary and the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission. Moreover, when interpreting the Bill of Rights provisions, the Fijian Constitution empowers the Judiciary, when relevant, to also consider international law, applicable to the protection of the rights and freedoms that are outlined under the Bill of Rights.

- ii. The Fiji Constitution also has strong anti discrimination provisions which state that a person a person must not be unfairly discriminated against directly or indirectly on the grounds of his or her actual or supposed personal characteristics or circumstances, including, race, culture, ethnic or social origin, colour, place of origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, birth, primary language, economic or social or health status, disability, age, religion, conscience, marital status or pregnancy.
- iii. Since 2014 Fiji has remained committed to ratifying the core 9 United Nations Human Rights Treaties and Convention (Conventions). As of May 2019, Fiji has ratified 7 out of the core 9 Conventions. On May 16 2019, the Fijian Parliament approved that Fiji also accede to the remaining 2 conventions that are International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- iv. Fiji's legal framework to address gender-based violence and reinforce women and children's human rights are further detailed in the Family Law Act (2003), the Domestic Violence Act (2009), the Crimes Act (2009), the Juvenile Act (1974)the Child Welfare Act (2010), and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2018). These legislations align to international frameworks in ensuring the protection of rights and freedom of women and children.

## **Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission**

- v. The Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission (Commission) has been established under section 45(4) of the Fijian Constitution as well as section 12 (1) of the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission Act 2009. Section 45 (7) of the Constitution provides that "in the performance of its functions or the exercise of its authority and powers, the Commission shall be independent and shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority, except by a court of law or as otherwise prescribed by written law".
- vi. The establishment and mandate and scope for the Commission is prescribed further in section 45 (8) and 45(9) of the Fijian Constitution which also guarantees the Commission the administrative and financial autonomy. Section 45 (11) requires that the Parliament shall ensure that adequate funding and resources are made available to the Commission, to enable it to independently and effectively exercise its powers and perform its functions and duties. Section 45 (12) expressly provides that the Commission shall have control of its own budget and finances, as approved by Parliament. Between 2016 and 2018, the Commission was allocated \$3.8m and has conducted outreach initiatives to over 110 schools and 6369 women and LGBTQI participants in 2017.

### ***Outreach initiatives:***

- vii. The Commission visited 113 schools between 2016-17 and reached out to women in rural, remote, maritime areas, semi-urban and informal settlements, including women living with disabilities, mother's clubs, lesbians, trans-women, interfaith based organizations raising awareness on gender rights, prohibited grounds of discrimination, right to education, domestic violence, right to health in particular reproductive health rights, individual rights, accessing free legal service and state welfare schemes.
- viii. The Commission led six pubic consultations (under the Access to Justice Project) with women, youth, LGBTI groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) across Fiji, held training

workshops and conducted community visits to create awareness on human rights.

- ix. A major portion of this awareness raising has been under the Rights, Empowerment and Cohesion (REACH) Project conducted by teams of officers from the MWCPA, Legal Aid Commission and the Commission. Since its inception in 2015 REACH has conducted awareness and delivered services in 956 communities, 139 districts and all the 14 provinces. Specifically the REACH programme has reached 6,369 women and LGBTI participants in 2017 with an awareness of rights enshrined in the Constitution and further deliver any required legal, social and economic services. The REACH Mobile service delivery is supported by the Government of Japan and UNDP.
- x. The Commission has installed a “Human Rights Wall” in every police station outlining the constitutional rights of arrested and detained persons and collaborated with the Fiji Police Force, the Judiciary, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Legal Aid Commission to train police officers on the First Hour Procedure which included video recording of caution interviews.
- xi. Other achievements and activities include:
  - a) Gender based violence and human rights training for the police in collaboration with the UNDP and Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre
  - b) Juvenile justice workshop in collaboration with the judiciary and OHCHR
  - c) Media freedom and human rights workshop in collaboration with MIDA and OHCHR
  - d) Video on LGBTI rights
  - e) Unite Against Racism Campaign
  - f) Booklet on constitutional rights and freedoms and accessing national human rights commission
  - g) Successfully encouraged Fiji to vote for the UN Independent Experts on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
  - h) Successfully encouraged Fiji to co-sponsor the resolution on National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights at the 33rd Human Rights Council in Geneva
- xii. Key progress has been made in recognising and upholding the rights of senior citizens with an increase in budget allocation to the MWCPA enabling the establishment of an Older Persons Unit under the Department of Social Welfare to cater for the needs of older persons/senior citizens, In January 2016, the MWCPA was given the responsibility to administer and manage the 3 State Homes for the elderly in Labasa, Lautoka and Samabula. This was initially under the coordination of the Ministry of Health & Medical Services however now a unit as the Older Persons Unit is established under the Department of Social Welfare.

## ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- xiii. Despite the zero tolerance policy, some women are still apprehensive about lodging police complaints because of family pressure, cultural restrictions about going against household heads resulting in cases of incest, marital rape and child abuse being unreported.
- xiv. Challenges still exist with the safety and protection of sex workers.
- xv. Healthcare workers who provide family planning services to LGBTI (trans-women in particular) lack gender sensitivity and need training to ensure safe spaces to access contraceptives and hormonal tablets.
- xvi. Persons with disabilities using legal services are not fully supported with interpreters for persons (mute and deaf) for ease of communication.

## ► **Way Forward**

- xvii. Data and statistics need to provide data disaggregated by sex and different types of vulnerabilities (especially

by disability status and age).

- xviii. Undertake further research and capacity development measures to improve understanding about groups with special needs, particularly, widows, LGBTQI, women with disabilities, elderly women as well as sex workers so their needs and issues can be better addressed and mainstreamed in sectoral policies and programs.
- xix. Coordinate a review/implementation of relevant legislation, develop and disseminate guidelines, and provide capacity development measures to justice officials to improve legal protection of women and girls with disabilities who experience gender-based and/or family violence. Include women engaged in prostitution and/or women working in the men's entertainment sector who experience gender-based violence.
- xx. Include specific educational content in school curricula to address the socio-cultural diversity of Fiji and the realities of women and girls from different groups, as well as to raise awareness about discrimination and rights.
- xxi. Improve accessibility and availability of sexual and reproductive health services, as well as psychosocial and mental health services for women and girls with disabilities, elderly women, LGBTQIs, women survivors of gender-based violence and their children.
- xxii. The DoW to continue to work with the Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission (FHRADC) to comply with the Paris Principles to resolve the following issues around increasing accessibility to the Commission to ensure a wider reach and public profile to various target groups particularly vulnerable women's groups.



## POVERTY ERADICATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

### **A. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN**

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- i. The Fijian Government notes the significance of education in reducing the unemployment rate in Fiji, eradicating poverty and in moving the country towards stronger growth and development. The Government is committed to maintaining universal access to education at all levels with a focus on improving the quality of education as highlighted in the 20-year development plan and in alignment with SDG 4 that promotes the role of education in achieving a more humane world “education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, a global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development”.
- ii. Government maintains a free education initiative through per capita grants to schools as well as bus-fare and boat-fare subsidies, free textbooks and other financial assistance. Boys and girls have equal opportunities to all levels of education and there is a strong commitment to taking the benefits of education to every corner of Fiji – “Making Fiji a Knowledge-based society”. Universal access to primary education has been achieved in Fiji and net secondary school enrolment is over 80 percent.
- iii. In alignment with the shift to quality education, the Ministry of Education Heritage & Arts has been implementing new education reforms with a particular focus on the integration of technical education as essential to prepare people for skills in the modern workplace and the modern global economy. In Fiji's Beijing Plus 20 report, the challenge of the relevance of the education curriculum to the changing labour market was highlighted, with the need to take into account potential labour market expectations.
- iv. The integration of Information Communications Technology (ICT) into the Technology and Employment Skills

Training (TEST) curriculum is seen to be an “enabler” which will not only lift the benchmark for the Ministry’s delivery of quality education and get the return of investment from primary, secondary, tertiary schools and other relevant stakeholders but will also provide a robust and dynamic education system reflecting on the core business of teaching and learning across the nation.

## ► Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements

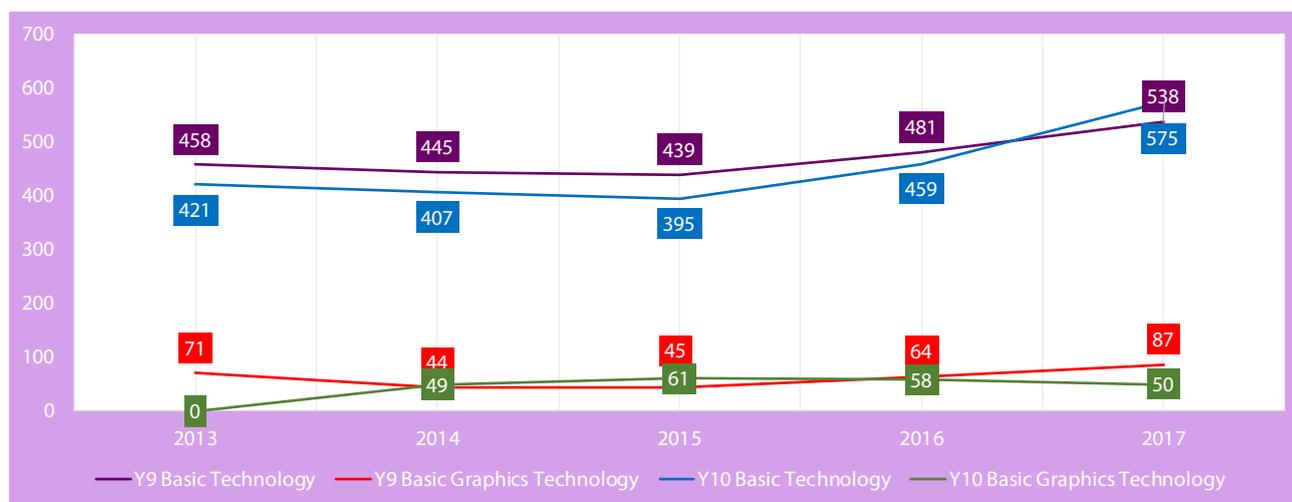
### Quality Education, Training and Life-Long Learning for Women and Girls

- v. Within the last five years, the Ministry of Education Heritage and Arts (MEHA) has made significant progress in furthering Governments commitments to gender equality through incorporating aspects of the National Gender Policy into related MEHA policies. This has been done by explicitly monitoring the processes through which quality education, training and life-long learning is being delivered to women and girls, monitoring the content of education curriculum to eliminate gender bias and taking positive steps towards the inclusion of girls in STEM and TEST areas which are recognised as ‘male domains’.

### Increase girls’ access to, retention in and completion of education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development programmes

- vi. MEHA has seen significant growth in the increase of numbers of females in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development programmes in schools across the country with more young girls accessing technical areas that were predominately male dominated. For instance, in Industrial Arts known as male a dominated subject, the total number of female students enrolled for Industrial Arts subjects at Year 9 to 10 levels in 2013 – 2017 has increased. Male and female numbers have gradually increased over the past 5 years bringing the total number of students taking Industrial Arts subjects in 2017 to 25,856, an increase of 1079 since 2013. The increase in student numbers to date shows the growing interest of students towards TVET as a whole.

**Graph 2:3 Number of Female Students (2013 - 2017)**



- vii. In recognition of the need for quality education and training, the Government run Technical College of Fiji (TCF) opened its doors to students who are inclined towards building skills in Engineering, Construction, Hospitality and Agriculture in 2015. TCF offers National Qualification Programmes (Level 2) based on the skills and competencies students display, in turn preparing them for the work environment.
- viii. As part of the efforts towards achieving equality, TCF encourage male participation in the predominately female areas of Cookery and Baking & Patisserie and female participation in sectors that are predominately male choices, with the drive towards gender balance a key focus of their marketing. TCF market the courses provided

widely across the country with campuses located in the remote maritime islands and opportunities for tailored training in rural areas that are not located near a campus. Since 2015, TCF has seen more females enrol in agriculture than males and females students enrolled in construction and engineering programs. TCF also offers short courses in areas such as beauty therapy, textiles, baking & patisserie and floristry, which are generally favoured by female students. The Fiji Higher Education Commission has developed National Qualifications that provide equal opportunities for access, retention and completion of education, providing these options to students and adults who may have dropped out of school.

- ix. To assist with the development of resource materials to support delivery of the science curriculum & train teachers in the use of educational resources, MEHA has increased access to skills and training in new and emerging fields, especially STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and digital fluency and literacy.
- x. As part of integrating the guidance in the National Gender Policy to incorporate gender based violence sensitively and appropriately into programmes in Primary and Secondary schools, the MEHA created the Family Life Education (FLE) curriculum for secondary schools and the Healthy Living curriculum for the primary schools. The FLE curriculum includes subjects such as gender violence, abuse (sexual, mental, financial, and spiritual), self-esteem, respect for others and themselves, consent, preventive methods and actions, what to do after being abused, who do you trust, post traumatic syndrome treatment.
- xi. Teacher training workshops focused on level 9 teachers in six districts were conducted in February 2019. The workshops provided a space for teachers to share their experiences and strategies with each other, while providing them with tools and resources to enhance their teaching skills. As part of the collaborative approach to EAW, education officers collaborated with multiple NGO's such as Medical Services Pacific (MSP) and Fiji Women's Crisis Center (FWCC) and drew from the NGO experience in this area. Additional publications donated by the NGO's, has been distributed to the teachers for use in FLE classes.
- xii. Activities for Level 9 students participating in FLE outlined in an activity book, include discussing the myths and facts about pregnancy, bullying, abuse, LBGTQI topics, non-communicable diseases, who do you trust to tell your story to, what are the possible ramification and outcomes. In addition to discussion activities, the activity book suggests art and music as modes of expression, creating pamphlets, and organizing community projects. Teachers are urged to create their own lesson plans to motivate students to participate in a difficult subject matter. Future plans include continuing the workshops and activities books for each of the secondary school levels. Outlined in the table below are the concepts taught through the FLE from Level 7 – 13, aimed to increase gender-responsiveness and eliminate bias, at all levels of education.

