



Co-conveners of the
Fiji Consultation on Women's Participation in National Democratic Processes

WOMEN'S FORUM

10th – 12th April, 2012
Suva, Fiji

OUTCOMES STATEMENT

1. **12th April 2012** marks a historic moment in Fiji's history and the history of our women's movement. This inaugural national Women's Forum brings together women from rich and diverse backgrounds – our women speak with voices that represent women with disabilities and living with HIV, as well as different faiths, cultures, sexualities, gender identities, ages, demographics and opinions. Women make up 49% of the voting population.
2. Since 6 December 2006, when our democratic rights were arbitrarily removed from us - we have been isolated and silenced. The State's current road map to elections was neither transparent nor inclusive. However as feminists, human rights activists, peace-builders and democracy advocates, we have come together to make our voices heard.
3. We call on the State to respect the rights of the women, and the people of Fiji. Our voices must be heard. The rights of women must be valued and respected by the State. At every point in our history, at every point in our democratic process, it is imperative that every person in Fiji respects human rights, the rule of law and the dignity of every person as fundamental principles which must be promoted and protected at all times.
4. This Women's Forum builds on a rich tradition of activism of Fijian women throughout our national history. It confirms our combined commitment to define the future of democracy in Fiji. This Women's Forum is committed to representing the voices of women throughout the country through an ongoing process of information dissemination, collaboration and solidarity.
5. This Women's Forum discussed a range of issues relating to the State's constitution making process announced on 9 March 2012. Concerns were raised at the lack of consultation and engagement, and its tight time frame. Participants concurred that any process must be legitimate, participatory and inclusive to ensure that the democratic State has popular sovereignty.
6. Learning from the lessons of our past, we call for a transparent process for endorsing the constitution in a collaborative and inclusive manner ensuring that all of the peoples of Fiji play a meaningful and genuine part in the making of our constitution. This means that the State may not – at any stage of the process - arbitrarily impose its own views on the women and the people of Fiji.

Respect for Human Rights

7. The National Women's Forum agreed that:

- The principles of participation, transparency, accountability, respect for human rights and respect for the rule of law are fundamental values which must be respected by every person in our country;
- Any new or reformed Constitution must entrench a strong Bill of Rights which builds on the benchmark of freedoms and rights included in the 1997 Constitution of Fiji and integrates international human rights treaties and norms;
- The State must respect the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association. If people cannot meet freely and speak without fear, they will be unable to effectively engage in the ongoing democratization process. In this context, it is imperative that the State immediately repeal the Public Order Amendment Decree and all other repressive decrees;

Defining the role of the security forces

8. The National Women's Forum agreed that:
- There should be a return to democratic, civilian leadership as soon as possible;
 - The Land Force Commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces should not be one of the focal points for constitution making and electoral reform processes;
 - Civic education and awareness raising for the constitution making processes should not be conducted by any military or police personnel. The people of Fiji must be able to engage with the constitution making process in a free and open environment which allows for debate, disagreement and discussion. If this process is to be meaningful, people must be empowered to reflect openly and honestly on the challenges facing our country, and their ideas on how we can move our country forward;
 - There should be no military or police representatives on the proposed Constituent Assembly.
 - Any new or reformed Constitution must make it explicit that there will be no ongoing military involvement in Fiji's Government upon the return to democracy. In this context, the democratization process should require that military personnel in the public service be required to resign.

Promotion of women's participation in decision-making & democratisation processes

9. The National Women's Forum agreed that:
- It is imperative that the current democratisation process integrates women's participation at all levels.
 - Any new or reformed Constitution must integrate temporary special measures to promote 50% women's political participation at national and local government levels. At a minimum, it must be a requirement that all political parties in Fiji must include 50% women candidates.

A rights-based, respectful, open and participatory constitution making process

10. The National Women's Forum agreed that:
- Civic education should be implemented using a rights-based and gender-sensitive approach, which promotes inclusivity and genuine participation. As much as possible, content should be developed and implemented with civil society. All those involved in delivering civic education activities, including public service personnel must undergo gender and human rights training;
 - Civic education programmes must be developed and delivered in a participatory and inclusive manner. Every effort must be made by all stakeholders to ensure outreach to all citizens of Fiji, wherever they live, with special efforts made to ensure that the opinions of women and marginalized groups are heard.
 - Recognising that young people will comprise our largest voting block by 2014, civic education efforts must ensure that young people, the majority of whom have never voted, are particularly supported to engage in these democratization processes;

- The women of Fiji must be involved in developing the terms of reference for the proposed Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly must be comprised of 50% women, from throughout the country, representing diverse constituencies.
- Final endorsement of a new or reformed Constitution must involve an open process which includes popular endorsement in some form, for example, through an elected Constituent Assembly or a national referendum.

11. The members of this Women's Forum have committed to taking back what we have discussed here this week and sharing it with our communities. We are also committed to working with other groups and stakeholders throughout the nation, who are committed to democracy. This Forum is the start of an ongoing process for women to reclaim our rightful place in national decision-making and in the democratization process. We will meet regularly, and commit together and with others, to discuss, debate and advance Fiji to participatory democratization. The National Women's Forum will continue to ensure that the process to elections and beyond will be genuinely democratic for all the people of Fiji.