



Fiji Young Women's Forum

Outcomes Statement – 1st Fiji Young Women's Forum on Young Women's Participation and Representation in Political Spaces

8th – 10th November, 2013

1. The Fiji Young Women's Forum convened by **Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVA)**, **Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA)**, **Young Women Producers and Broadcasters- FemlinkPacific** and the **Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)**, brought together young women leaders and activists aged 18 – 30 years from Fiji to discuss barriers and strategies to young women's meaningful participation and representation in Fiji's democratisation process.
2. We, young Fijian women leaders including transwomen, women living with disabilities, LGBTQI women, rural women, mental health consumers and young women in all our diversities affirm our power as implementers and contributors of positive change, decision makers, partners and leaders of today and the future. Our strength is in our numbers and in our diversity.
3. The forum builds on the initial Fiji Women's Forum and a rich tradition of activism of Fijian women throughout our national history and is committed to representing young women throughout the country. We acknowledge and recognise the work of the many women who have gone before us and the gains that they have made for young women today. We note the rich history of women's participation in political spaces including social movements and we call for more recognition of this hard fraught journey.

Young Women's Political Participation and Representation

4. The Fiji Young Women's Forum is deeply concerned with the under-representation of women, especially young women in decision making bodies. Young women face double discrimination for both being young and female and are often excluded in decision making processes, almost entirely absent from local, national and regional decision making and leadership roles. There is an urgent need to correct the historical and cultural exclusion of young women in decision making and political spaces.
5. The Fiji Young Women's Forum urges local and national governments, political parties, private and public sectors to implement **Temporary Special Measures** to increase women's representation and participation in decision making. This will enable our State to comply with CEDAW which Fiji ratified in 1995. The Forum further asserts that transformative change is not just about the policies of parties but also party structures that are inclusive and human rights based.

Rights based, Participatory Democratisation Processes

6. We value and advocate for the principles of the Universal Declaration of **Human Rights** with **Accountability**, that people's human rights cannot be fully realised without accountability of the injustices that have been committed.
7. The Fiji Young Women's Forum affirms that **Democracy**, the **Rule of Law** and the full enjoyment of one's **Human Rights** are closely linked.
8. We call for adherence to the principles of democracy including the **separation of powers** between the executive, the judiciary and the legislative.
9. The forum affirms that religion and state must remain separate
10. The Fiji Young Women's Forum is deeply disappointed that young women and the citizens of Fiji were not consulted in the development of the States' budget. We remind the State of their obligation and accountability to translate gender equality, **transparency** and human rights commitments into legislation, policy and budget allocations and to make these norms and standards the guiding principles of our society.
11. The forum participants highlighted the importance of having **legitimate participatory and inclusive** processes in the development of the constitution and national budget.
12. We call for the reinstatement of the **People's Constitution** which was drafted by the Constitutional Commissioners headed by Professor Yash Ghai with over 7000 submissions including groups and individual submissions from all over Fiji.
13. We call on the State's alignment to principles and processes of **Free and Fair Elections**, such as the levelling of the current unequal playing field and that rules and regulations are not oppressive to political parties and independents. We demand that the elections process is **transparent** and that citizens, candidates and all other stakeholders are **informed** in a **timely** manner regarding electoral developments.
14. We highlight the importance of the role of the **media** in a sustainable democracy and call for the removal of oppressive laws and decrees. We note the invisibility of women in the media as powerful agents of change and call for balanced and accurate reporting and documenting of women free of negative stereotypical biases. We note the role of community media and alternative media in facilitating the flow of information

Sustainable Development

15. The Young Women's Forum affirms that **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights** must be realised. We stress that bodily integrity and autonomy is at the core of all work on SRHR, we call for a comprehensive sexual education, information, services and commodities that is available to everyone including members of the LGBTQI community and persons with disabilities.
16. We are currently living in a time of escalated social, economic, financial and environmental crisis we urgently seek full and decent employment and economic empowerment for all young Fijian women. We call for the **meaningful participation**

of young women in the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of development goals, policies and indicators at all levels.

17. The young women's forum is deeply concerned with the rapid expansion of the extractive industry in Fiji. We call on the State to consider **sustainable development** options that do not further exacerbate widespread environmental degradation as this further commodifies and compounds the burden on young women, social relationships, communities and societies at large, increasing the labour required meet their basic needs. We are further concerned with the likely SRHR issues such as sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancies and the trafficking of local and foreign women that emerge in relation to sudden increase in the population of male transient workers in remote mining communities.
18. We acknowledge the support and **solidarity** of the broader women's movement in Fiji and encourage them to continue to champion the inclusion of the **diversity** of young women; in particular transwomen especially when in it comes to difficult spaces and circumstances.

We commit to work together in solidarity towards gender equality, participatory democracy, the rule of law and the meaningful participation of young women in local, national and regional decision making bodies.

For more information contact Tavai Bale: 9990869