**Table 2:4 Concepts Taught through the FLE from Level 7 - 13**

<b>Year Level</b>	<b>Concepts taught on gender equality and prevention of violence against girls and women.</b>
<b>7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender roles and responsibility.</li> <li>• Gender is a word used to describe the way in which ideas about how males and females should behave influences what happens. This includes things like the way they dress, the things they do and the way they relate to others. Gender roles and expectations are learned, can change over time, and can vary within and among cultures.</li> </ul>
<b>8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power exists in various relationships.</li> <li>• They can be positive and negative uses of power within peer and gender relationships.</li> </ul>
<b>9</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss how commonly held beliefs about gender and cultural roles affect relationships.</li> <li>• Promote caring relationships and stand against gender violence in school and their communities.</li> </ul>
<b>10</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate understanding of gender in relation to sex and sexuality</li> <li>• Discuss how these beliefs and expectations influence the power dynamics</li> <li>• Develop skills and strategies to maintain caring relationships that promotes trust and love</li> <li>• Discuss instances of violence especially towards children and women and develop ways to end such practices</li> </ul>

<b>Year Level</b>	<b>Concepts taught on gender equality and prevention of violence against girls and women.</b>
<b>11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the different types of relationships people engage in</li> <li>• Demonstrate positive behaviors that affect relationship</li> <li>• Describe sexual identities and stereotypes that affect these relationships</li> </ul>
<b>12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and discuss the different types of cultural beliefs and perceptions towards gender roles</li> </ul>
<b>13</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss cultural perspectives on heterosexual and other types of relationships (e.g. homosexual, bisexual, etc.)</li> <li>• Describe common cultural practices that promotes peaceful and harmonious relationships</li> </ul>

- xiii. The MEHA has revised its approach to teenage pregnancies by making room for preventative measures through the provision of guidance and advice to young women at high schools on critical issues such as drugs, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy. Speakers are from organisations such as the Substance Abuse Advisory Council of Fiji (SAAC) and Fiji Police Force and MHMS. The MEHA provides counselling services to those in need and encourages students to return to school and resume studies post pregnancy.
- xiv. To directly address sexual harassment and elimination of violence in public places, educational settings and in employment, the MEHA has embedded measures in relevant policies and operating procedures. This is work in progress for the Ministry with discussions taking place for a policy to also continue to monitor the use of electronic devices in line with the vision of introducing new and digital learning. In this context, the Ministry is working with technology providers such as the Government Information Technology and Communications (ITC) Services to put in place good practices.
- xv. The Ministry has taken measures to enhance access, affordability and use of ICTs for women and girls through the provision of free Wi-Fi hubs and community technology centres and provide the tuition fee via the free education grant to schools based on student roll, which has an allocation for Computer and ICT equipment. The schools utilize this allocation to improve their ICT equipment and infrastructure. All students have equal access to this curriculum.
- xvi. To further enhance the ability for gender mainstreaming within the MEHA and to up skill Senior Education Officers are being supported to attend and participate in gender equality and human rights training courses for teachers and other education professionals. This is organised and facilitated by the Australian Government support to Fiji's Education Sector - the Fiji Program Support Facility (FPSF).
- xvii. Major progress has been made in the last five years in the dissemination of information on rights and empowerment to the rural women and rural communities, with the Rights Empowerment and Cohesion (REACH) Program reaching 70% of the country with information on ownership rights, property and partner rights, legal services and support. The REACH Program was initiated in April 2014 by UNDP and is being carried out with the Ministry of Women. From July 2015 to December 2018, REACH has reached 956 communities across all the 14 provinces, reaching a total of 22,223 people (9,306 women, 9,050 men and 3,877 children) through awareness sessions and providing services to 37,807 people, of which 57% were women and 43% men.

## **Equal Access and Participation**

- xviii. The Water, Sanitary and Hygiene (WASH) Policy ensures access to safe water and sanitation services, facilitated menstrual hygiene management in schools and other education/training settings and encourages the participation of girls and women in school WASH committees. The committee is trained on elements of ensuring that all hygiene practices are being followed and the WASH infrastructure meets all standard requirements. One of the targets is to ensure improvement in class attendance and reduction in illness especially for girls. WASH training is conducted with the assistance of NGOs and the Health Ministry. MEHA also provides funds for the construction of menstrual hygiene management facilities in schools.

- xix. The Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) within MEHA have developed a mechanism to ensure the reduction of gender biased language in the development of school curriculum. This has come from an awareness of common gender stereotypical roles and references that can be perpetuated through the school curriculum. The Unit has developed an approach and guide to ensure that the language and references used in the development of school curriculum are not discriminatory and that gender equality considerations are applied systematically in the development of educational resources.

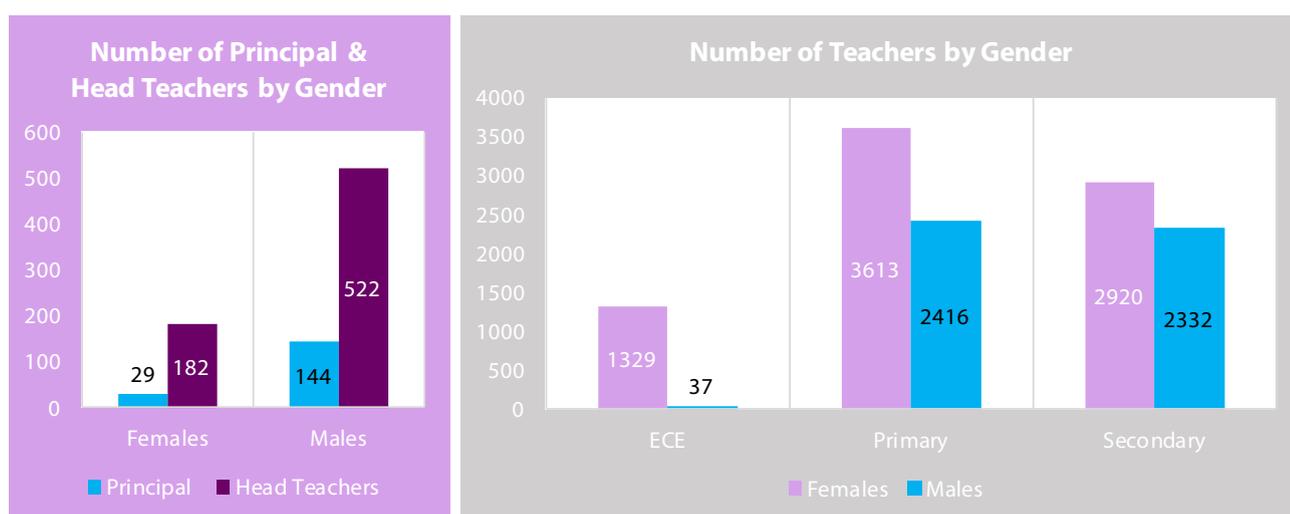
## National Gender Statistics

- xx. A web-based application named the Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS) has been operational since 2013 to support MEHA data needs including the gender statistics. FEMIS captures individual student details by sex while statistics for the staff is captured in the Fiji Education staffing Appointment System (FESA). These are the two major applications of the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts. There are over 240,000 students and over 13,000 staff with data kept in these two databases and used by the Policy Unit in the formulation of policies. The programmes and projects that target boys and girls separately have used this data. This has also allowed for the collation of up to date data on students attendance, enrolment and gender-parity etc. Sex disaggregated data has been also used for staff in terms of the number of staff, leadership positions, etc.

### ► *Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges*

- xxi. While there have been some gains with female students accessing predominately male dominated areas in TVET, the enrolment rate for females at technical and vocational colleges remains at a low 34%. Of the 34% of females enrolled at Fiji Technical and Vocational Centres, 60% actually stay on to complete their programmes with a gradual increase in the number of females graduating from male dominated courses.
- xxii. Male teachers dominate and make up a large percentage of leadership roles in Primary and Secondary schools as with 83.3% for secondary principals and 74.2% for primary head teachers. In contrast, females comprise only 16.7% for secondary school principals and 25.8% for primary head teachers. The majority of the Early Childhood Education teachers are women. Similar trends in disparity between males and females can also be seen at the 15 Fiji Technical and Vocational centres established since 2015.

**Graph 2:5 Number of Teachers, Head Teachers and Principals by Gender**



- xxiii. There are key challenges with young people’s access to information and awareness programs on sexual and reproductive health that are youth friendly and rights based. The Fiji Adolescent Health and Situational Analysis (2016) notes that adolescents less than 18 years can only access contraception with parental consent. This highlights the need for comprehensive sexuality education in schools. The adolescent birth rate recorded by the MHMS in 2017 was 16.1 per 1000 births.

xxiv. There is a challenge with the capacity of users of data to do analysis of gender statistics with the need for training, statistical appreciation seminars. MEHA is liaising with the Commonwealth of Learning to assist with capacity building to increase statistical capability of users.

## ► **Way Forward**

xxv. Develop a collaborative approach to ensure young people including adolescents have access to youth friendly services to assist them to make responsible choices to protect and safeguard their health, with particular reference to unplanned and early pregnancies, STI and HIV and sexual abuse.

xxvi. Ensure stronger collaboration and coordination amongst key stakeholders to ensure that more employment and education opportunities are created for young people especially those trained through TVET. This collaboration could also create opportunities for mentorship and leadership training for young people.

xxvii. Conduct more gender analysis and develop relevant interventions to address the gender data gaps.

xxviii. Facilitate the advancement of women and girls in science, technology and innovation as this is key to the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals particularly how to address the impact of climate change, how to increase food security, improve healthcare, manage limited freshwater resources and protect biodiversity. Girls and women are the greatest untapped population to become the next generations of STEM professionals. Specific steps are to:

- a) Promote the visibility of women with STEM qualifications, and in STEM careers, especially in leadership positions in governments, business enterprises, universities, and research organizations.
- b) Map, collect, analyse and publish statistics on the status of women and girls in STEM.
- c) Mainstream a gender perspectives in STEM related education policy frameworks and strategic plans.

## **B. WOMEN AND HEALTH**

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i. Fiji's 5 year NDP (2017-2021) highlights the significant progress the country has made in increasing overall life expectancy of Fijians and improving health outcomes. In line with Governments commitments to ensure all Fijians have access to quality health facilities and health care services including reproductive health, the NDP notes the substantial investments made in the construction and upgrading of hospitals, health centres and nursing stations. Medical services have been decentralised for convenience and easy access and there is an improvement in the doctor to patient ratio with increased funding for essential drugs and consumables. This is in line with the commitment made by the Fijian Government 5 years ago and reflected in Fiji's Beijing Plus 20 progress report.

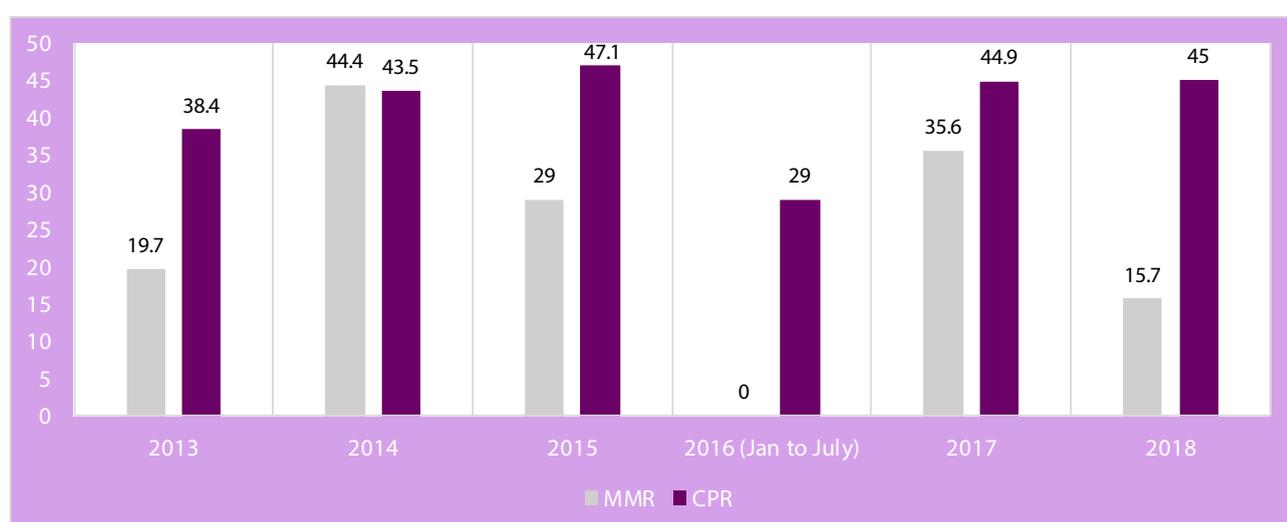
ii. Specific achievements include improved access to maternal health care services with the addition of new birthing units on Koro Island in the Eastern region, a region that experienced serious devastation during TC Winston. A Low Risk Maternity Unit expected to manage around 800 births per annum has been built in Makoi in the Central Division to ease increasing pressure at the National Referral Hospital as a result of rapid population growth. The Maternity Unit is also providing antenatal and postnatal clinics. Sub Divisional hospitals have opened up to serve pregnant mothers and to do deliveries with pregnant women now able to do their booking at their respective health centres within their geographical location. To ensure staff are equipped for these decentralised services, special trainings have been given to midwifery and obstetrics twice in a year. The MHMS recognises the need to have more space for the Maternity Unit to accommodate spouses and partners to be part of the whole antenatal clinic processes from booking to delivery.

iii. A new health centre is now available to serve the growing population at Nakasi, also in the Central Division and a new rural based hospital that includes maternity services is being constructed in a hard to reach remote

area of the Western division, Navosa Sub Divisional Hospital. Up until now, women from these highland areas would need to travel for hours to access health care in particular maternal health care. This is in line with Governments commitments towards lowering maternal mortality rates, a key priority outlined in the Maternal Health Strategic Plan for Fiji.

- iv. Expanded specific health services for women and girls have been provided over the last five years that include sexual and reproductive health services, mental, maternal health and HIV services.
- v. In particular, the introduction of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination into the school health programme, for the vaccination of young girls between the ages 11 -13yrs. Cervical cancer is the most common cause of cancer mortality among women in Fiji. The HPV vaccine is targeted to reduce cervical cancer in adult women. The coverage of the first dose of HPV was at 95% in 2014 to nearly 50% in 2017. This vaccination programme is currently ongoing and is a regular and continuous part of the school health programme, which is expected to reduce the rates of cervical cancer amongst women in the years to come.
- vi. The MHMS has completed national distribution of family planning commodities through public and clinical health systems and conducts annual training for family planning. There has been an increase in HIV, syphilis and hepatitis screening in antenatal clinics to allow for early diagnosis and timely management of positive cases. HIV services are available free of charge and antiretroviral treatment is available free for life. The MHMS has also taken measures to protect pregnant women from the zika virus infection during the period of outbreak in 2016 through the provision of medically treated mosquito nets.
- vii. The MHMS recorded a decrease in Maternal Mortality Rates (MMR) with improved access to family planning services reflected in the Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR). The MHMS National Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 noted the plateau of maternal deaths since 2000, fluctuating from 4 – 12 per annum. An analysis in the last 5 years has linked this to underlying causes from delayed presentation (which was often linked to poverty, low levels of education) and pre-existing cardio-vascular problems (including rheumatic heart disease) and other NCDs. The report noted nearly 99% of pregnant women had an antenatal visit but only 10.7% of pregnant women had an antenatal visit in their first trimester in 2013 reflecting the need to promote early ante-natal care, especially among high risk and hard to reach communities. The table below reflects the MMR rates for the last 5 years that reflect this fluctuation.

**Graph 2:6 Fiji - Maternal mortality (per 100,000 live births) and Contraceptive prevalence rate (per 1000 women of CBA)**



- viii. As indicated in the table, the CPR has increased from 38.4 in 2013 to 45 in 2018. Fiji has not yet implemented a nationally representative study on contraceptive prevalence, such as, for example, a DHS and as such data on unmet need and demand for contraception is not available for Fiji.

