



# Giving Women a Fair Go! How Gender Equality is Faring in Fiji?

## An analysis of Fiji in the Global Gender Gap Index.

*By the Fiji Women's Rights Movement.*

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) is an advocate for gender equality and the realisation of human rights. For FWRM, narrowing the gap in opportunities for men and women is a good indicator (amongst others) of the level of development in a country. Since last year, FWRM has issued an annual analysis of the status of gender equality in Fiji, based on a global report on the gap between men and women. The World Economic Forum (WEF) has been issuing an annual *Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR)* since 2006.

In the most recent report on performance in 2015, Fiji ranks poorly – **sitting at 121 out of 145 surveyed countries**. Last year, in the 2014 report, Fiji ranked 122 out of 142 countries, but this slight advance may be misleading as three new countries were added to the survey in 2015<sup>1</sup>. With barely any progress, the report indicates Fiji is not advancing women as a group of its population. Over the past five years, Fiji's rank consistently fell, from 108<sup>th</sup> in 2010 to 122<sup>nd</sup> in 2014, moving up one place to 121 in 2015 (see table below).

**Fiji's performance in the bottom 25 of the rank illustrates the struggle that women and girls face in realizing opportunities for themselves.**

### What does the Global Gender Gap Index measure?

The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) measures and ranks gender equality, not women's empowerment, in its annual report. It is a quantitative, not qualitative index. It looks at outcomes not inputs, and gender gaps (between men and women as a group), not levels. It cannot therefore assess the improvements in the quality of women's lives.

The Index measures 4 key indicators: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment.

Fiji is currently the only Pacific Island country to be ranked. In this regard Fiji is to be commended for collecting and sharing sex-disaggregated data.

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<sup>1</sup> The three new countries introduced were The Gambia, Benin and Cameroon.

Year	Overall		Economic Participation and Opportunity		Educational Attainment		Health and Survival		Political Empowerment	
	Rank/ Total Number of Countries	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
<b>2015</b>	<b>121/145</b>	<b>0.645</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>0.512</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>0.992</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.980</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>0.097</b>
2014	122 /142	0.6286	125	0.5065	70	0.9925	1	0.9796	136	0.0358
2013	117/ 136	0.629	120	0.498	63	0.992	1	0.980	125	0.045
2012	113 /135	0.629	117	0.497	63	0.992	1	0.980	123	0.045
2011	109 /135	0.625	116	0.497	70	0.989	1	0.980	123	0.036
2010	108/ 134	0.626	114	0.498	70	0.989	1	0.980	121	0.036

(Source(s): *The Global Gender Gap Index, World Economic Forum (2015); The Good , the Bad and the Ugly- Fiji and the Global Gender Gap Report, Fiji Women's Rights Movement (2014)*)

### Celebrating Success:

Fiji has managed to progress in the **Political Empowerment** sub index, which is reflected in the ranking, moving up 26 spots from 136 in 2014, to 110 in 2015. The narrowed gap in 2015 is a reflection of the 16% women in parliament with 4 women holding ministerial positions. However, it is still a challenging journey for women to achieve political success. Whether this translates into real change for Fiji's women remains to be seen. Fiji still scored 0.097 in comparison to the global average of 0.230. An undermining factor in women's political empowerment is the absence of provisions for temporary special measures or reserved seats for women's political participation. As stated in the GGGR, "progress in the economic and political worlds has been proven to be self-reinforcing, so interventions such as quotas – which have been demonstrated to have wider positive effects – offer insight into how the gap could be closed further in future".

### Not much change:

Fiji has maintained a good position in the **Health and Survival** sub-index, ranking 1 along with 41 other countries that all received the score of 0.980. Fiji's rank in this sub index is due to good performance in the areas of life expectancy, maternal and infant mortality, and child mortality. Although the gender gap is generally narrow when it comes to health, there are two areas that need further improvement: (1) women are significantly higher at risk for deaths caused by cancer with a 119:76 female: male ratio; (2) the absence of statistics on contraceptive prevalence. The absence of data on contraception is of some concern considering the needs of women related to bodily autonomy, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Fiji was placed 71 in the score card for **Educational Attainment**. The country has maintained a narrow gender gap in the areas of primary, secondary and tertiary education. There is actually slightly higher

female enrolment in secondary education, as compared to males, although that does not necessarily translate into better employment or economic outcomes, as we shall see in the next section.

