FIJI


Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Please refer to Fiji’s implementation report on the Beijing Platform for Action (1999) and Fiji’s combine 2nd, 3rd and 4th periodic CEDAW Report (2008). In addition, under the National Women’s Plan of Action – 1999-2008 there were a range of initiatives been developed and implemented for women in Fiji.

Women’s Plan of Action 1999-2008
Based on the premise of the Beijing Platform of Action 1995 and the needs of women in Fiji, the Women’s Plan of Action (WPA) was formulated after extensive consultation with stakeholders in 1998, followed by the launching of the WPA (1999 – 2008) in the same year. The WPA had five areas of concern namely: Gender Mainstreaming, Balancing Decision Making, and Review of Laws which are disadvantageous to Women, Micro Enterprise Development and the Campaign to Eliminate Violence against Women.

Some of the achievements of the WPA include:

a) Gender Mainstreaming
Gender mainstreaming of women and gender concerns into Government policies and programmes have not achieved the desired results. However, the ADB funded gender audit pilot projects at the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health have been revisited and plans are underway to implement the recommendations in the respective reports. Other milestones include the Gender Audit reports for the 2 pilot ministries; Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health and the production of tools for gender mainstreaming, the Gender Assessment Pathway (GAP) which should facilitate in depth audits in the 2 ministries and future audits in other ministries and departments. At the programme level, Driti Fish Pond is a good example of gender mainstreaming through an integrated approach. The project was the result of the partnership between the Ministry for Women, Department of Fisheries, University of the South Pacific (USP), South Pacific Commission (SPC) and the women of Driti village in Bua.

b) Women and the Law (WAL)
The WAL taskforce which is the most progressive in terms of the implementation of the Women’s Plan of Action participated and contributed to processes which resulted in the following achievements:

- Enactment of the Family Law Act 2003;
- The Employment Relations Promulgation 2007;
- The Fiji Law Reform Commission was initially approved by Cabinet in 2003 and the proposed legislation Domestic Violence is in the Bill stage;
- Review of the Penal Code and Criminal Procedures Code 2006
- Marriage (Amendment) Regulations 2009

c) Balancing Decision Making
The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy in the Fiji Public Service was adopted by the Public Service Commission in 2000; however, women continue to dominate at the lower level and comprise 17% of those in the Senior Executive Service (SES) grade. According to the Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics (FIBoS) Employment/Unemployment survey 2004/2005, women dominate in the social sector and make up 58% of those who are employed as clerks. Meanwhile, the target of 30% women representation in public boards and committees continue to be elusive. Another key development is the appointment of the Minister responsible for the Department of Women into the National Security Council. By virtue of this appointment, women will be represented at divisional and district levels by Divisional and Women Interests Assistants respectively. This provides the platform to effectively address Fiji’s commitment to UN Security Resolution 1325 on Peace and Security and the representation of women in decision making bodies.
d) Elimination of Violence against Women
Violence against women continues to be a major concern by key stakeholders, however, the Domestic Violence Bill is a major achievement and once passed, it should address most of the critical issues confronting victims and also streamline processes and protocols for service providers. Further, the involvement of men as partners is one of the initiatives by NGOs to address gender based violence. The programme provides gender training to male advocates who in turn are able to train and share with other men the importance of reducing such violence at home and in the community. In 2008, the Ministry for Women together with its partners introduced the ‘Zero Tolerance and Violence Free Community project, which was launched during the 16 day of activism in 2008 at Koroipta, (outside Lautoka). The inter agency committee together with the local committee continues to monitor the project. Plans are underway to replicate the programme in other communities. Gender based violence is often associated with hardship and poverty, hence the need for continuity in pursuing economic empowerment for women.

e) Micro Enterprise Development
As outlined by the mid term review of the WPA, this area of concern was one of the strengths of the Ministry for Women, particularly the Field Services. Practical skills training continued to be implemented upon requests from communities. In addition, micro and small business skills trainings were conducted in partnership with key agencies. One of the success stories is the Driti Fish pond which is a joint project with Fisheries Department, USP and SPC in Bua. Women have also benefited in other programmes like the Yasawa I Rara Handicraft centre which provides women with a place to sell their handicrafts to tourists who visit the island. For the period 2005 – 2006, a total of 14 economic projects were funded through the WPA and NGO funds allocations. The challenge was in monitoring to ensure the continuity in operations of these projects. Other community assistance like sanitation and water projects were also implemented co-jointly with other development partners which also included the Vatoa toilet project in Lau.