## ► *Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements*

### **Quality Education, Training and Life Long Learning for Women and Girls**

- ix. The MHMS recognises the importance of quality education essential in health services provision. Aside from the basic qualification attained for doctors and nurses and health staff to provide clinical services, ongoing education and training is necessary to ensure quality health services. An achievement in this area is the wide range of post graduate training opportunities and capacity building programmes that have been made available to support the technical expertise and career progression for the provision of services of health care workers especially in the field of obstetrics and gynaecology, family planning, birth preparedness, emergency management of obstetrics and newborn complications, HIV care, breastfeeding, child protection, gender mainstreaming, planning and budgeting, and responding to intimate partner violence and violence against women and children.
- x. The Community Health Worker (CHW) programme continues to be an integral part of health service delivery, empowering CHW, most of which are women (total of 1581 community health workers of which 85% are women), to encourage and facilitate referrals as well as establish recommended health seeking behaviour in the communities they serve. CHW provide basic health services support for people living in the communities, are advocates for wellness, and provide support assistance and encouragement to women in the community to access health service when needed. CHW provide a necessary service in hard to reach, rural communities encouraging ensure pregnant mothers attend antenatal clinics in a regular and timely manner, ensure mothers with new-born babies attend their maternal child health clinic follow ups, and immunizations, assist in defaulter tracing for immunization, TB contact tracing and other assistance as required. A key development in this area is the remuneration offered to CHW in the last three years on the condition that their reports are submitted on time. CHW receive regular training with the support of sub divisional ministry of Health Senior officials (Nurses and Doctors). Although the number of dispensaries have been increased across Fiji, CHW and Public Health Nurses are limited to prescribing medications and can only issue paracetamol.
- xi. In the Paediatric specialty, there has been nine (9) Master of Medicine Graduates in the last 15 years, 89% of these graduates are females. Three out of the nine graduates are currently holding Consultant positions. One female senior medical officer represented the MOHMS to the Infectious Disease Conference in South Africa. The Paediatric Services in collaboration with the Sangam School of Nursing will be introducing Post Graduate Training in Child Health For Nurses in the coming year, 2020.
- xii. As part of the progress of the MHMS in EAW a clinical guideline for the management of intimate partner violence and violence against women and girls has been developed. The MHMS is working with partner agencies for the development of an Inter Agency Guideline (IAG) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for managing women and girls and child victims of all forms of abuse, neglect and abandonment. A child protection policy has been developed to guide the work of the MHMS with a child protection training manual available to guide up skilling in this area.
- xiii. The MHMS has continued to support the strengthening of comprehensive sexuality education in schools or through community programme. The Adolescent Health Services programme provides peer education for school children and youths, as well as for those who are not in the school setting.
- xiv. Other important achievements particularly relevant to women and girls are various schemes targeting health which includes free public healthcare service across all divisional and sub divisional hospitals and health centers, free health check-up for school children, free medicine scheme, food voucher for rural pregnant mothers, support funds for victims of domestic violence, Care and Protection Allowance and Poverty Benefit Scheme, Parenthood Assistance Payment, and Barefoot College programs.
- xv. Governments commitments to improving the health and wellbeing of women and girls is reflected in the increased budget allocation for Family Health by more than 100% from 2015 to date (\$50,000/PA in 2015 to \$200,000/PA in 2016 onwards) The budget allocation towards HIV services which includes screening and testing

for all pregnant mothers, and follow up and treatment for those who are positive is \$350,000 per annum. This has led to the strengthening of human resources to support HIV services provision, increased efforts in the prevention of parent to child transmission of HIV.

- xvi. The Family Planning Allocation is \$21,000.00 to Fiji Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Services for the procurement of Family Planning commodities to supplement the assistance received from UNFPA for the procurement of supplies, technical support, and support for training of service providers.
- xvii. Divisional Hospitals and Subdivisional Operating budget includes the budget for the continuous provision of maternity services in every health facility in Fiji. Pregnant women who referred from maritime islands, for delivery and further care at the divisional hospitals are supported free of charge with transportation. The three Divisional Hospitals have facilities for mothers or guardians of children admitted to the hospitals that include shower rooms, rest lounges and meals.

## ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- xviii. Gender based violence has numerous health consequences for women and girls; physical, mental, behavioural, as well as sexual and reproductive. Access to medical care, psychosocial and other types of counselling services is hampered by:
  - a) Inconsistent levels of services for survivors
  - b) Limited access to safe shelters for most women in rural areas (shelters are primarily in urban settings)
  - c) Local authorities lack of skills to provide safe, survivor-centred interventions
  - d) Lack of confidentiality as VAW cases are routinely discussed without permission of the survivor
- v. The outbreak of diseases and the impact of natural disasters always require prioritisation and disbursement of funds and resources to help control the situations. In the past 5 years, TC Cyclone Winston presented a major challenge and required immediate response to the thousands of people impacted. Fiji also experienced a Meningococcal Infection (Men C) outbreak and response in 2018, a typhoid fever outbreak in 2013 and 2016 and a dengue fever outbreak in 2013 together with the detection of new diseases in 2015-2017 such as Zika virus infections, and Chikungunya infections.
- vi. The MHMS reported a notable increase in cancer incidence rates from 2010. The leading causes of cancer in females are cancers of the breast (41%) and cervix uteri (32%). Research by FWRM noted that many women are presenting themselves very late with cancer and as late as stage three cervical or breast cancer. This is linked to the stigma on relation to accessing sexual reproductive health services and also women's health seeking behavior for reproductive cancers.
- vii. There is a need for greater awareness on accessing reproductive health services, contraceptives, counselling screening for HIV and STIs for rural and remote communities.

## ► **Way Forward**

- viii. There is a need for greater utilisation and collection of administrative-based or alternative data sources to address gender data gaps. This includes a review of health data forms and information systems to be evidence based to inform the development of health policies and services that promote health and gender equity and a review of the Health Information Policy and Medical Records Policy to be aligned to the Information Act 2018, which looks at data accessibility, data confidentiality, and retrieval of data regardless of someone's background.
- ix. Women are affected uniquely by the strong link between NCDs and maternal and reproductive health. NCDs and sexual and reproductive health share important risk factors such as HPV, cervical and breast cancers. In this context, addressing the prevention, early detection and control of NCDs shall be considered as part of a comprehensive life course approach for women and adolescent girls. Health system integration implies expanding healthcare facilities and programs that have been built around women's reproductive health to

provide a platform for delivering new modalities of healthcare to address other issues including the prevention and control of NCDs. Thus, this integration of NCDs into existing programmatic areas offers an inroad to expand the scope of women and adolescent girls' health.

- x. Maternal and child health services are often the primary point of contact with most women – nearly 80% of pregnant women in LMICs have at least one antenatal visit – it is important that these services offer awareness raising, screening, early diagnosis and treatment where feasible and/or referral for selective NCDs such as cancers.
- xi. Ongoing training and capacity building for interns and newly engaged health workforce especially nurses and doctors will continue with the training platform improved to reflect the importance of capturing gender statistics since it will assist the program heads to identify and allocate adequate resources in awareness and public interventions.
- xii. Rights based training of health workers on gender equality and gender based violence to ensure that there is no discrimination against patients on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and gender identity, and to ensure confidential and non-judgmental assistance for survivors of sexual assault.
- xiii. Build rest stations for pregnant women in rural health centres to accommodate pregnant mothers travelling from remote and rural areas to allow them to stay in a safe space for at least one week after the delivery. This is similar to what has been constructed by MHMS in rural areas of Savusavu and Navosa.
- xiv. Support the introduction and strengthening of women and family friendly hospital practices, which encourage fathers' involvement in pre-natal, birthing, and post-natal activities, female friendly birthing procedures, and parents' ability to stay overnight with children who are ill.
- xv. Support the national reproductive health program to provide comprehensive and integrated reproductive health services and ensuring universal access to reproductive health care (including access to family planning) for women and girls across Fiji.
- xvi. Ensure that in cases of abortion, doctors are trained and sensitized to ensure that women give informed consent to terminations of pregnancy in accordance with the Crimes Decree and subject to the conditions set out in that Decree, and are adequately counseled on the choices they make.
- xvii. Strengthen awareness on food security and nutrition to ensure that quality and quantity of the maternal diet are an integral part of ANC provision.
- xviii. Strengthen and expand youth-friendly health information services at health centres in urban and rural areas.



## FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMA AND STEREO TYPES

### **A. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

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- i. The commitment of the Fijian Government to the elimination of violence against women is clearly articulated in the 20 year National Development Plan 2017 – 2036 with the 5 year National Development Plan 2017 – 2021, outlining the roles of different Government ministries towards achieving this goal. The NDP outlines

commitments and indicators for the education and health sector and the role of the police and coordinated referral networks to effectively respond to victims of sexual violence and intimate partner violence as well the role of Police and the Solicitor General's office in the review of legislation to EAW as per the commitments in the National Gender Policy. The Gender Policy outlines the required response to GBV that include the GBV Service Protocol to improve the provision of service to victims, the training that needs to be institutionalized to address this crucial issue, the need for coordination and institutional strengthening to improve responses to the issue, victim support, family and parenting support programs as well as counseling services for perpetrators.

- ii. Specifically for the Education sector, the NDP in articulating the goal for quality education for all, notes the need to "Increase awareness of, and capacity for education on social issues such as Drug Education, HIV/AIDS, Gender Based Violence, Respectful Relationships, Sex Education, NCD, Cyber Safety, and Mental Health at school" and "Increase number of teachers undergoing training on gender sensitization, equality and child protection including protective behaviors programs to detect any child sexual abuse".<sup>8</sup> These are the two strategies for addressing and creating more awareness in educational settings for gender based violence and sexual abuse. In addition to that, the Fiji National Employment Policy (2018) makes reference to promoting greater enforcement of sexual harassment policies in public and private sector.
- iii. Violence Against Women is increasingly recognized as a major health and development issue over the last 2 decades and has been estimated to have cost Fiji a total of \$740 million when compared to \$330 million in 2002. This estimate by the University of the South Pacific is based on a NZ model of quantifying the economic costs of domestic violence. While the relationship between violence and poverty is not linear, it is clear that violence against women contributes to poverty in both direct and indirect ways.<sup>9</sup>

## ► **Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements**

### **Resource Allocation and Institutional Processes**

- iv. Significant achievements have been made towards EAW in Fiji in the last 5 years. These include the launch of a 24-hour toll free Domestic Violence helpline in 2018, dedicated to helping women facing domestic violence to access services through dialling 1560 from any network around the country. The initiative was launched by the MWCPC in 2018 who also launched a Child Helpline toll free services number for children in need of immediate assistance in 2015. By 2018, more than 42000 calls had been received by the Child Helpline with children seeking assistance when being bullied, domestic violence and reporting parental negligence<sup>10</sup>. The 2018-2019 National Budget had a specific allocation of \$200,000 towards the DV helpline.
- v. In 2018, commitments by the Fijian Government to EAW through responsive policing and improving referral networks was boosted through the launch of Fiji's National Gender Based Violence (GBV) Service Delivery Protocol (SDP). The SDP provides for a multi-sectoral response to ensure that appropriate, timely, quality services are provided to the survivors of GBV and is a result of extensive consultation with existing service providers including civil society and faith-based organizations. A domestic violence helpline was established in 2017 to provide free 24 hour counselling to women.
- vi. Government also committed an allocation of \$100,000 in the 2018-2019 national budget towards a Domestic Violence Support Fund to temporary support domestic violence survivors.<sup>11</sup> The Fund is envisaged to provide temporary monetary relief to those survivors that made an order for urgent monetary relief where a Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO) has been made, while awaiting the processing of the monetary order. The fund is expected to assist many women who hold back from reporting DV or applying for a DVRO for fear of not being able to financially support themselves and their children.

8 <https://www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/15b0ba03-825e-47f7-bf69-094ad33004dd/5-Year---20-Year-NATIONAL-DEVELOPMENT-PLAN.aspx>

9 5th State CEDAW Report

10 <https://fijisun.com.fj/2018/10/27/child-helpline-receives-42000-calls/>

11 <https://www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/f228b9fe-ffcb-4237-a3f5-2157657a7ac9/Budget-Estimates.aspx>

- vii. The collaborative effort of Government and NGO's towards EAW has been further strengthened in the past 5 years with stronger interagency collaborative efforts through mechanisms such as the EAW Task Force. Government launched the National Service Delivery Protocol that outlines the responses required from social services, police, health, legal/justice providers. The protocol aims to ensure "the provision of appropriate, timely and quality services for survivors of gender-based violence together with accountability and justice for perpetrators".<sup>12</sup> The Protocol was launched in March, 2018 with the pilot training undertaken in July of the same year.
- viii. NGO's Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), Medical Services Pacific (MSP) and Empower Pacific have continued to strengthen the capacity of Government by providing post rape care, safe abortion counselling and VAWG counselling and by operating the DV Helpline and the Child Helpline as well as support other Government initiatives towards EAW.
- ix. From 2014 – 2017, the DoW implemented the Zero Tolerance Violence Free Community (ZTVFC) programme in communities in collaboration with stakeholders from government and NGOs. Sixty-four communities have been declared violence free as a result of this initiative. NGO partners have questioned the objectives and the impact of the programme with an independent evaluation to determine this and provide the necessary feedback to the DoW.
- x. Despite the criticisms, the ZTVFC programme provided an entry point for conducting Male Advocacy Training with gatekeepers in communities. The training also targeted males in government agencies and was conducted in partnership with the FWCC. Awareness was carried out throughout the four divisions in Fiji with the focus on building a pool of gender sensitized male community leaders and government personnel who are able to provide the 'right' information to other men within their groups of influence and to build a pool of male leaders and advocates who can be further trained to provide initial and basic counselling and work with male perpetrators.
- xi. In 2017 the MWCPA launched the Man-Up campaign with participation of government agencies, corporate organizations, banking institution and diplomatic missions. The campaign aimed to involve men in addressing the issue of gender based violence during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence and included a march through the capital city of Suva.
- xii. To reflect the strong collaboration between NGO and Government, MSP linked their services with government and assisted 637 sexual assault survivors from 2014-2018, in dedicated Post Rape Care clinics.<sup>13</sup> MSP provides a One Stop Shop (OSS) national Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) program for women and youth, inclusive of activities to prevent GBV and promote gender equality and social inclusion. The OSS program has continued to fill a gap in health care service provision and education in rural areas, peri-urban and urban areas in Fiji. The OSS provides:
  - a) Access to specialized, confidential clinical Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services for survivors of sexual assault and gender based violence.
  - b) Access to justice for survivors through ongoing patient advocacy, counselling, emergency shelter, legal aid and legal stakeholder capacity building.
  - c) Strengthen and build capacity through training, education, coordination, dialogue, rights awareness, service integration, capacity building to strengthening services and systems.
- xiii. NGO Empower Pacific continue to support government through the provision of professional counseling and social work services in the hospitals and communities. The NGO has 5 centers and opened a centre on one of the outer islands in 2019 with support from the European Union. Services provided include antenatal clinic health and screening program that looks after pregnant women's sexual and reproductive health and incorporates gender-based violence screening questions. The Health Screening Counselors identify cases and

12 <http://www.mwcpa.gov.fj/images/stories/Files/2018/Fiji%20National%20Service%20Delivery%20Protocol%20for%20Responding%20to%20Cases%20of%20Gender%20Based%20Violence.pdf>

13 Medical Services Pacific Annual Report 2018

refers them for professional counseling if they wish or for further social work support. Cases of intimate partner violence, domestic violence including sexual violence and marital rape are referred for social work intervention as the need is identified and once the client is willing to report the abuse, assistance is provided for the filing of a DVRO with relevant support if children are involved. Counselors and social workers have been conducting case management with the DSW, Fiji Police Force and the Legal Aid Commission.

- xiv. An analysis of GBV cases seen at Empower Pacific Counseling Centres in Lautoka and Suva since 2015 revealed that a majority of referrals come from the hospital, followed by referrals from communities and the lowest number of cases seen are from internal referrals. This reveals the strength of interagency collaboration towards EVAW. As expected over 95% of GBV cases are women with a small percentage of males.
- xv. To enable women survivors of violence to access legal services, the Legal Aid Commission has increased its presence in the public domain. Since 2014, a total of 22 Legal Aid Commission offices (18 across Fiji) are open to offer assistance to the public. For increased efficiency, the Commission has a 1-day approval policy as compared to a week approval previously. Changes in the eligibility criteria opens legal services to a wider range of audience.
- xvi. The Judiciary and the Legal Aid Commission also work together to ensure that services are provided to people in the outer and remote islands with the Judicial Department making provisions for Island Court Sittings. The cost of this service is absorbed by the Judicial Department while human resources are provided by the Legal Aid Commission through 18 centres across Fiji.