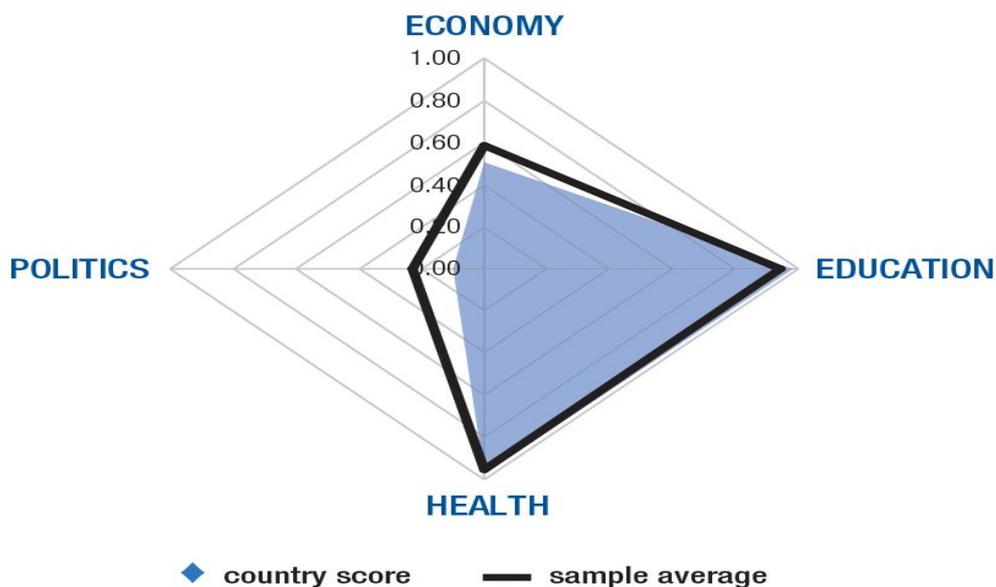
### Enduring Challenges:

**Economic Participation and Opportunity** is the greatest area of challenge in narrowing the gender gap in Fiji. Fiji slipped four places in this sub index from 125 (2014) to 129 (2015). The alarming disparity in remuneration and the labour market participation gap was a setback for Fiji’s overall ranking. Remuneration gap analyses ‘wage equality for similar work done’ and ‘estimated earned income’. While Fiji has provided information on estimated earned income, the GGG Report shows no data for wage equality for similar work done in Fiji. This means the report cannot show us whether men and women are getting paid equally for doing the same types of work, or whether there is discrimination.

The report shows a US\$4568: \$11552, female: male comparison for estimated earned income per year. This means that, according to the data, women in Fiji earn **less than half** of the income that men do or only about 40%. The gender gap is also reflected in formal labour force participation rates in the 2014 Annual Employment Survey by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, where “almost two thirds, 65.3% (94157) of total paid employees were males while (the) remaining 34.7% (49993) were females”.

Figure 1 Graphical representation of Fiji's performance in the Global Gender Gap Report 2015

Against sample average



### Conclusion- Letting Women Grow

In the 2015 Global Gender Gap Index, Fiji has done well in political empowerment, and maintained its position in two categories, but needs to do better for women in the economic sector. FWRM’s suggestions for policy reform in our 2014 analysis for narrowing the gender gap in economic participation and opportunity still hold true: “Fiji can start off by designing macro-economic policies that are gender sensitive and that target industrial subsectors which have a potential for expanding

women's job opportunities – investing in areas in which women might be attracted to the job market. Jobless growth is meaningless.” Fiji's progress in the area of political empowerment is commendable. It is an opportune time to build on our gains in this area by pursuing temporary special measures for increasing women's political participation.

Women's participation and leadership in all sectors will be vital to our future, which means much more must be done to narrow the gender gap between men and women in Fiji.