Apart from the above, achievements of the Women’s Plan of Action (1999-2008) have been difficult to measure, nonetheless, it has managed to identify and brought forth critical issues which affect women and their marginalized positions. Be as it may, mainstreaming women’s and gender concerns should continue to be part of the process of advancing these issues at sectoral and institutional levels.

By definition:
“Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. (UNDP: 2000)"

Although women continue to be marginalized in certain areas, Fiji has come a long way since adopting the Beijing Platform of Action and the ratification of CEDAW in 1995. In 2008, Fiji submitted its 2nd, 3rd and 4th periodic state CEDAW report. These milestones reflect the strategic partnership with women NGOs, community based organizations, UN agencies, donor partners and other government Ministries and Departments.

Part Two: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

Please refer to Fiji’s implementation report on the Beijing Platform for Action (1999) and Fiji’s combine 2nd, 3rd and 4th periodic CEDAW Report (2008). In addition, under the National Women’s Plan of Action – 1999-2008 there were a range of initiatives been developed and implemented for women in Fiji.

The Department of Women continues to pursue its role as primary advisor to government on public policies that affect women and is the key catalyst for the implementation of the Women’s Plan of Action (WPA) 1999-2008. Government continues to provide the policy framework for the development and advancement of women through successive Strategic Development Plans which also reflects provisions of the WPA.
Equality and Empowerment of Women.

It must be noted, however, that women and gender issues are cross-cutting; therefore, it needs to be reflected across the sectors. Meanwhile, the main objective under SEEDS is the ‘Achievement of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women through full participation in business through entrepreneurial support in non-formal and formal sector and decision making processes.’ This provides the framework for the development and advancement of women in Fiji for the medium term. In the meantime, the process of revising the Women’s Plan of Action is in progress and this paper attempts to provide insights into women and gender issues after the mid-term review in 2005.

Mid Term Review of the WPA 1999 - 2008

A mid-term review was conducted in 2005 with particular focus on assessing the structure and functions of the Department of Women in view of current and future commitments by Fiji to implement international, regional and national agreements on gender equality and the advancement of women. The review, amongst others, recommended the inclusion of two new areas of concern namely: Formal sector employment and Livelihoods; and Reproductive Health and HIV & AIDS. Micro enterprise development became part of the Formal Sector Employment and Livelihood, whilst ‘Mainstreaming Women and Gender Concerns’ was removed as an area of concern, it became recognized as a process underlying all implementations. The 3 which were retained were: Equal Participation in Decision Making, Women and the Law and Campaign to Eliminate Violence against Women. Apart from Women and the Law, the 4 new and revised areas of concern were eventually approved by Cabinet in 2007.

Subsequent to the mid-term review, the joint consultation with NGOs adopted the following 14 outcomes:

i) Formal Sector Employment & Livelihoods
   a) To create an awareness and understanding on trade liberalization in order to increase and enable women's participation in commercial enterprises;
   b) To provide financial incentives that will enable women to participate effectively including the identification of ways to address the cultural barriers that hinder success in business;
   c) To carry out a survey on marketing mechanisms for women’s craft locally and overseas;
   d) To encourage the co-operation of line ministries to work closely to ensure the productivity and sustainability of quality goods both for the local and overseas market;
   e) Improving quality of goods;
   f) Conserving raw materials;
   g) To ensure that there be intentional planning of engaging youths where appropriate to carry out joint programmes with women;

ii) Equal Participation in Decision Making:
   a) Governments act on their commitments to women and gender and development;
   b) Governments encourage and provide adequate resources for effective national machineries for women and development;
   c) Strengthen the capacity of the National Council of Women and the Soqosoqo Vakamarama;
   d) For political parties to identify, endorse and support both women and men as candidates for political offices at national and local levels;
   e) Equitable participation by women and men in public life, statutory bodies, an in management roles in government, private sector and civil society organizations.

iii) Reproductive health and HIV and AIDS
   a) National health legislations and policies to meet the different needs of men and women and promote gender equality in access to services and training;
   b) Improve the quality and access to reproductive health services;
   c) Prevent the spread of STIs and HIV and AIDS and cancers in men and women;
   d) Improve access to health education and provision of health promotion programmes to men and women in the rural and urban centers.