## Police Response

- xvii. In direct response to increasing cases of human trafficking locally and internationally, the Fiji Police Force established a Human Trafficking Unit in November 2018, under the Criminal Investigations Department. Since its establishment, the unit has so far registered a total of 8 cases of human trafficking (2 girls under 15 years & 6 women (21-50yrs of age).
- xviii. Police have strengthened and enforced the serving of DVRO to all accused with breaches of DVRO immediately taken in for further charges/remand by police officers. The police recorded a total of 878 DVRO breaches from 2014 - 2018 reflecting the need for stronger action in this area to protect women and girls.
- xix. The Fiji Police Force recorded a total of 591 domestic violence cases against women and children in 2018 a decrease of 35% from the number of cases recorded in 2017.

**Table 2:7 Domestic Violence Cases (2015 - 2018)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>DV Cases</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sept</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2015</b>	Women	36	27	26	31	22	25	40	31	30	26	32	42	368
	Children	2	7	9	2	9	4	2	2	1	10	11	10	69
<b>2016</b>	Women	54	47	36	48	37	24	22	32	81	99	130	42	652
	Children	8	6	12	7	4	4	3	5	12	36	30	4	131
<b>2017</b>	Women	49	68	80	64	70	61	74	56	45	71	65	74	777
	Children	6	20	14	6	7	10	8	10	11	13	11	15	131
<b>2018</b>	Women	42	45	13	35	50	39	47	52	44	16	30	67	480
	Children	4	11	1	4	21	14	16	11	7	5	6	11	111

*(Source: Fiji Police Force)*

- xx. To accommodate victims of violence awaiting medical examination, the Police Child Abuse & Sexual Offences Unit have created a safe space for women and girls at the main Police Command & Coordinating Centre in the capital city, Suva.

- xxi. Awareness on crime against women and children reaching out to 175 people from 2017 – 2018. 24 hour turnaround time on mandatory reporting in which the FPF immediately reports any case of violence for children 18 years and below to the Ministry of Social Welfare within 24 hours and the cases are also dealt with immediately.

## **Women Facing Multiple Forms of Discrimination**

- xxii. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act was passed by Parliament in 2018 following the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2017. The legislation covers issues of discrimination on the basis of disability and rights of persons with disabilities and is to be adopted at all levels of society and the education system. There is also an enforcement component if there are discriminatory acts for a person with disabilities. The Fiji National Council for the Disabled Persons is a focal point for the area of disability in Government and is governed by the FNCDP Act 1994 that has provisions for the government to give grants to the institution for the operation of the institution. Government is financially supporting 5,157 recipients through the Disability Allowance Program.
- xxiii. In partnership with Pacific Disability Forum and funded by UN Women Multi country office and DFAT, Fiji Disable Peoples Federation with its affiliates put together a Toolkit on Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities in Fiji. This toolkit guides the work carried out by DPO's when they conduct community awareness on EAW. The toolkit has every day case studies that women with disabilities face at home, in their communities and at work.
- xxiv. NGO FemLink Pacific works with the diverse group of women constituents by amplifying their voices through radio, media and publications on issues such as ending violence against women and girls etc. FemLink also works with LGBTQI and persons living with disabilities.
- xxv. The University of the South Pacific has set up a Disability Resource Centre at USP to cater for students with special needs.
- xxvi. For older women, there is an added level of hardship a trend with the abandonment of old people by their children and relatives resulting in a growing waiting list of applicants who have been referred or applied to be accommodated in one of the three State homes. As at July 2017, a total of 130 older people were recorded as residents of the 3 state owned State Homes, with 52% women compared to 48% of men. The main objective of these Homes was to create a space to provide institutional care to those that were abandoned and neglected by their families and reflects the slightly higher number of older women left in this manner. Some of these cases do not fall under the category of old persons but rather under a form of physical or mental disability.

## **Training & Awareness**

- xxvii. One of the most common strategies used by government and NGOs to prevent violence against women and girls is community training to create awareness and change attitudes and behaviour. In order to respond to the high rates of violence reported within the education system, the Fiji Police Force Child Abuse & Sexual Offences Unit conduct ongoing school awareness programmes discussing issues regarding sexual violence. Medical Services Pacific "CHESS" program also targets primary and secondary school students. A report by the National Substance Abuse Advisory Council (2018) revealed that there were 20,462 cases of violence in schools in 2017.
- xxviii. The MWCPA also conduct training and awareness on gender based violence at community level, and schools. Since 2014 a total of 42 training sessions have been conducted by the Ministry reaching 1688 people (818 male and 870 female).<sup>14</sup>
- xxix. The Fiji Police Force Community Policing programme have taken a preventative approach towards curbing

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<sup>14</sup> Department for Women- Internal Data 2018

crime and have also introduced a number of initiatives in schools, communities and with sporting bodies to connect and communicate with specific target groups. The Programme is facilitated in all the four divisions with Community Policing Officers in the divisions and over the past five years more than 10,000 awareness programmes were carried out targeting violence against women & children and other related offences. A key output of this community policing is the establishment of 84 Crime Prevention Committees all around the country.

- xxx. The Fiji Police Force also conduct an ongoing Edutainment Program combining entertainment with education. In some situations, dance is incorporated as part of the entertainment whilst awareness messages called “SPRINKLERS” are sprinkled in between breaks. This program was implemented in many villages around the country particularly Kadavu, Rotuma, Sigatoka and maritime villages. The Fiji Police Force has also integrated Gender training into professional development training at the Fiji Police Academy.
- xxxi. As part of their ongoing corporate social responsibility, Vodafone ATH Foundation are working with the Fiji Police to encourage the reporting of crime and violence in their communities through a free text and phone service. M-safe the SMS channel aspires to create a safer, secure and smarter community and M-speak up is the voice channel.

### ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- xxxii. Sexual Harassment in the workplace remains an issue, a follow-up study on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in 2016, revealed that one in five women face sexual harassment in the workplace with the high incidences in the food, beverage and hospitality in the western division. The Employment Relations Promulgation of 2007 explicitly provides that employers are to develop and maintain a policy to prevent sexual harassment at workplace, the follow up research found that of the total women interviewed, 22% said that their employer does not have a policy and a further 16 % claimed that they did not know if there was a policy or not in their workplace.<sup>15</sup>
- xxxiii. Despite continuous work undertaken by various services providers, there has been under or non-reporting of cases on gender based violence from families and communities. This has been attributed in part to the family relationships between perpetrators and victims (as demonstrated in most rape and sexual cases involves person(s) from their own family or know cycles.<sup>16</sup> An NGO report<sup>17</sup> highlighted that women applying for restraining order cases in the family division of the High Court quadrupled from 97 applications in 2012 to 392 cases in 2016. The High Court rejected more Restraining Order applications than it granted in 2016 (404 not granted and 251 granted). Over the last 5 years, the Family Court has on average rejected more Restraining Order applications than it has granted.
- xxxiv. Police have also identified that the relationships between Police Officers and perpetrators of violence as a contributing factor to Police Officers not pursuing the cases and laying charges in accordance with the No Drop policy.<sup>18</sup>
- xxxv. While legislations and policies are in place there is a need to educate law enforcement agencies on the existence of policies and to ensure implementation.
- xxxvi. Women/girls with disabilities in rural/maritime communities need information on Access to Justice Services, educational advances, and other support available to enable them to access these services.
- xxxvii. Women/girls with disabilities face multiple levels of discrimination, particularly with access to information and services on their SRH. The lack of awareness on menstrual health and access to sanitary pads leaves them in a

15 [http://www.fwrm.org.fj/images/fwrm2017/publications/general/National\\_Employment\\_Policy\\_Submission.pdf](http://www.fwrm.org.fj/images/fwrm2017/publications/general/National_Employment_Policy_Submission.pdf)

16 Fiji Police Force response

17 The Balancing the Scale: Improving Fijian women access to Justice (FWRM: 2017; pg. 40.)

18 Submission by Fiji Police Force to BPFA plus 25 process

place of fear and insecurity. With limited support in maternity hospitals to cater for their specific needs which place them at additional risk of complications.

xxxviii. There is lack of data and evidence on violence experienced by specific groups of women facing multiple forms of discrimination with a lack of adequate resources in terms of both infrastructure and capacity of formal justice sector agencies to ensure that women living with disabilities can have improved access to justice.

xxxix. There is a lack of available data disaggregated from an intersectional and interlinked perspective with no recognition of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE).

## ► **Way Forward**

- xl. Develop, cost, finalize and implement a comprehensive EAW National Action Plan/Framework.
- xli. Ensure that forensic examinations are accessible, appropriate and free, and that medical staff have the skills to conduct such examinations.
- xlii. Complete an assessment of the successes and challenges in the legal system's response that results in recommendations for improvements and an advocacy strategy on VAW/G. Clarify and/or review the following laws, regulations and procedures:
  - a) Family Law Act 2003
  - b) National Policy on Sexual Harassment in the workplace 2008
  - c) Crimes Act\* 2009
  - d) Domestic Violence Act\* 2009
- xliii. Ensure clear provisions in national legislation on the establishment of effective systems for identification, reporting and referral of cases of VAW/G, especially for vulnerable groups.
- xliv. Adopt a framework for mediation or alternative dispute resolution that best serves the needs, and respects the integrity, of survivors of VAW/G.
- xlv. Provide training to judicial and law enforcement officers to ensure that cases of violence against women and girls, including domestic and sexual violence, are effectively prosecuted and not systematically diverted to mediation.
- xlvi. Develop and implement a multi-sectoral coordinated primary prevention strategy targeting key actors and settings for positive change in perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, practices and social norms concerning VAW/G particularly targeting women in disability groups and rural areas.
- xlvii. Target education activities to adults and youth that challenge traditional gender norms and practices and unequal gender relationships, discrimination and power imbalances.
- xlviii. Develop a policy on the strategic use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for awareness raising and prevention of VAW/G.
- xlix. Use ICT, including social media, to disseminate information about VAW/G prevention and response protocols and programs.
- l. Establish baseline data to identify gaps among service providers at local levels (including state and non-state actors) to identify blockages in the referral system, and the time of response from service providers so women seeking help are responded to efficiently and in a timely manner.

- li. Strengthen the collaboration of service providers including all stakeholders in the implementation of legislative frameworks in particular relation to intimate partner violence, including sexual violence and marital rape.
- lii. Stronger commitment is required for the implementation of the 'No Drop Policy' by the Fiji Police Force with accountability mechanisms put in place to safeguard against possible breaches. Introduce the 'No Drop Policy' during in house training sessions for Fiji Police to ensure a widespread understanding of the provisions under the policy and the implementation mechanisms.
- liii. Ensure legislation is in place to criminalize sexual harassment with strict penalties with considerations to address indecently annoying any person as an offence under the law.
- liv. Promote disaggregated data collection on VAW/G in all relevant Ministries and develop a data management system including service delivery process tracking, integrated with the mobile application / S2F (Start to Finish Service Delivery Tracker) "if proven feasible" for service providers (applications, follow up) and beneficiaries (status, approval etc).
- lv. Implement the roll out of the Service Delivery Protocol for responding to cases of gender based violence.
- lvi. Improve access to justice for women and girls with disabilities by amending relevant laws and policies and providing training to justice system actors. Strengthen the commitments by leaders to tackle barriers faced by persons with disabilities with specific measures to address the discrimination they experience including ensuring access to public transportation for women with disabilities.
- lvii. Conduct more research on violence against specific groups of women facing multiple forms of discrimination. This is to include working beyond the silos of violence and ensuring a multiple intersectional approach/ perspective is taken on and noting Disability and LGBT groups.
- lviii. Engage Men and Boys (Masculine Transformation) in the fight to EVAWG centered around women's experiences.
- lix. Complete the WHO Prevalence Survey on VAW/G.

## **B. WOMEN AND THE MEDIA**

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- i. The National Gender Policy outlines the direction for Women and the Media which include:
  - a) Support for women-led media initiatives, including community radio, television and print media and consider financial support for the supply and importation of media equipment.
  - b) An allocation of at least 30% of Public Service Broadcasting funding for the promotion of CEDAW and gender equality projects and requiring all Public Service Broadcasting to have a gender policy and gender codes.
  - c) Training and competence of all government media personnel on CEDAW, gender equity and women's empowerment, conducted by the Ministry of Information and or the Ministry of Women.
  - d) Review the Media Industry Development Decree from a gender perspective and in particular regular reviews of the Codes of Conduct in the Media Industry Development Decree 2009 to incorporate a gender perspective of media ethics in Fiji.
  - e) Conduct annual qualitative and quantitative gender audits by the Ministry of Information of content produced by government information networks using the Global Media Monitoring Guidelines, and support other media organisations in the conduct of similar audits for other media.
  - f) Consult with Information Communications Technology specialists from women's media organisations when any reform is contemplated in relation to the regulation of ICT.

## ► **Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements**

- ii. The explicit commitment to the area of Women and Media in the National Gender Policy (2014) is an achievement gained during the last five years.
- iii. NGO Femlink Pacific has continued to consistently work in this space operating as a community media broadcaster, promoting the voices of women in their communities and highlighting issues that are often ignored or invisible in local commercial media. FemLink Pacific uses community radio FemTALK 89FM, and a bi monthly e-Bulletin to amplify rural women's voices and draw attention to their issues. Through organised rural women's networks, FemLink creates awareness on global development commitments and empowers women to situate their everyday issues within the commitments made by Government to CEDAW & the Beijing Declaration and UNSCR 1325 with reference to government's commitments. As a result of ongoing advocacy using the media, a number of women's groups in rural locations have been able to secure government assistance for daily needs such as access to water, safety and other issues. FemLink also provides training to media personnel to encourage the creation and use of balanced and diverse images of women and girls in media. As a feminist community media NGO FemLink Pacific is governed by the Broadcast Licence, Regulation of National Spectrum Act 2009 (Section 5 and Section 4), Telecommunications Act (2008) and the Media Industry Development Act 2010.
- iv. To protect women and girls from online exploitation across any electronic communication including but not limited to online mainstream media channels and websites, the Online Safety Act, was passed in 2018. Although there is no mention of gender and women in the Online Safety Act, the bill was introduced in response to the high levels of sexual exploitation of women and girls online. Government allocated 300,000 FJD in the 2018-2019 National Budget for the setup of the Online Safety Commission and appointed a law graduate as the Commissioner to administer the Act.<sup>19</sup> In January 2019 the Act was declared as an entity in a government gazette along with the complaint form.<sup>20</sup> In addition to this, the Fiji Police Force also has a Cyber Crime Unit, which also investigates complaints related to online sexual harassment, online stalking and non-consensual sharing of intimate images. For the past five years, the unit recorded 19 cases, mostly obscene publication of women & girls from as young as 9 years old.
- v. A new magazine specifically focused on women's empowerment was launched in 2018. I am Women, publishes once a month and highlights the achievements of ordinary women. The magazine also has a strong social media presence with over 1000 followers.
- vi. Other NGO's such as the FWCC, FWRM and Diverse Voices for Action and Equality (DIVA) have continued to advocate strongly for equal rights and opportunities and EVAWG through the media, challenging social norms and discriminatory statements made in public forums and by public figures. DIVA works for full gender equality, and toward feminist transformative futures. The National Council of Women used the media during the build up to the 2018 elections to promote women in politics. Faith Based Organisation House of Sarah has also used media advertising to communicate key messages of non-violence to the public.

