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# Gender Assessment

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## **FP008: Fiji Urban Water Supply and Wastewater Management Project**

Fiji | ADB | B.11/11



**GREEN  
CLIMATE  
FUND**

The gender assessment for this specific project is also published by ADB, which can be accessed in the following link:

<https://www.adb.org/projects/49001-002/main#project-documents>

## I. Gender Issues

1. Feminist economists agree that women's employment has done more to encourage growth than increases in capital investment and productivity improvements and that gender equality is essential to reducing poverty. Fiji Governments Strategic Action Plan 2007-11 has committed to "enable women to participate fully in the socio-economic development of the country". In spite of 8 international and national instruments for gender equality signed by FIJI, it is accepted that occupational discrimination and gender segregation in the labour market remain strong and women's share of employment is significantly lower than that of men. Women are under-represented in managerial positions and tend to be concentrated in the low end of the labour market. Many women work in self employment and semi-subsistence types of economy and also faced higher risk of poverty. The Gender-related development index (GDI) of Fiji is 0.757 in 2005, ranked in the 82nd in the world. Women's higher risk of poverty and destitution is associated with labour force discrimination, increasing divorce and separation rates and problems in collecting maintenance payments from departed spouses. Women constitute the majority of beneficiaries under the Social Welfare Department's Family Assistance Scheme.

## II. Cultural differences and gender relations

2. Among the Itaukei population, gender relations are influenced by traditional values that emphasize the authority of chiefs, who are predominantly male. Traditionally men have more authority and rights than women; women have few if any rights to inherit land or formally own property, or to take part in public decision making, with an exception made for paramount chiefs who inherit chiefly titles. Itaukei cultural norms do not appear to place restrictions on women's mobility or on most types of economic participation though concerns have been raised recently about the introduction of village by-laws in select villages, prohibiting women from wearing certain types of clothes and wearing certain hairstyle. Among the next largest group, the Indo-Fijians, women remain subservient to men. Due to migration and living in urban areas, a number of social barriers are coming down. Decision making now is practised by both sexes, depending who is the bigger earner.

3. **Gender Gaps in Economic and Social Development:** Government Fiji has accepted Equal Opportunity as a policy for the civil services, but these have not been incorporated in industrial legislation. Of the economically active female population, only about 30% are engaged in the formal economy, promotions are rare and a large number of women work in semi-subsistence employment or self-employment. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (MAFF) has introduced gender mainstreaming in its policies and activities, through recommendations from the Gender Audit by the ADB. Rural women contribute labour to their family farming and of doing their small business of floriculture and food processing; they also are the main workers in fishing as well as well as marketing fish.

4. **Setting up a National Women's Machinery:** The Department of Women in the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation has been set up as the national machinery to address women's issues focusing on women's equality, empowerment and gender mainstreaming. The National Women's Action Plan 1999-2008 consists of the five actions; (1) mainstreaming women and gender concerns, (2) women and the law, (3) micro-

enterprise development, (4) balancing gender in decision-making and (5) violence against women and children. For each action, a task force was established and the task forces have consisted of various relevant organizations. With the efforts of the national machinery for gender in Fiji, gender mainstreaming has been prevalent over the public and private sectors and women's involvement to political, social and economic activities has been promoted. However, it is also pointed out that indigenous hierarchies in the communities, especially in rural areas, have remained and male members have been dominating decision making processes in the communities.

5. **Gender Sensitive Policies:** In 1995, Fiji ratified the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and set up the National Women's Action Plan which was formulated in 1998, on which actions on gender have been implemented. Other policies and laws to protect women's rights were promulgated, such as No Drop Policy (1995) for police investigation on any kind of assault and domestic violence and established the Police Sexual Offences Unit for watching all sexual and abuse cases, Family Law Act., was amended in 2003, and National Policy on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in 2008. Against sexual harassment in working place, Ministry of Labor enacted "the National Policy on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace" in 2008. To promote gender equality at workplaces in terms of employment conditions, such as wages, working hours and opportunities given. However implementation of these policies remains a challenge.

6. **Education:** Gender disparities in primary and secondary education have been reduced over the country. To promote the overall enrolment of children of school ages, especially in rural areas, the Ministry of Education (MOE) applies community approaches to build close partnerships between parents and schools to help parents to understand the importance of sending their children to schools. The 2013 Regional MDG Tracking report notes that gender parity in education has been achieved at all levels. There is a need to provide opportunities for girls and women to enter into non-traditional fields such as science, technology and engineering. At the Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT), only 30% of students were women in 2002. Most women at FIT study business, secretarial, hotel and catering courses. Meanwhile, men tend to study automotive, mechanical, electrical and civil engineering, and maritime courses. (ADB, 2006; Chandra and Lewai, 2005). Sf Women/Gender in Health.