iv) Elimination of Violence against Women and Children
   a) Establish policies and programmes to prevent violence against women and children;
   b) Review existing structures and facilities;
   c) Collect and publicize data on VAW and children;
   d) Monitoring and evaluation – reporting mechanisms.
The Way Forward:
Needless to say, the Women’s Plan of Action 1999 – 2008 has achieved some of the policy objectives, however, there are key issues which still have to be addressed, hence the continued inclusion of 3 areas of concern namely; Equal Participation in Decision Making, Elimination of Violence against Women and Women and the Law is necessary. Therefore, based on the findings, it is recommended that the following be considered as the new Areas of Concern with relevant policy changes in the revised WPA:

A. Formal Sector Employment & Livelihood
In order to improve the status of women in formal sector employment and also to effectively address the situation of those poor and marginalized the following is recommended:

- a) Gender mainstreaming - Incorporate women’s issues into sectoral policies, plans and programmes including macro economic policies and national budgets;
- b) Strengthen existing and forge new strategic partnerships for an integrated approach to the economic development and empowerment of women;
- c) Strengthen research capacity of the Ministry for Women to undertake research (in partnership with academic institutions and donor partners) on critical matters and emerging issues pertaining to women.
- d) Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women, Indicator 3.2 (Share of women in wage employment in the non agriculture sector);

B. Equal Participation in Decision Making
Despite policy directives by successive governments for women to have 30% representation in various boards, committees etc. this has not been achieved hence the need to re-strategize. The following is therefore recommended:

- a) EEO policy needs to be facilitated, reviewed and monitored;
- b) Promote and facilitate the review of relevant legislations particularly on membership of boards, commissions etc.
- c) Equal Participation in political life including Parliament has to be pursued vigorously;
- d) Facilitate the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325; the inclusion of women in Disaster management and environmental committees;
- e) Monitor MDG 3 Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women, Indicator 3.3 (Proportion of seats held by women in parliament);
- f) Gender mainstreaming - Incorporate women’s issues into sectoral policies, plans and programmes.

C. Elimination of Violence against Women
One of the root causes of gender based violence is “attitude” which is often compounded by the power relations in our patriarchal society. In order to address this problem and change the mindset of people, gender sensitivity programmes are necessary. These are to be conducted at all levels of society targeting the service providers, the Police, health professionals and counselors hence the following recommendations:

- a) Educate community & law enforcement agencies to prevent and eliminate violence against women;
- b) Facilitate review of harsher sentencing penalties for offenders of gender based violence;
- c) Facilitate the provision of shelter with professional counseling services for victims of domestic violence and perpetrators as well;
- d) Gender mainstreaming – incorporate men’s and women’s issues in relevant Ministries and Departments with initial focus on service providers namely Police and Health;
- e) Promote male involvement in eliminating violence against women;
- f) Institutional mechanisms (WPA) to monitor implementation for the plan of action.

D. Access to Services
D.1 Health
As discussed in the report, clinical health care and management of reproductive health and HIV & AIDS has been adequately addressed in existing policy frameworks and programmes therefore the Department of Women needs to focus on Prevention. This can be addressed through the following:

- a) Access to health services for rural and remote areas need to be improved;
- b) Increased awareness programmes on RH issues to reduce incidences of teenage pregnancies, STIs and HIV and AIDS;
- c) Facilitate the inclusion of specific programmes for care givers in the family of HIV positive persons within the existing framework;
- d) Promote good nutrition and healthy living to reduce morbidity and sickness;
- e) Gender mainstreaming – continuation of gender audit of MOH policies;
- f) Facilitate access to improved water supply and sanitation.
D.2 Education
There is a need to eliminate certain biases in the education sector. These include having gender sensitive educational materials, incorporating gender awareness training for trainee teachers and those who are actively involved namely school committees. Gender representation at decision making levels within the sector also needs to be included. Hence the following recommendations:

a) Encourage the elimination of all forms of gender bias in education including revision of textbooks and materials;
b) Integrate gender inclusive education programmes in schools and tertiary institutions;
c) Develop education potential of women including school dropouts to enable them to contribute effectively to their families and communities;
d) Monitor MDG 3 Indicator 3.1 (Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary & tertiary education);
e) Gender mainstreaming – incorporate women and men’s issues into sectoral policies, plans and programmes;

E. Women and the Law
E.1 Legislations and Human Rights
Certain legislative reform is necessary to improve the status of women in Fiji and to ensure compliance with international and regional commitments such as CEDAW, MDGs, etc. In addition, human rights issues of women and children need to be monitored. Legal literacy training is required to create and increase awareness hence the inclusion/retention of this particular area of concern for Women & the Law is deemed necessary. Therefore the need to include the following recommendations:

a) Access to the Justice and legal system;
b) Provide gender perspectives to legislative changes and new legislations;
c) Facilitate education & training on human rights.
d) Gender mainstreaming – incorporate women and gender concerns into sectoral policies, plans and programmes;