### **Improved Access to ICT**

- vii. Achievements in the area of improved access to ICT include the provision of free and unlimited wireless internet by Government in various locations in the main towns of Fiji providing access to women and men in rural areas. Government has also provided computers to schools to assist children in their learning.
- viii. As a result of improved ICT services, Social Welfare clients are now able to receive their allowances through banks via e-transfers. This has made access to money much more convenient as in the past, disbursements were made using voucher books that can only be cashed in specific places and recipients were required to pay extra money to travel from their villages to urban centres to cash their voucher.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.economy.gov.fj/images/phocadownload/20182019%20Budget%20Estimates.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/6f280336-7cab-42ee-829b-9e3b5ad10907/LN-2-3--Online-Safety-Regulations-2019---Declarat.aspx>

- ix. The Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) has been given power under the Media Industry Development Act (2010) to monitor the activities of media industries. The legislation sets the framework and the guiding principles towards its mandate and provides MIDA with the authority to scrutinise the content of media so that it does not create communal discord and against national interest, protects the rights of minorities and monitors the media code of ethics and practice. Under the Act, media organisations “shall avoid discriminatory or denigrating references to people’s gender, ethnicity, colour, religion, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental disability or illness, or age.” The Act also outlines the responsibility of the media in reporting cases of sexual violence and protects the identity of children in such cases.
- x. Through the provision of grants to vocational training institutions, these institutions have been able to provide computer classes NWM has been able to support computer classes targeting widows and young women with the completion of courses providing them with certificates that support them when seeking employment opportunities.
- xi. The NWM has continued to provide ongoing support to organizations such as FEMLINK Pacific who provide access to the media.

### ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- xii. According to the Global Media Monitoring National report, 2015 women in Fiji are dramatically under-represented in the news with the overall presence at 16% which is consistent with the findings from Fiji GMMP 2010. The report noted that men outnumbered women as newsmakers in every major news topic and news stories on gender inequality were almost non-existent. This highlights a major challenge in this area with the need for a more consistent investment with strategic interventions on who is making the news. The media plays a significant role in influencing public opinion and can be used more strategically and consistently to highlight key messages of gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- xiii. The introduction of legislation to govern media activities and political advertising (Electoral Act 2014) has been seen as a challenge for women’s organisations in the build up to the elections as it restricted broadcasts or advertising on behalf of a candidate or political party for election to a political office.
- xiv. Even though there are regulations in place to govern the activities of the Media industry with a code of ethics and practice, gender discriminatory comments and views are still being published and shared on social media with the challenge of ongoing consistent media monitoring an issue.
- xv. Privately owned media publications e.g. I AM Woman magazine, seek to give women’s empowerment voice and visibility in the media landscape but are often limited by financial constraints and circulation of the product is therefore limited to certain centres.
- xvi. Fiji has provisions for strategies and measures within existing legislation and policies that promote a gender-balanced media however; there is a lack of information and reported evidence on its implementation and a lack of information; analysis and data, to better inform strategies on how to improve women’s representation and portrayal in the media.
- xvii. Based on global experience, the Online Safety Act presents some challenges with the interpretation of ‘harm’ created from online posts and the scope and powers and discretion of the Commission in interpreting ‘harm’ when receiving, assessing and investigating complaints.

### ► **Way Forward**

- xviii. Develop and adapt a comprehensive ICT policy with a focus on challenging traditional gender stereotypes to empower and promote women to decision-making positions.

- xix. Engage the private sector and social media in sectoral policy formulation and implementation in order to promote positive role models for women in politics, leadership roles and business by changing perceptions and attitudes regarding women's capacity to be leaders. Facilitate strategic networking opportunities for women leaders at both national and sub-national level, through the use of communication technology and social media. Ensure that women's voices are heard and reflected in policy formulation through the use of social media.
- xx. ICT and information dissemination strategies for economic empowerment programs for women in rural areas.
- xxi. Explore opportunities for using information and communication technology (ICT) among women framers to promote green micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) and increase access to climate relevant information.
- xxii. Regular and systematic monitoring of women's representation in the media to identify how women are being portrayed in the media and to inform targeted interventions in this area.
- xxiii. Clearly demarcate the role and responsibilities of the Online Safety Commission and the Cyber Crime Unit and ensure both are adequately resourced to respond to violence against women and girls facilitated by technology.
- xxiv. Establish partnerships between NWM and privately owned media networks that promote gender equality and women's empowerment to ensure key messages in these publications reach both urban and rural populations.
- xxv. Strengthen the provisions in current legislation that support the growth of community media and in particular radio due to its accessibility and reach to listeners.
- xxvi. Ensure equal representation in the composition of the Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA), where at least one of the five members should represent the interests of women in Fiji.
- xxvii. Organisations like MIDA and the Online Safety Commission to collate more data and provide more information on their online portals.
- xxviii. CSO and Government Taskforce to develop ICT literacy programmes for rural and elderly women and gather sex disaggregated data on connectivity for baseline.
- xxix. Media personnel to undergo ongoing training on Women and the Media and the commitments by Government to gender equality and how this needs to be reflected in the media.

## C. THE GIRL CHILD

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- i. The 2017 Population and Housing Census revealed that 37.7% of the total population falls under the age of 0-19 years old with 48.7% female. Fiji is reported as having achieved gender parity at primary level in line with MDG 3.A, and data indicate that the country is making good progress towards achieving SDG 4.1 with regard to primary education.<sup>21</sup> Girls seem to be doing better than boys in Fiji with lower survival rates in secondary school and a slight gender disparity in favour of girls at the secondary school level. Fiji ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1993 with the best interest of the child, child rights and child protection provided for in a number of laws i.e. the Juveniles Act 1974 (as amended in 1997), the Child Welfare Decree 2010, the Domestic Violence Decree 2009, the Family Law Act 2003 and the Human Rights Commission Decree 2009.
- ii. As outlined in previous sections, sexual abuse of women and girls is significant in Fiji with 16 percent of women

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21 [https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/03\\_Situation\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Children\\_Fiji.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/03_Situation_Analysis_of_Children_Fiji.pdf)

experiencing child sexual abuse under the age of 15 as detailed in a 2013 report by the FWCC. The research identified 45% of the most common perpetrators of child sexual abuse were male family members, followed by strangers (15%) male family friends (13%) stepfathers (7%) and female family members (4%). Concluding Comments from the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted grave concerns about the practice of selling their daughters into marriage, the exploitation of children in illegal brothels, local hotels and rural and urban locations and the traditional practice of sending children to live with relatives or families in larger cities, where they were at risk of abuse or human trafficking. A 2010 study conducted by ILO found that, of the 500 working children surveyed, one in five (109) were engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, with some starting sex work as early as 10 years old.

## ► **Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements**

- iii. In line with Governments overarching commitment to eliminate violence against women and children through responsive policing and coordinated referral networks, a Child Helpline was established by MWCPA in 2015. The first for the Pacific, the Helpline operates through a partnership between the MWCPA, Medical Services Pacific and three telecommunications companies. By October 2018, more than 42,000 calls had been received with issues such as domestic violence, parental negligence and being bullied at the top of the list.<sup>22</sup> In between January – August 2015, 612 cases of child abuse were reported to the Permanent Secretary for the MWCPA as required by the Child Welfare Act, with the most prevalent issues being sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy, neglect and physical abuse. This is a significant increase from the 312 cases reported in 2013 and has been attributed to the increased training on Act and inter-agency procedures to police, teachers and health workers.<sup>23</sup>
- iv. For specifically children, including the girl child, In 2016/2017 Annual Report<sup>24</sup>, MWCPA reported that there has been 52-child protection training of trainer's community awareness trainings as well as efforts to maintain continued coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child through the National Coordinating Committees and Inter Agency Meetings (NCCC and IAC); With 2016/2017, a total of 36 meetings were conducted across 4 divisions. In addition to that, over 2016 and 2017 reporting period the ministry strengthened its work on Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE).
- v. Government has gradually increased the budget allocation for the Child Services Unit with the past 5 years increasing from 2.0m in 2015 to 3.2 million in 2016. The increase in budget has supported the work towards the implementation of the Child Welfare Decree 2010, Child Protection in Emergency training and awareness and other key work including a review of adoption processes by the Child Services Unit.
- vi. In the last five years, a large number of agencies [both state, CSO, International and Regional], media, including Fiji Police through its various work units like Community Policing, Sexual Offences Unit, etc. have been involved in advocacy and awareness work. The Fiji Police Force through its DUAVATA Community Policing programme take a preventative approach towards curbing crime. The ongoing Crime Stoppers Scholastic Programme was launched in more than 53 schools for the past five years. The Scholastic Program is a call for students to step up and show everyone they care about creating a safe and secure environment including the protection of young girls in schools. The Child Services Unit at Yearly event of the Department of Social Welfare in providing Awareness on Protection Care And Neglect.
- vii. Ongoing work by NGO's include the establishment of a Child Protection Policy and Child Safeguarding Policy by Save The Children Fund and the Grow Inspire Relate Lead and Succeed [GIRLS] program run by FWRM run to empower young women to assert themselves to stand up and echo their voice, know their rights and ready to lead. The GIRLS program helps create a safe space for the young girls to be heard and creating interventions in their own environment. Through the program young girls have highlighted ongoing issues of abuse experienced in schools and in public places from boys. The girls have used the program to highlight the

22 <https://fijisun.com.fj/2018/10/27/child-helpline-receives-42000-calls/>

23 [https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/03\\_Situation\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Children\\_Fiji.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/03_Situation_Analysis_of_Children_Fiji.pdf)

24 [http://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MOWCPA\\_AR2016-2017\\_final-approved\\_web.pdf](http://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MOWCPA_AR2016-2017_final-approved_web.pdf)

need for friendly teaching environments free from bullying of any sort.

### ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- viii. Challenges remain with the lack of research on issues such as teenage pregnancy, access and awareness of contraceptives amongst young girls, children who live with relatives, the role of information technology in influencing adolescent girl's choices and the ability of young women to negotiate their relationships. Key gaps also are in understanding key influencers in young women's lives and in particular the role of Faith Based Organisations and churches in influencing behavior.

### ► **Way Forward**

- ix. The National Coordination Committee on Children (NCCC) to have a representative of the girl child, as part of the council. The NCCC to engage more with child-centered programmes around the country.
- x. The NCCC to work together to develop a holistic approach to improve adolescent reproductive health awareness to tackle the issue of teenage pregnancy.
- xi. Ministry of Education to accelerate integration of social issues such as violence against women and girls within the school curriculum and ensure all school professionals go through gender sensitization training as per the strategies stated under the National Development Plan (2017,pp.36).
- xii. Media to promote and raise awareness on child rights and child abuse.
- xiii. Government to support the work of all Faith Based Organizations and utilize existing platforms to highlight issues and raise awareness on the rights and responsibilities of a girl child.
- xiv. Increase the number of rehabilitation centres available to cater for the needs of the girl child.



## PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

### **A. WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING**

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- i. Fiji's NDP 2017 – 2021 clearly outlines the strategies to be employed across Government to increase women's representation at all levels of government and civil society. These include the introduction of women's empowerment programmes in rural areas through leadership and decision making training, promoting girls training and participation in traditional male occupations and to place more focus on women's leadership training, sponsorship and special assignments, mentoring and coaching. The National Gender Policy refers to the commitment to review electoral laws through the Electoral Commission to ensure women have equal access to political leadership and the identification of cultural, economic and institutional barriers to the political leadership of women in Fiji.

### ► **Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements**

- ii. There have been considerable gains in women's participation in political leadership in Fiji since Fiji's Beijing Plus 20 Progress report, in 2014. The report revealed slow progress in this area with only 1 female Cabinet

Minister and 2 Permanent Secretaries at the time of the report. Following the September 2014 general election, women's representation in parliament increased to 16% with a current representation of 20% following the 2018 general elections. This is the largest number of women in the House of Representatives and reflects Fiji's progress towards gender equality in political participation. Fifty percent of the women in the House are in Government, with the remaining 50% Members of the Opposition. There are 3 women Ministers and 2 Assistant Ministers.

- iii. The increase in women's representation could be attributed to focused attention in this area by the Office of Parliament that was initially driven by the first female Speaker of Parliament who was sworn in in 2014. The late Honourable Speaker conducted consultations in communities to encourage women to aspire to be politicians or parliamentarians. She advocated for women both internationally and nationally to join national and local government highlighting the potential for women to play a positive role in particular, at national government level.
- iv. In 2016 the Office of Parliament hosted the first ever Women's Parliament as part of an ongoing commitment to promote the participation of women in politics. The objectives of the Women's Parliament Fiji was to encourage women to be confident to stand for elections; expose women to the realities of policy-making and parliamentary engagement; and empower women to secure representational change. A total of 50 women from various backgrounds across Fiji participated in the event. The event offered an opportunity for aspiring women leaders to learn about Parliament, be briefed on important development issues, and build their policy skills. The 3-day event was held at the Fiji Parliament complex and speakers were invited from the various Government ministries and organisations. The final day consisted of a mock Parliament session.
- v. Women from different ethnic, social, religious and professional background in Fiji were invited to express their interest to be part of the event with overall, majority of the participants responding positively to the programme. Many noted a desire or a few more days in the programme to understand the procedures and functions of Parliament and how to engage in Parliamentary debates. One of the participants in the Women's Parliament is now the Opposition Whip in the House of Representatives.
- vi. Directly related to this and the work of the Fijian Parliament is the gender mainstreaming strategy used by the Fijian Parliament towards progressing the SDGs, in particular Goal 5 – 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.' The Parliament's Standing Orders require a gender-based analysis to be used by parliamentary committees when scrutinising legislation or undertaking their oversight functions.
- vii. The Office of the Speaker of Parliament initiated the Gender Group which is made up of all Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons of the six Parliament Standing Committees. This is to ensure that gender considerations are applied to all committee works and reflected in the Committee reports tabled in Parliament.
- viii. To support this work, a practical toolkit to guide Members of Parliament ('MPs') in scrutinising legislation from a gender perspective, in the day-to-day work of a Parliamentarian has been developed. The toolkit also provides guidance to committee staff assisting the Parliament's Standing Committees during the legislative process. The toolkit was developed by the Fijian Parliament with the assistance of the UNDP Fiji Parliament Support Project ('UNDP FPSP').
- ix. The Fijian Parliament through the Research and Library Services team provide budget briefings of the national budget and conduct gender analysis on budget allocations for the various Heads in the Budget Estimates. Furthermore, the Fijian Parliament through the Parliamentary Committees will be effectively engaging in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in all areas of committee work. Currently Standing Committees are mandated by Standing Order 110(2) to provide that where a committee conducts an activity, the committee shall ensure that full consideration will be given to the principle of gender equality so as to ensure that all matters are considered with regard to the impact and benefit on both men and women equally.
- x. The Honourable Speaker and Members of Parliament (both male and female) attend various Parliamentary forums, workshops and conventions that focus on women Parliamentarians and women in politics.

- xi. The Fijian Parliament has produced various literature such as a report on the Overview of the Fiji Parliament 2014-2018 which contained gender statistics on public participation in Committee work. During the course of the Parliament term 2014-2018, over 2,600 individuals have appeared before the Standing Committees to provide their views on Bills, annual reports, petitions, and international treaties and conventions under consideration by the Committees. These have included Government officials, academics, and representatives from NGOs, private sector and faith-based organisations, political parties as well as private citizens. It is worthwhile to note that only around 34 percent of those who appeared before the Standing Committees were women with further work being required to ensure that public participation in the work of Parliament is gender balanced.