7. **Health:** MOH has developed the National Strategic Development Plan 2007-2011 leading to the overall improvement of health services for women. Family Planning has led to better health of both mother and child. The conditions of birth deliveries have improved with 99% of the deliveries attended by skilled persons in 2007. However, adolescent education is necessary in order to enhance the youth's consciousness of contraceptive usage. The Ministry of Health formulated the Fiji National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2007 – 2011, which states the priority areas and action plans. In terms of HIV/AIDS, the number of newly detected infection in 2007 is smaller than in 2006, when the biggest number was recorded. Other priority areas and action plans focus on reduction of burden of Non-Communicable Diseases, to begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and preventing, controlling or eliminating other communicable diseases, to improve adolescent health and reduced adolescent morbidity and mortality, improve environmental health through safe water and sanitation in Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries

8. **Women in Government:** Women hold only about 16% of senior executive positions in the government and that too, mainly in the social sectors. In the education sector, for example, more men than women are primary and secondary teachers, but few women hold management positions. In 2005, MOE decided, as a matter of policy to increase the intake of males to primary teacher training by allotting 20 more places to men than women applicants, thereby discriminating against women.

9. **Rural Development:** Women in most rural areas are the major subsistence producers and small-scale marketers of food and handicrafts including subsistence fishing (one of the two highest fisheries sector contributors to GDP) in most coastal and riverine areas. Women are also significant contributors to non finfish capture and marketing in the small-scale commercial fishing sector.

10. **Public Health and Trade:** Imported, low-quality foods are cheaper than most local produce; though islands around Fiji produce a lot of food, they have very little access to markets. Twice as many women as men have nutritionally-related diseases associated with poor diets and poverty. More women than men suffer from anaemia and diabetes.

11. **Political Participation:** Participation of women in decision-making bodies continues to be a major challenge. Since 2003 there has been a policy of 30% representation to women in Parliament but as the CEDAW Committee reports, the progress is very slow. In 2006 there were eight women parliamentarians amongst the 71 members of the House of representatives and five women senators in the 42-member Upper House (Senate). In 2007 there were two women in the Interim cabinet, however this was reduced to one due to the streamlining of ministerial portfolios in 2008. Statistics on women's membership in the twelve Municipal Councils as of 2008 reflect low numbers, ranging from no women to 50% membership in one Municipal Council (Levuka). In the public service, women only occupy 18% of the upper echelon of Government whilst the majority of them are at the lower rung, which includes nursing, teaching and clerical work.<sup>1</sup>

12. **Family and Sexual Violence:** An important Policy Objective for gender and development is "to educate the community and law enforcement agencies to prevent and eliminate violence against women." A recent national survey of women in Fiji has found that more than three in five (64% of women) who had ever been in a relationship have experienced physical or sexual violence or both by a husband or intimate partner. Rural women more than urban women face the higher risk of violence, and the likelihood that women who encounter intimate-partner violence are also subjected to controlling behaviours that undermine their access to health care and their economic and social development and rights. So far, however, responsibility for implementing the policy has been delegated to the MOW and NGOs.

13. **Reproductive Health and HI:** The fertility rate of 4.4 among rural Fijian women suggests the need for renewed efforts—with innovative programs targeting men as well as women—to promote rural family planning programs. This would be in keeping with the recommendations of the gender audit assisted by ADB, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, and in accordance with MDG #5 for improved maternal health endorsed by the Government, as well as the government's gender mainstreaming policy. In 2004, for the first

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<sup>1</sup>The Situation of Women in Fiji, Government of Fiji Report to the CEDAW Committee, 2008

time, more women among new cases were confirmed HIV positive than men. A strong emphasis on gender issues is needed to reduce HIV transmission, in keeping with MDG goal #6 and in accordance with the government's policy on gender mainstreaming.

14. **Data:** There is lack of timely, efficient and reliable sex disaggregated data mandatory for effective gender analysis and for informed policy choices. This needs to be done urgently.

15. **Micro-enterprise:** The Fiji Development Bank (FDB) provides women with small loans to agriculture and commercial activities though the number of loans approved for women are much less than for men. Women lack of access to information, insufficient ability to complete the whole process for getting approvals, compared to men, have low level of education, and lack of family supports and understandings of the women's income generation activities (Chandra and Lewai, 2005). In order to overcome these negative situations, the MWSWPA has been encouraging the other financial institutions to provide small loans to women under favourable conditions and the ANZ Bank has started the small loan services to women.

### **III. Conclusion**

16. Commitment to Gender equality is an integral part of Fiji's political landscape. The government has signed international conventions like CEDAW, passed legislations for women's equality, set up a woman's machinery to implement women friendly policies, identified issues like violence and lack of economic opportunities that prevent women from realizing their potential, developed gender sensitive policies, identified the issues that impact women negatively including violence, lack of economic opportunities, identified that women are at the lower end of labour activities and pay, few women in senior positions or at decision making levels and few opportunities for promotion. The government has also tried to encourage women in non traditional jobs.