### Promotion of Women's Participation:

- xii. The MWCPA has been actively promoting women's leadership through conducting Leadership Training activities. Since 2014, close to 200 women including young women between the ages of 18 – 35 and Chiefly Women Leaders from across the country have been trained through this initiative, which also recognizes good leadership in communities and organizations. The MWCPA facilitates the selection of nominees for the recognition awards.
- xiii. NGO's have also conducted extensive work to advocate for women's political participation and for women's leadership at all levels. Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) has been advocating for women's political participation as part of the Fiji Women's Forum and developed a voting guide to provide young women with a step-by-step guide to making their voice count in the 2018 general elections. The "My Guide to Voting booklets" were distributed by FWRM and DIVA for Equality through the Fiji Young Women's Forum. NGO Viseisei Sai Health Centre has been conducting mentoring and capacity building programmes for young mothers in which has resulted in young mothers finding employment. FemLink Pacific works with minority and young women in creating spaces allowing their participation and representation at forums including divisional and national level. These have resulted members of the organisation attaining different positions of leadership including parliamentary positions in current government, local government, and CSO and community level forums.
- xiv. Civil Service Reforms have seen significant changes in women's leadership through the Open Merit and Recruitment Selection (OMRS) criteria which is now used by all Government ministries and departments during recruitment processes. As a result, women now hold 30 percent of the 55 diplomatic posts in 18 missions located in 16 countries and 5 Permanent Secretary positions out of the 25 Permanent Secretary positions in Government. The highest percentage of women in leadership positions in the machinery of government are in the Ministry of Industries, Trade & Tourism, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defence, the Office of the President and the Ministry of Sugar with over 50% of leadership positions held by women. The lowest representation of women leaders are in the Ministry of iTaukei (Indigenous Affairs), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Forestry. The table below reflects the leadership position by gender by Government Ministry.

**Table 2:8 Leadership Position by Gender at Government Ministries**

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Ministry of Civil Service	60%	<b>40%</b>
Ministry of Defence	50%	<b>50%</b>
Immigration Department	63%	<b>37%</b>
Ministry of Health	48%	<b>52%</b>
Ministry of iTaukei Affairs	78%	<b>22%</b>
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	75%	<b>25%</b>
Ministry of Industries, Trade and Tourism	43%	<b>57%</b>
Ministry of Education	67%	<b>33%</b>
Ministry of Local Government	100%	<b>Nil</b>
Office of the Prime Minister	62%	<b>38%</b>

Office of the President	50%	<b>50%</b>
<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Ministry of Forestry	73%	<b>27%</b>
Immigration	62%	<b>38%</b>
Ministry of Sugar	50%	<b>50%</b>

- xv. The iTaukei Affairs Board has put in place a quota system [70% Male, 30% Female] that enable men and women to be members of boards and committees. This includes other development committees at community level. The Commissioners Office endorses the names that have been submitted to his office and forward it to the Ministers Office who appoints the members of the boards and committee. Despite this the percentage of women serving on Provincial Development Boards dropped slightly from 23% in 2015 to 19% in 2019.
- xvi. In terms of women's representation at the district administration level, the percentage of women serving as leaders as district advisory councillors has increased to 14% in the 2017 – 2019 period compared to 6.7% in 2015 – 2016 and grew from 10.5% to 13% for the same period on Divisional Development Boards. See Tables below:

**Table 2:9 District Advisory Councilors**

No.	Year	Total	No. of Female (s)	Percentage (%)
1	2013 - 2014	267	28	10.5
2	2015 - 2016	287	18	6.7
3	2017 - 2019	173	24	14

**Table 2:10 Provincial Development Board**

No.	Year	Total	No. of Female (s)	Percentage (%)
1	2013 - 2015	309	71	23
2	2017 - 2019	171	32	19

**Table 2:11 Divisional Development Board**

No.	Year	Total	No. of Female (s)	Percentage (%)
1	2011 - 2013	51	14	27
2	2013 - 2015	267	28	10.5
3	2017 - 2019	55	7	13

## ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- xvii. Despite the advancement, Fiji is still lagging behind in terms of women's leadership at all levels. Women are still under represented on Boards and Public bodies. The Global Gender Gap Index Report (2018) ranks Fiji 107 out of 149 countries in area of Political Empowerment hence there is a lot more work that needs to be done in this area.
- xviii. The lack of support from the family and community as a whole is one of the challenges face by women who show their interest in leadership position. Culture and tradition and how men view women in leadership is another factor that affects the appointment of women into boards and committees.
- xix. There is a lack of sex-disaggregated data to assist MPs in scrutinising legislation from a gender perspective. With the achievement of 20 percent women MPs after the 2018 general election, there is still a long way to go to

achieve gender equality in Parliamentary representation.

## ► **Way Forward**

- xx. Conduct specific research to identify the cultural, economic and institutional barriers to the political leadership of women in Fiji.
- xxi. Develop standard monitoring tools for tracking, sharing methods and data on women's participation in leadership at all levels.
- xxii. Establish a quota system to encourage women's participation on Boards and committee members in the private sector and State owned enterprises.
- xxiii. Strengthen the capacity of Members of Parliament to conduct gender analysis in particular for Parliamentary Committees to ensure reports, take into consideration the specific interests of women and men.
- xxiv. Produce core briefs on gender equality and women empowerment, which includes all the basic information needed to introduce leaders to a new subject area. This is to be used as a reference and a starting point to aid understanding about gender inequality in specific sectors.
- xxv. The Fijian Parliament is working on a monitoring matrix for the Parliamentary Committees (termed the Fiji Committee Indicator tool) to note the progress in the 2030 Agenda for SDGs as well as the corresponding goals in Fiji's National Development Plan 2017-2036 when scrutinising Bills, annual reports, petitions, international treaties and conventions and how effectively the Government implements its SDG commitments. Emphasis will be on the scrutiny of the gender statistics for SDG 5 and other SDGs that provide sex disaggregated data. This will assist MPs in gender analysis in committee work.

## **B. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS**

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- i. The first national women's machinery for gender equality was set up in Fiji in 1987 and was upgraded to a Ministry following the endorsement of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. Over time the national women's machinery has evolved from service delivery to women in the country to a more strategic role in policy formulation and intervention. The NWM has gained recognition as the primary adviser to Government on public policy issues that affect women and also a facilitator of national women's issues and concerns, working with other Government ministries and the NGO/CSO sector. The Department of Women that sits under the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) as it is known today continues to take a two pronged approach to addressing the development needs of women in Fiji. A Women in Development (WID) Approach is still considered necessary to improve the situation of women in rural and semi-urban areas and a Gender Mainstreaming approach that aims to integrate gender considerations across all of Government. A Women's Plan of Action 2009 – 2019 and the National Gender Policy guide the work of the NWM.
- ii. Successive governments have continued to maintain a commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment through the NWM, even though the budget allocation over the years has not moved beyond 0.1% of the overall national budget. In an annual allocation, the department receives 0.08 – 0.10% allocation, which is made on reports from department budget expenditure for the previous year and its work plan for the following year. This reflects the need for the strengthening of capacity within the NWM so they can request more funding and utilise the allocation made to them. As an overall Ministry with oversight of the Department of Social Welfare, Department of Women and Poverty Alleviation the budget allocation has grown progressively from 1.5% to 2.6% in the 2017/2018 budget, reflecting Government's commitment to those who are socially

disadvantaged.<sup>25</sup> Fiji's NDP 2017 – 2021 outlines a specific goal of Empowering Women to reach their full development potential listing key performance indicators linked to SDG 5.

## ► **Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements**

- iii. Despite the overall low budget allocation to the NWM from the national budget, analysis shows that they received the highest allocation for programme implementation in the 2017/18 budget, which increased from \$1.2 million in 2014 to \$2.6 million. The allocation for the implementation of the Women's Plan of Action increased to \$1.4 million from \$550,000 in 2013 and reflects stronger advocacy from the NWM on the importance of the WPA to achieving the overall goals of gender equality and women's empowerment.
- iv. The increase in funding has allowed the Department for Women to implement programs across the five thematic areas in the WPA. Some major achievements for the Department have been detailed in the other sections of this report, with support towards women leaders, the development of Service Delivery Protocol to EVAW, the continuation of the EVAW Task Force, Gender Mainstreaming program, representation at international forums including the Commission on the status of Women (CSW) and International Women's Day Celebrations to name a few. Another significant achievement has been in the increase in NGO grant funding which increased to \$150,000 in 2017/18 compared to \$100,000 in 2014.
- v. As detailed under the Women & Poverty area, the National Women's Expo has gained significant momentum since it was first held in 2014 and provides an opportunity for women from rural areas to showcase their crafts and to leverage opportunities for entrepreneurship in the capital city of Suva. The first Expo was funded from the WPA budget as part of the Livelihood and Rural Women's Day celebration. Following its success a \$0.5 million allocation was provided from the National Budget to host what has now become the annual event for promoting Fijian Women artisans. The Allocation has remained at \$0.5m for 2015, 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 Expo.
- vi. The increase in programme funding has enabled the first ever Domestic Violence Helpline, a new initiative for the government. The first allocation was made in 2016/ 2017 budget of \$170,000 for the establishment of the toll free line, which was subsequently increased to \$0.2m for the operations of the line by the Fiji Women's Crisis. Since 2014, the NWM has provided an annual voluntary contribution of \$10k to UN Women that is also scheduled in every budget.
- vii. In another first, the NWM has granted funding support for the strengthening of Women's Vocational Institutions to provide pathways for women's economic empowerment through strengthening skill sets for production of handicraft and other products that is demanded by the market. The funding was allocated to the Ba Women's Forum and the Makoi Vocational Centre.
- viii. The existing National Gender Policy and Women's Plan of Action (WPA) 2010 – 2019, works to stimulate women's empowerment, gender equality, social justice and sustainable development at all levels of society. Whilst the WPA continues to recognize and address women's issues in the priority areas of Formal Sector Employment and Livelihood; Elimination on Violence Against Women; Equal Participation in Decision Making; Access to Services and Women and the Law, the Ministry also recognizes emerging issues such as climate change with the establishment of the Gender and Climate Change thematic desk.
- ix. For the implementation of the National Gender Policy and its Framework, the Ministry has been able to establish Gender Focal Officers (GFOs) across government agencies. This is one of the areas that the Ministry seeks to strengthen with more gender sensitization training, equipping them with gender analysis tools to be able to scrutinize existing policies in the respective agencies.
- x. To strengthen the capacity within the NWM for gender responsive budgeting, bilateral partnerships have

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25 Department for Women Budget Analysis 2012 – 2017/18

provided the Ministry opportunity to develop analytical skills in this area. Five staff from the MWCPA have been exposed to the training as well representatives from 4 other government agencies and a representative from the CSO sector.

- xi. The National Gender Policy and the revised social protection measures and policies for improved responsiveness to the differential experiences and needs of women and men, with provisions not only determined by contributions made in the productive sector, but also determined by the burden of care and reproductive work provided by women throughout their lives.
- xii. The Fiji National Policy on Persons Living with Disabilities. The policy notes that being disabled has clear gender dimension.

### **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

- xiii. In the last five years, the NWM has also taken steps to improve on its collection of data and information to inform international reporting requirements. To accommodate this, a CEDAW Working Committee has been established made up of 22 Government Agencies and working in partnership with the intergovernmental regional organisations, Pacific Community (SPC). The CEDAW Working Committee convenes on a periodic basis to the requirements of the Convention and in adherence to its provisions. The Committee consists of Senior Officials from key agencies within Government and works to consolidate efforts for strategic interventions on the implementation of the Convention. The work of the Committee is expected to contribute to the efficient preparation and delivery of the CEDAW Follow Up report due in 2020 and 6th State CEDAW Periodic Report due in 2022.
- xiv. The NWM strives to conduct inclusive consultations once the formulation of the periodic report with NGOs, CSOs, FBOs, Development Partners, Institutions and government agencies at both National and Divisional Levels.

### **► *Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges***

- xv. Achieving the SDGs for women and girls requires an enabling environment and a stronger commitment to partnership and cooperation. Integral to strengthening the means of implementations are commitments focusing on the mobilization of adequate resources and capacity building, delivered through partnerships based on accountability and solidarity, and adequate data to monitor implementation.
- xvi. An enabling environment for gender mainstreaming across all of Government also requires political will and commitment from all Government ministries in particular the central Government agencies. The NWM faces the challenge of a lack of political will and a lack of commitment to gender mainstreaming which impacts the coordination efforts around key issues such as Gender Responsive Programme Budgeting.
- xvii. Line ministries and institutional policies do not have monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems for gender mainstreaming. There is a lack of adequate gender-sensitive data, including data that is disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics, as well as a lack of data on trends covering - 54 gender indicators across all SDG goals.
- xviii. Limited technical capacity and financial constraints within national statistical systems, inconsistent disaggregation, lack of timely reporting, limited data dissemination, and lack of coordination between data producers.
- xix. There is a lack of understanding of the proportion of official development assistance that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, with this information key for measuring impact, ensuring strategic interventions going forward and also to prevent duplication.

- xx. The National Gender Policy is key to guide gender mainstreaming in different sectors across Government, but the implementation of the policy has not been done consistently across all of Government. This has highlighted the need for a more strategic approach towards the implementation of the policy that needs to be budgeted for and adequately resourced within each sector and also by the NWM in their advisory role across Government.
- xxi. While Gender Focal Officers have been appointed and trained across Government, they serve in other technical capacities within their respective Government departments with the priorities of their host agency taking priority over commitments for gender mainstreaming within their Ministries/Departments. The links between the NWM and Gender Focal Points remain weak.
- xxii. There is a lack of sex-disaggregated data to clearly see the trends and progress of Fijian women and to provide policy advice for legislative reforms and policies in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.
- xxiii. There is a lack of technical capacity across all of government to report on progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment with gender mainstreaming perceived to be the role of MWPA.
- xxiv. Further support is needed to effectively utilize gender mainstreaming mechanisms at sub-national level, Provincial, Municipal, District levels.
- xxv. LGBTQI issues such as legal identities as highlighted in the CEDAW Shadow report remain unaddressed which could further embed discriminatory practices and HR violations on this minority and at risk community.

## ► **Way Forward**

- xxvi. Raise the profile and overall capacity of MWCPA and its DoW as a catalyst, coordinator and facilitator in terms of gender policy analysis and advocacy to strengthen the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming across government at all levels.
- xxvii. Strengthen capacity in gender analysis and planning, mainstreaming, monitoring and evaluation, across government, including data collection and analysis in the Ministry of Economy, as well as line ministries and MWCPA's internal data collection capacity.
- xxviii. Strengthen links between MWCPA and Gender Focal Points and establish MWCPA presence in all sectoral Task Forces. Ensure that all Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans are developed and fully integrated into line ministries' core planning and budgeting cycles. Strengthen MWCPA's monitoring, evaluation and reporting system.
- xxix. Ministry of Economy should continue to implement Gender Responsive Budgeting initiatives: include a gender impact statement in the guidelines for the preparation of budget sectoral plans for line ministries to ensure that gender is fully considered in all budgeting processes, particularly in indicators and annual output.
- xxx. Increase consultations between the Ministry of Economy and NWM in collaboration with CSO by way of a consultative forum designed specifically to collectively conduct gender budget analysis in line with the national gender policy.
- xxxi. Strengthen government officials' capacity for gender mainstreaming and monitoring the implementation at all line ministries and levels.
- xxxii. Ministries and agencies at national level should consider the expansion of gender mainstreaming at sub-national level/divisions, especially in their departments. This includes capacity development and forming gender working groups within their departments.



### A. WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT

#### ► *Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements*

- i. Within the last 5 years, the significant shift in the area of women and armed conflict in Fiji has been through the increase in leadership, representation and participation of women in key positions in the defence forces, which are predominately male institutions. These achievements can also be recognised as supporting women's meaningful participation in peace processes.
- ii. At a national level, the Fiji Military Forces appointed a number of women to senior military leadership positions with 1 full Colonel, 2 Lt Colonels and 1 Major, 12 other Commissioned Officers, 18 Senior Non Commission Officers and 148 other ranks i.e. Sergeant to Private. At an operational level, the RFMF appointed the first ever female Chief of Staff Land Force Command and at a tactical level the first female Commanding Officer at the Logistic Support Unit. The appointments reflect Government commitments towards gender equality.
- iii. In another milestone achievement, the Ministry of Defence purchased navy vessels that include women's facilities in 2018 in line with the commitment in the Ministry of Defence Strategic Plan to the recruitment of women into the Navy for the first time.
- iv. Women in defence services from Fiji are also making their mark at an international level with the current female Police Commissioner of the UN Mission in South Sudan a product of the Fiji Police Force. Thirty other female officers are serving in Missions across the world.
- v. At an all of Government policy level, there are a number of high level commitments to guide the work on women, peace and security which include:
  - a) National Development Plan which highlights a segment on women, peace and security
  - b) National Defence Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Defence which highlights the nine thematic areas one of which is the Peace and Security plan for the nation
  - c) Establishment of the National Security Council which is a Steering Committee
  - d) RFMF Act 1949
  - e) Ministry of Defence and National Security Gender Mainstreaming Policy

While these are still male dominated areas, the Fiji Gender Policy recognises the ongoing commitment to peace, security and an environment of non-violence for all citizens of Fiji is a commitment that includes women's security. There is a recognition of the need to implement gender mainstreaming and the leadership of women and young women in conflict prevention and management, in political decision-making, in peace building and peace-keeping and also in security sector oversight and accountability.

- vi. The Gender Mainstreaming strategy highlights the engagement of women's groups to contribute to the promotion of knowledge regarding gender, and provision of support for activities geared to tackling the inequalities and disadvantage of women experience as either consumers or users with particular attention to issues that are linked to gender inequality.
- vii. The Defence Forces in Fiji are involved in a number of peace building initiatives in communities around the country that engage with both women and men. These include the RFMF Band general community

engagement, the Fiji Police Force Duavata Community Policing programme that has been discussed in the previous section, and the RFMF Territorial Forces nation building activities through community engagement. These are initiatives whereby members of the defence forces work directly with communities, raising awareness on peace and security and at the same time contribute to the wellbeing of the community through different projects. For example, the Royal Fiji Navy works in maritime communities during their periodic Surveillance and Search And Rescue Exercises and Tasks and also uses these opportunities to engage with womens groups and youth groups.

- viii. There have been key developments with the engagement and participation of women's groups in consultation processes organised by various sectors of Government. For example women were part of the Ministry of Defence consultations that were conducted to develop the National Security Strategy.
- ix. The Constitutional role of the RFMF has expanded from primary state defence objectives to protecting the wellbeing of Fiji and all Fijians and also in nation building with the RFMF Engineers playing an extensive role in government infrastructural projects. This has led to an increase in the Ministry of Defence budget allocation for community development work, improvement in infrastructure, search and rescue exercise, purchase of hardware for peacekeeping operations, safety mission exercises, training for soldiers, peace building exercises, empowerment of police officers, etc.
- x. To assist defence personnel deal with issues of trauma they may have experienced during peace keeping missions, the RFMF Psychosocial Support Programmes provide pre and post tour of duty Counseling and In Country Counseling and Psychosocial Support. It is unclear if this counseling is also offered to families of those who experience trauma during missions.
- xi. Feminist Media NGO, FemLink Pacific continues to be a strong advocate of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and works with rural women's networks to localize 1325. Rural women's groups have been able to amplify their issues at a district, national and regional level by linking their daily issues to issues of peace and security. Through the use of community radio and other communication strategies including social media, rural women's groups and marginalised groups are able to amplify these issues as they highlight the Women, Peace and Security agenda linking it in particular to climate change and disaster risk reduction (CCDRM)

## ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- xii. The impacts of climate change – extreme weather, droughts, cyclones and floods, amongst many others – have increased the vulnerability and insecurity of women and girls. Lack of access to early warning systems, information and resources, gender stereotypes, social norms and cultural restrictions makes women and girls among the most susceptible to climate risks. Through the adoption of Security Council resolution 2122 (2013), the Security Council stated that it will increase the attention given to women and peace and security issues in all relevant thematic areas of work on its agenda, such as climate change. A key challenge exists in the limited linkages between the Climate Change Disaster Risk Management (CCDRM) and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agendas across policy, strategic frameworks and action plans.
- xiii. There is also limited cross-sectoral engagement/ coordination across relevant stakeholders with a specific focus on WPS/CCDRM.
- xiv. Most agencies reflect women, peace and security agenda in their strategic plan but there are no clear indicators of implementation. The area of Women, Peace and Security to best be communicated from the National Development Plan to agencies strategic plan and right into implementation with clear key indicators.

## ► **Way Forward**

- xv. Develop, adopt and implement a Women, Peace and Security (WPS) - National Action Plan (NAP) that recognises and builds upon the contributions of women to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. As the

primary providers of food, fuel, and water in rural communities, women remain highly aware of techniques to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

- xvi. Ensure/increase women's representation in decision making processes regarding CCRDM planning at all stages (i.e. prevention, preparedness as well as response and rehabilitation/reconstruction in post disaster stage).
- xvii. Improve humanitarian stakeholder's capacities/awareness to intervene effectively to prevent violence, as well as protect and rescue/provide services to survivors of SGBV during and after natural disasters.
- xviii. Address/ensure the collection and utilization of sex- and age-disaggregated data and gender related statistics in the context of CCRDM/WPS.
- xix. Set targets for gender-responsive financing in line with the UN Secretary-General's recommendation that 15 percent of funding be allocated to peace-building initiatives that address women's specific needs, advance gender equality or empower women (S/2010/466): by guaranteeing a portion of all funds dedicated to addressing disaster risk-reduction and CCRDM are committed to projects that address women and girls' specific needs/interests and advance women's representation and participation in decision-making/leadership positions.
- xx. Explore the possibilities of training women as mediators with support from the Ministry of Employment.



## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION

### A. WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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- i. The National Gender Policy stipulates the use of gender impact assessments, gender analysis and gender aware approaches to better understand the role of men and women in the harmonious and sustainable use of the country's limited natural resources. The Policy highlights the need for the promotion of environmental sensitivity, climate change impacts and disaster risks that can be done through training and continuous monitoring. The Policy in alignment with Sedai Framework (UN, 2015) considers that "adequate capacity building measures need to be taken to empower women for preparedness as well as to build their capacity to secure alternate means of livelihood in post-disaster situations.
- ii. The Policy supports the Framework for Resilience Development (FRDP) in the Pacific that recognises the critical role of integrating gender considerations, and advocates for equitable participation of men and women in planning and implementation of resilience building activities. Priority actions identified by the FRDP for national governments include the strengthening of capacities at the national government, local government and community level to develop integrated preparedness and response plans through inclusive gender-responsive decision-making systems, human rights-based approaches, and sound financial management to plan for, and ensure fast and effective humanitarian action, disaster response and recovery.<sup>26</sup>
- iii. The Gender Policy stipulates the need equal access to energy supplies to all persons in Fiji and to ensure that women in communities are consulted in any energy projects, recognizing that women in rural communities

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26 [http://gsd.spc.int/frdp/assets/FRDP\\_2016\\_Resilient\\_Dev\\_pacific.pdf](http://gsd.spc.int/frdp/assets/FRDP_2016_Resilient_Dev_pacific.pdf)

have the most limited access to energy sources including access to renewable energy sources. The policy outlines the need to monitor the effect of some energy sources that may have a detrimental effect on the health of women and ensure an enabling environment for affordable access to energy sources.

- iv. Women's equal participation in National Disaster Managing decision-making is very important in terms of acknowledging women's agency, capabilities and skill in the proactive role they play in post disaster relief work within their families and communities. The Global Gender Gap Report (2017) ranks Fiji on 105th position in terms of political empowerment out of 144 countries. At local government level, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) reports that women in Fiji make up less than 25% of the local government with only 2% of females employed as field staff. The above statistics are important as women's opinions, experiences and representation in all levels of decision making is crucial for integrating gender responsive disaster management approaches.
- v. In February 2016, a Category 5 Tropical Cyclone cut a path of destruction across Fiji directly affecting about 40% of the total population. The eye of the cyclone had wind bursts of up to 320 kilometres per hour and caused widespread damage and devastation. An assessment done of protection needs and concerns of those impacted highlighted the particular protection needs of specific groups such as children, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, and displaced persons who need follow up and support. While TC Winston tested the mechanisms for National Disaster Response, it also provided an opportunity to activate specific measures for vulnerable groups i.e. women, girl's children, PLWD, LGBTQI and older population and strengthen the capacity of communities in times of disaster.

## ► **Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements**

### **Establishment of the Women Friendly Space [WFS] in Emergency Setting**

- vi. Following the onslaught of TC Winston in 2016, the NWM, supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) established the Women Friendly Space (WFS) in emergency setting programme. The MWCPA coordinated and sustained oversight and leadership of eight (8) Women's Friendly Spaces (WFS) to support women who had gone through sexual or physical abuse or other forms of abuse. The NWM worked hand in hand with other members of the GBV sub cluster under the Social Protection cluster, established as part of the humanitarian response, in the running of the programme. NGO's Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and Empower Pacific, led management and immediate supervision of the facilities on a weekly basis with the overall oversight leadership of the NWM.
- vii. The WFS also catered to the immediate needs of women as part of humanitarian emergency assistance and early recovery, while at the same time creating opportunities for women to be key actors in the response. The interventions also aimed to facilitate community resilience building, with women who are active actors in emergency response and early recovery of their communities. The WFS ensured access to awareness and sensitization sessions in affected communities, psychosocial support, multi-sectorial referrals and related services for survivors of gender based violence. Locally based women identified to be community WFS facilitators went through a 3 day orientation on relevant topics related to gender based violence and gender equality as well as training on referral mechanisms and their role and functions in their engagement in the rehabilitation efforts. The capacity building is in line with the intentions of building community resilience in the event of an upcoming emergency.
- viii. The MHMS response to TC Winston included the mass distribution of dignity kits for affected women populations in the affected areas by TC Winston. Comprehensive responses was also provided by the ministry which included, urgent clinical care; follow up public health surveillance in an attempt to control the development of communicable diseases; and the provision of a full integrated and comprehensive Family Health mobile outreach services which included all the clinical service that would routinely be delivered in a health centre setting such as MCH clinics, Family planning services, antenatal clinic and booking, HIV & STI awareness, EPI services and general and special outpatient services. MHMS - Provided refugee women and girls as well as

women and girls in humanitarian settings with access to sexual and reproductive health services.

A number of key policy decisions and actions were taken following TC Winston which takes into consideration the way that natural disasters further exacerbate pre-disaster inequalities, vulnerabilities and protection risks based on gender, age, physical ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other factors. The prevailing protection needs and risks are further compounded as communities struggle to meet basic needs including food, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene.

- ix. Following Fiji's participation at the humanitarian women summit and post TC Winston the National Humanitarian Policy 2017 was developed. The Policy commits to the pro-active engagement of community networks, private sector, and groups/people with vulnerabilities in all aspects of national information management and communication, particularly at the divisional and local levels." The Policy informed the development of the National Disaster Management Plan that specifically considers the gender-based risks of violence for women, children and marginalized communities.
- x. A Post Cyclone Rapid Gender Analysis drew attention the increased rate of Sexual and Gender Based Violence cases and highlighted the need to prioritise equal access to humanitarian assistance and targeted support for people with specific concerns. The Gender Analysis noted that for all affected people, in particular the most vulnerable, psychosocial support and access to accurate and timely information on assistance and protection programmes are critically important.
- xi. A Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Review Workshop was held in collaboration with the MWCPA bringing together representatives from across relevant departments to discuss the overview of the Disaster Risk Management review process as well as the recommended priority focus area for the new DRM Framework. Since starting the review, several priority areas have been highlighted to be incorporated into the updated National DRM act, such as the role of climate change in disaster as well as the importance of supporting disaster coordination across all communities. The DRM Act review is also addressing the needs of vulnerable groups i.e. women, children, elderly and person with disabilities as it is important that there are structures in place to ensure they are taken care of in times of disaster.
- xii. In humanitarian action the Department of Women works in partnership with UN humanitarian Fiji based organizations and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) in an integrated approach towards attending to issues that concerns all especially women and children.
- xiii. In terms of integrating a feminist perspective in humanitarian and crisis response, Fiji based NGO FemLink Pacific has benefitted from the expertise of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), having served as the secretariat from 2009 - June 2019. During this time, GPPAC developed a model of integrating feminist practice and the goals of UNSCR 1325 - women, peace and security, in a global community of practice to advance conflict prevention and human security. FemLink Pacific has built of this in Fiji with all peace and security work done, at the community, national and regional reflecting UNSCR 1325.
- xiv. Since 2014, progress has been made with promoting the political agency of rural women's leadership including as first responders during times of disaster through the establishment of a Rural Women Leaders Community Media Network through FemLink Women's Human Security First (WHSF) programme. The RWCLN consists of 519 women leaders of all diversities including representatives of community-based organisations, disability rights and LBT activist organisations and networks, as well as faith-based organisations and other women-led groups.
- xv. Another component to the WHSF programme is the Women Weather Watch (WWW) -with 355 rural women leaders in 10 districts updating the women weather watch portal. At the heart of this system is community radio, linking a network of women leaders and correspondents to real-time information via SMS alerts (mobile phone and bulk system) as well as a Viber group and Facebook. The system is a two-way information system enabling the network members to also provide real-time situation updates which are used for media and podcast productions. The system is coordinated from FemLINK's regional hub based at its Suva community

media centre and activated in the disaster preparedness stage and is also used as a disaster impact assessment tool. It can be operated from a desktop or mobile device. Women's Weather Watch documents the lived experiences of women in disaster affected communities and supports the leadership of women to ensure more gender-inclusive preparedness and humanitarian response during times of disasters – storms and cyclones, droughts and floods as well as tsunamis, as well as in the recovery. The Women's Weather Watch system includes 379 women subscribers representing these networks. FemLINK's community radio network has an estimated audience of 14790. FemLink Pacific have been able to provide regular feedback to the NDMO from the WWW network.

- xvi. The Education in Emergencies and Safer Schools Policy encourages the involvement of girls and women to be part of the School Based DRR Committee. The committee's key role is to ensure minimization of the impact of hazards and disasters in school communities from potential threats by better protecting students and the school environment.
- xvii. The Ministry of Forestry continues to protect and preserve the knowledge and practices of women in indigenous and local communities related to traditional medicines, biodiversity and conservation techniques.
- xviii. In 2017, the Government of Fiji introduced a plastic bag levy under the Environment and Climate Adaptation Act that has resulted in a significant reduction in the use of plastic bags<sup>27</sup> and also provided an additional source of income for women's groups producing subsidized alternatives like market cloth bags.
- xix. A Climate Change Disaster Risk Reduction Office is now situated within the NWM to provide support towards the implementation of the UNDP Pacific Risk Resilience Programme (PRRP). PRRP seeks to address gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) to ensure CCDRM integration reflects the different priorities and contributions of men and women and other groups (including people with disabilities, youth and older people). Increasing the participation of different social groups, and accounting for traditional knowledge and governance systems, allows better protection for communities and is fundamental for increasing national capacities for building people's resilience to climate change and disaster risks.

## Solar Engineers

- xx. With reference to climate smart technologies, the DoW has successfully implemented a Solar Grandmother and Rocket Stove initiative, that has provided women with a more cost effective energy source, while at the same time giving them a break from labouring over traditional slow outdoor stoves. Through the initiative 10 women travelled to India in 2012 to be trained as solar engineers at the Barefoot College. A regional training was conducted in Fiji in between 2016-2017 with a commitment by the Fijian Government to set up the Barefoot College in Fiji. The tangible outcome of the training locally and overseas is the supply of the solar panels to 755 families in Fiji with solar homes being maintained by the trained solar engineers. The initiative has also enabled the grandmothers to have another sources or income as they are paid for the maintenance of the system. The women engineers have stated that through the solar project, their children are able to study better during the night and the women are also able to do some of their chores in the evenings. The family saves money from the solar system; otherwise they would need to be paying a lot for kerosene. They do give subs for the solar unit; however it is cheaper than buying kerosene.

## ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- xxi. Fiji's Beijing Plus 20 Progress report highlighted the challenge of the technical knowhow to mainstream gender within the environment sector. This is still a challenge with no systematic gathering of sex-disaggregated data from the differential impact of environmental programmes on men and women.
- xxii. While there has been some advancements made in recognizing the key role of women as equal partners

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27 [www.sprep.org/news/plastic-bag-levy-reduces-plastic-usage-fiji](http://www.sprep.org/news/plastic-bag-levy-reduces-plastic-usage-fiji)

in all aspects of disaster preparation, management and rehabilitation, many interventions still see women as recipients of assistance during disasters, not recognizing the vital role they play in community rehabilitation and development.

## ► **Way Forward**

- xxiii. Mainstream gender into the development and implementation of policies and plans related to climate change at national and sub-national levels, including disaster preparedness plans especially related to food, drought and storms. Monitor implementation and budgeting with the participation of relevant institutions to ensure transparency and accountability.
- xxiv. Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework on gender and climate change.
- xxv. Allocate adequate national budget to support the implementation of the policies and action plans on gender and climate change.
- xxvi. Take into account the specific needs of vulnerable groups like children under age five, pregnant women and elderly people when responding to disasters by ensuring compliance with guidelines provided that gives adequate priority to these vulnerable groups. To the extent possible, take into account the cultural and religious food requirements of specific groups as well.
- xxvii. Provide a learning exchange space for women to share information of their role as custodians of the land and sea similar to the Women's Expo Forum.
- xxviii. Review M&E software used by line ministries and agencies when collating and consolidating data in the context of climate change and disaster risk reduction and management to ensure it is consistent and comparable.
- xxix. Prioritise the mainstreaming of protection across all sectors to ensure the safety and protection of affected populations' still remaining in evacuation centres or without shelter.
- xxx. Promote low-technology climate monitoring (weather forecasting) tools.
- xxxi. Encourage community-based sustainable forestry and low carbon economic activities among women, including clean (renewable) power supply for households.
- xxxii. Cooperate with relevant institutions to provide technical extension services on organic agriculture and climate change adaptation to women in particular small-farm holders.
- xxxiii. Promote low carbon economic activities, including new technology, among women, through green agriculture and small industries.
- xxxiv. Research, compile and encourage the use of renewable energy among families and communities, especially among women, such as solar, wind and biomass digester, and new technology.



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## SECTION THREE

# NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

## National Machinery for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

### ► *Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements*

- i. The National Women's Machinery (NWM) for gender equality and the empowerment of women is the Department of Women that sits under the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA). The NWM takes a two pronged approach to addressing the development needs of women in Fiji. A Women in Development (WID) Approach is still considered necessary to improve the situation of women in rural and semi-urban areas and a Gender Mainstreaming approach that aims to integrate gender considerations across all of Government. The Women's Plan of Action 2009 – 2019 and the National Gender Policy guide the work of the NWM which is also aligned with the Bill of Rights in the 2013 Constitution.
- ii. Under the Women's Plan of Action, the NWM operates six thematic desks in line with the six themes of the WPA. The NWM works with interagency task forces IAG to implement the priorities identified under the thematic areas. The IAG includes government agencies, NGO and other relevant stakeholders that meet bi-annually to share information on programmes implemented and upcoming programmes and activities in line with the themes. The six thematic areas are:
  - a) Elimination of Violence against Women,
  - b) Formal Sector Employment and Livelihood,
  - c) Access To Services,
  - d) Women and The Law,
  - e) Equal Participation in Decision Making
  - f) Gender and Climate Change

The alignment of the work of the NWM to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is through the alignment with the NDP 2017 – 2021 with one of the goals of the NDP "Empowering women to reach their full development potential" The NWM has established a CEDAW Working Committee following their participation at the 69th Session Constructive Dialogue with the UN CEDAW Committee in Geneva in February 2018 for the defending of the 5th State CEDAW Periodic Report. The Working Committee will provide technical support and advice on the implementation of the Concluding Observations for the 16 Articles of the Convention and is intended to convene on a periodic basis, in line with the requirements of the Convention and in adherence to its provisions. The Committee shall consist of Senior Officials from key agencies within Government to consolidate efforts for strategic interventions on the implementation of the Convention. The NWM envisages a Concluding Observation Response work plan with the line agencies, in preparation for the Follow-up Report due in 2020 and the 6th State CEDAW Periodic Report due in 2022.

- iii. A consultative process has also been adopted for progress reports on the Beijing Declaration and PPA with a commitment to continue to work with the stakeholders for the implementation of recommendations and to also inform the next reporting process. The NWM intends to formalise these processes following the submission of the Beijing Plus 25 report.

### **Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls as a key priority in the national plan/strategy for SDG implementation.**

- iv. As outlined in the NDP, government is working towards positive and innovative approaches to achieving gender equality and to eliminating discrimination against women. Government is committed to creating a gender fair

society that protects and promotes the rights of women through the implementation of the Women’s PoA and the National Gender Policy over the five year period of the NDP. Key performance indicators directly linked with SDG 5.5 is the percentage of women in decision making positions. See projections in table below:

**Table 3:1 Provincial Development Board**

Indicator	ANNUAL TARGET				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Percentage of Women in Decision Making Positions</b>					
Parliament % SDG 5.5		20	-	-	-
SOE Board of Directors		32	33	34	35
Ministries/Departments %		22	23	24	25
Proportion of women participating in paid employment %		-	-	-	40
Numbers of women participating in National Women’s Expo achieving Fijian made status for products		50	55	60	65

- v. The NWM provides ongoing guidance through consultation and awareness raising sessions with stakeholders /Parliamentarians, Permanent Secretaries on the National Gender Policy and the Service Delivery Protocol and gender mainstreaming
- vi. The NWM is working across government to implement the National Gender Policy and to ensure that the policy is operationalized in all Ministry Action plans and policies. This has been happening progressively over time and has led to the appointment of Gender Focal Points in all Government ministries. The Gender Focal Points are not gender specialists and require training to enable them to effectively lead gender mainstreaming within their sectors.

### ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- vii. Despite the NWM being well established within the mechanisms of Government, there is still a lack of collaboration of implementation efforts between the NWM and Government stakeholders. The NWM receives less than 1% of the overall national budget and this limits their capacity to influence national and sectoral policies. The DoW is not part of the institutional process for SDG’s implementation which is being coordinated by various committees and driven by the Ministry of Economy.
- viii. While there have been some gains in the strengthening of relationships between the NWM and NGO partners, there is currently no formal mechanism in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. NGO partners involved in the consultation process noted their willingness to continue to work alongside government in the implementation of the recommendations and way forward.

### ► **Way Forward**

- ix. The NWM established a Ministerial Forum in 2018 after participating in CSW in 2018 that aimed:
- x. To create a platform of Dialogue for Women NGOs, CSOs, FBOs and the Ministry.
- xi. To recognize the expertise, resources and partnering networks of women’s CSOs, NGO’s and FBOs.
- xii. To gain a holistic view of the scope of addressing women’s’ issues and the challenges of achieving gender equality in Fiji.

- xiii. To provide an opportunity for Government to align the issues and the challenges identified according to strategic priorities.
- xiv. To foster the spirit of partnership and cooperation thereby building better relationships between all parties.
- xv. During the consultation process for Beijing Plus 25 Progress report, stakeholders expressed concern about the localising of the SDG's in Fiji, with the need to make the aspirations of the SDGs real to local communities, households and individuals, particularly the most vulnerable in Fijian society. The progress towards the SDGs must draw on the actions of local partners and galvanize participation from all actors in society reflecting Fiji's specific capacities, constraints and challenges. While the SDG's may have been localised in the implementations through the programs under the NDP, the monitoring matrix of the SDG still needs to be operationalized by National Planning agency.
- xvi. In line with the above, there is a need to recognise the role of the NWM in the institutional process for SDG reporting especially SDG Goal 5 and to establishing a periodic reporting system. There is a need to consult the NWM on reporting requirements, including statistics presentation.
- xvii. A key challenge in the implementation of the National Gender Policy is the limited technical capacity for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming across government. Gender Focal Points have been identified in each Ministry but they are experts in those Ministries and not gender experts with the need for them to be properly trained and equipped with the right tools to be able to provide substantial input and guidance on gender in their respective ministries. The NWM needs to be able to work with these Gender Focal Points on an ongoing basis. Reporting processes need to be revisited with a consideration for the Focal Points to be paid for and trained by the NWM but situated in strategic positions across Government to drive the mainstreaming process.
- xviii. There is a need for gender statistics training and establishment of collective database systems to ensure effective periodical reporting particularly for BPA and CEDAW. In this light, the GFO network and the Ministerial Forum platform play critical roles in feeding regular and updated information and data for the proposed collective database system on gender equality and inclusion.
- xix. As outlined by the Office of Parliament, there is a need to build an understanding of the SDGs in Parliament and mainstream the SDGs within parliamentary mechanisms bringing the SDGs from the global to the local level; through engaging with the public and making laws or enacting domestic legislation in support of the SDGs; There is also a need to ensure the SDGs serve the most vulnerable (women, children Person with Disability, Elderly, etc). Government is to invest in the implementation of SDG's Monitoring and Evaluation and Impact assessment of the implementation of SDG's.



## SECTION FOUR

# DATA & STATISTICS

- i. As outlined in previous sections, the Fijian Government NDP 2017 - 2021 is aligned with global commitments including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. References are made to Inclusive Socio-economic Development, Women in development, Gender equality, Education, National Security and the Rule of Law and Expanding the Rural Economy. Accurate, reliable and relevant gender statistics are necessary to reflect the progress towards the achievement of these commitments. The Fiji Bureau of Statistics is responsible for providing statistics on key indicators measuring the progress of women and men and is also committed in improving the provision of statistics, to describe more accurately and fully the activities and characteristics of the whole population.
- ii. The progress of work on gender equality and women's empowerment in Fiji is hampered by the lack of quality data, which in turn hinders targeted interventions for women and girls. Development partners have been working consistently in this area in the last five years to help improve the collection and quality of gender statistics and to move the collection of statistics beyond sex disaggregated data and to draw out data directly linked to government's overarching commitments in this area. This is work in progress in Fiji with some gains made as outlined below.

### ► *Programmes, Policies and Key Achievements*

- iii. In the last five years, progress on has been made in the production of gender statistics at the national level through the re-processing of existing data from the MHMS, the Ministry of Agriculture, Justice (DPP, Deaths & Births), Trade & Tourism, Education and Administrative data (e.g. censuses and surveys).
- iv. As a result of this re-processing of existing data, knowledge products on gender statistics have been produced and research papers made available. For example, the Consolidated Monthly Return Information System (CMRIS) was revised in 2015/2016 to improve the capture of ANC visits, births and deaths in the health facilities and communities and outpatient visits. The age distribution on cervical cancer screening was also reviewed to align to the SDG and Health Island indicator reporting with an inclusion of male and female variables.
- v. Additional data collated by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics through the 2017 Census as a result includes:
  - a) Population Census & Surveys 2017 Number of Wage & Salary Employees by Industry and by Gender
  - b) Employment Status by Gender (2015+16 Employment and Unemployment Survey)
  - c) Rural: Urban Labour Force Status by Sex & Area
  - d) 2015-16 Employment and Unemployment Preliminary Findings Release 1 & 2
- vi. In the Ministry of Health Patient Information System (PATIS) sex is a mandatory field to enter and this will avoid misinterpretation. In the past, without this being mandatory, females who have common male names and vice versa were not correctly identified. This gathering of sex-disaggregated data will also help identify key information and inform public awareness and interventions.
- vii. There has been ongoing engagement in trainings and workshops, conferences and meetings to build capacity and strengthen use and understanding of gender statistics. For example, the Health Information Unit actively trained nurses on the different health information systems and forms utilized within the MHMS.
- viii. An example of interagency coordination in the production of statistics is the Civil Registration Vital Statistics

Committee, which is made up of four government agencies (Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Fiji Bureau of Statistics, Registrar General's Office & ITC). The collaboration aimed to strengthen CRVS systems in Fiji to ensure that every Fijian is registered, (both birth and death registration). The MHMS is the data custodian, RG's office registers births and deaths, FBOS publishes the vital statistics and the registered data is stored at ITC. Sharing of data is on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

- ix. As a result of better understanding from training, questionnaires have been redesigned to be more inclusive e.g. the additional variables added to the Population census questionnaire (e.g. Functional challenges, financial inclusion and communication, water and sanitation) In Fiji, household surveys are conducted every 5 years and the Population Census is collected every 10 years.
- x. The Bureau of Statistics have also produced knowledge products on gender statistics (e.g., user-friendly reports, policy briefs, research papers).
- xi. The use of technology (tablets) has contributed to the collection of accurate reliable and relevant data, which is an improvement from the 2007 Census.
- xii. The MEHA has an existing FEMIS which provides sex disaggregated data on the levels of Education which involves enrolment rates, retention, completion and net enrolment rate. Fiji was able to provide detailed sex disaggregated data sets to the CEDAW Committee in Geneva drawn from FEMIS that reflected the disparities, gaps of the level of education amongst women and girls in Fiji.
- xiii. The Office of the Director Public Prosecutions has improved its Court Proceedings and Complaints database and that is readily available on their website. Data includes the number of formal indictments (Information) filed in the High Courts of Fiji.

## ► **Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges**

- xiv. The coordination of relevant data from all stakeholders is a challenge that needs to be addressed as well as the method of collection with ongoing communication and collaboration needed between key stakeholders, National Statistical Offices (NSOs), and other stakeholders on producing sex-disaggregated statistics and using them to inform policy.
- xv. Gathering data is an expensive exercise and there are financial constraints which limit the systematic gathering of data across government. Also the standard of reporting differs across line ministries with this presenting a challenge for consolidating data. The variables also used in questionnaires are not consistent with more uniformity required for ease of consolidating data from different sectors. Other stakeholders outside of Government are also involved in gathering data with a need to make this data accessible as it could provide government with relevant information to inform policy development and interventions.

## ► **Way Forward**

- xvi. Strengthen the role of gender focal points by providing training, partnership and education initiatives promoting gender and the collection of gender statistics. This could include affirmative action initiatives to encourage commitment and grow a cadre of skilled gender statisticians. The NWM to take up the coordination role.
- xvii. Identify a set of "Ready to Measure" indicators across SDG targets that can be measured from individual survey data and collected across the country. Include additional examples of gender-sensitive indicators that can be measured in the near term through nationally representative surveys.
- xviii. Establish a network platform to address gender statistics for learning and sharing by key gender focal officers to share best practices and build support.

- xix. Develop a work plan or a plan of action with specific targets that are tangible to measure - with key smart indicators on who is responsible for what as per the provision of statistics.
- xx. Enhance and pursue collaborative initiatives with key international development partners, key custodians to the SDGs ILO, UNDP, etc.
- xxi. Conduct a thorough desk review/rapid assessment on what gender statistics are needed and what is available before the next State Report Submission (+30).
- xxii. Seek additional budget support for the gathering of gender statistics across the sectors of government. This could support the training and equipping of gender focal points and ensure effective gender mainstreaming.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action  
**+25 Fiji Country Progress Report**



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