E.2 Culture and tradition
There has been growing concern from Government regarding cultural revitalization. This is reflected through continued government support towards cultural heritage activities such as heritage site management, artistic promotion activities, preservation and protection of artifacts and archeological documentation, safeguarding and promotion of Language, Cultural and Heritage sites should be conserved and protected. Tourism, as the fastest growing industry in the world including Fiji, relies to a large extent on cultural heritage for its sustainability. The challenge is to develop an agenda that recognizes women as significant actors in development and as bearers and signifiers of their culture

a) The association between gender and culture needs consideration;
b) Promote culture as the potential tool for economic development to address the problems of unemployment, poverty and crime, faced by our youth today.
c) Modify cultural practices which discriminate against women and uphold those which enhance gender equality;
d) Acknowledge and recognize women’s specialized skills on traditional handicrafts and artifacts in light of the Patent Act (Cap 293).

Part Three Institutional development.

Institutional Mechanisms
The WPA is a national document hence it must be viewed within that context. The Department of Women would therefore need a clear definition of its role and functions to effectively deliver its services in the implementation of the revised WPA. In order to do so, the following institutional mechanisms are recommended:

a) Gender Focal Points
b) Inter-agency committee (Taskforces);
c) Ministry for Women Executive Team – PSWSW&PA and DW
d) National Women’s Advisory Council (by legislation).

To enhance performance and facilitate implementation by the Department of Women and its key partners, the following is recommended:

a) Institutional Strengthening & Strategic Partnership
The role of the Department of Women and Social Welfare is to eradicate poverty through providing support to the poor, empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming and co-ordination of services to the disabled. The roles of 2 distinct departments have been clustered into this one broad statement. The role and functions of the Department of Women need to be clear. When the Department was first established in 1987 it continued with the functions of the women’s interest office.
However, the role and function has evolved from being service oriented to providing policy advice. Dr Griffen in her mid term review recommended that “..the Department of Women revise its function to focus on its mandated responsibility for providing policy advice on women’s and gender concerns and to enable it to fulfill its role as a catalyst in promoting the implementation of the WPA and international commitments.”;

In light of foregoing and the planned activities for the Department of Women, the broad function would be:
   i. Providing policy advice to government;
   ii. Education and training;
   iii. Research and policy analysis.

Therefore, in order to effectively carry out these functions, the following is recommended:
   i. Strengthen the Policy and Research Unit;
   ii. Capacity building for all staff through targeted training in priority areas such as:
      a. Gender sensitization training;
      b. Gender policy analysis and mainstreaming;
      c. Legal literacy training and human rights based approach to development;
      d. Research and Statistical data analysis;
      e. Leadership and management/decision making training.

Partnership Arrangements
The Women’s Plan of Action recognizes that the full economic and social participation of women is the responsibility of Government. It therefore relies on the different ministries/ departments to integrate the needs and concerns of women in their everyday work. The Ministry will be the coordinating authority for the Women’s Plan of Action. To effectively carry out this task the following mechanisms will facilitate the implementation of the WPA. There will be a taskforce for each Area of Concern; membership will comprise representatives from relevant Government agencies, NGOs, Statutory Boards and other Development Partners.

Members of the taskforces will also be appointed Gender Focal Points in their respective organizations. The Terms of Reference for the taskforces is attached as Annex 2 to this document. At the same time, ministries planning mechanisms, Gender Focal points (Taskforce members – Annex 1) and other institutional mechanisms need to be strengthened so that they can effectively mainstream gender issues and concerns into their respective sectoral policies and programmes. Civil society organizations and other stakeholders at national, regional and international level also play a crucial role in strengthening its partnership to deliver the outcomes pertaining to the Women’s Plan of Action.

Financial Arrangements
The implementation of the Women’s Plan of Action requires both financial and human resources. The WPA is a document which articulates the development needs and aspirations of women in Fiji hence the need to view it in totality. The limited resources of government will not be able to fulfill all these obligations; therefore, the participation and contribution of Development Partners through technical assistance and financial support is not only important but imperative. This will result in the goals identified in the Women’s Plan of Action being achieved.

Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements
The implementation of policy directions is a continuing process involving the strategies and resources of Government and the co-operation of its Development Partners through wide consultation. The WPA will be effectively implemented through the Inter agency Committees for each area of concern. The chairperson and deputy chairperson will be appointed by the Permanent Secretary for Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation upon the recommendation of the Director for Women. The list of members for each committee is outlined on Annex 1. Essentially, effective monitoring will result not only in demonstrating the changing position of women in the key areas of concern but also identify policy changes required. The monitoring framework will include the Executive Gender Management Team and the National Women’s Advisory Council. The Terms of References is also included on Annex 2.

Reviewing and Reporting
The Minister responsible for women will provide an annual report of achievements and changes to the Plan of Action and progress reports on continuing work. At the end of every three years a full scale review involving the widest consultation process of all key partners will take place within the next ten years. In addition, line Ministries and Departments involved are expected to be reporting through their annual reports and performance agreements.
Part Four Remaining challenges and actions to address them.

Women’s Plan of Action (2009-2018)
The WPA aims to provide direction for actions to be taken by government; its development partners stakeholders, NGOs to promote gender equality and reduce inequality and discrimination against women in all sectors. It is also a Plan of Action that will be operationalized in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation’s Corporate Plan and the Business Plan of the Department of Women. The WPA is meant to reflect critical areas of action and government’s commitment to strategies appropriate to address gender equality in those areas. The Women’s Plan of Action is a national document and needs to reflect national development issues of concern to women, providing a gender analysis of government policies and programmes. The Women’s Plan of Action (2009-2018) covers policy objectives in the National Development Plan – Strategic Framework for Change, Pacific Platform for Action 2005-2015 and the Revised MDG January 2008.

In accordance with the Strategic Framework for Change of Government with the recommendations by Dr Griffen’s Mid-term Review, the findings from the achievements for the last WPA (1999-2008) and the WPA Situational Analysis Report 2005 - 2008, it is concluded that the following areas of concern will be the way forward for the new Women’s Plan of Action (2009-2018).

The areas of concern are:
1. Formal Sector Employment and Livelihoods
2. Equal Participation in Decision-Making
3. Violence Against Women and Children
4. Access to Services:
   (i) Health and HIV & AIDS
   (ii) Education
   (iii) Other Basic Services (Water & Sanitation, Housing and Transport)
5. Women and the Law

Since gender mainstreaming is a cross cutting issue, it will be used for all the above areas of concern as a means to strengthen internal and external institutional capacity of the Department of Women, and its key partners in supporting gender equality strategies at the national level. This will also help government in its role and commitment in implementing the WPA and advancing gender equality.

There is a need to improve the status of women at work, in the home and the community through expanding their choices and providing a conducive environment for their progress and well being. The new WPA is aimed at providing them with such opportunities.

Areas of Concern

1. FORMAL SECTOR EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS.
The Beijing Platform of Action outlines the need to promote women’s economic rights and independence which include access to employment, appropriate working conditions and access and control over economic resources. Furthermore, Article 11 of CEDAW requires states to ensure that women have the right to the same employment opportunities, free choice of profession, the right to promotion, job security and training, the right to equal remuneration irrespective of the work and value amongst other employment benefits.

In Fiji, the WPA has a lot of economic strategies for women focusing on assisting women in the informal sector hence the need to have a broader and more encompassing area of concern. Therefore, the inclusion of Formal Sector Employment and Livelihoods will reflect the broad economic status of women and their participation and contribution to the overall economic development of the nation.

The Plan of Action identifies the need to recognize and support mechanisms that will strengthen and improve the quality of life and reduce the level of poverty through increased participation of women at all levels of engagement.
2. EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING.

Government has endorsed MDG number 3 to Promote gender equality and empower women with Target 3.A ‘Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015 with the following indicators 3.1 (the ratio of girls to boys in education) and 3.3 (the ratio of literate females to males of 15 – 24 year olds). There is still a long way to go on indicators 3.2 (the share of women in wage employment in the non agricultural sector) and 3.3 (the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament).

Representation of women in decision making bodies in the public sector continues to be a major challenge. Although successive Governments had a policy of having at least 30% representation since 2003, this has not been achieved. Achieving the goal of shared decision-making between men and women will reflect the composition of society and strengthen the democratic processes of governance. It is also a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace articulated in global women's conferences will be difficult to achieve.

The Plan of Action identifies the need to recognize and support mechanisms that will enable the achievement of the goal to Making Women Visible in Formal Decision-Making in Fiji.

3. ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

There is a need to recognize and support mechanisms that will help eliminate sexual and family violence in order to achieve the goal of having ‘A Safer Community through the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children.

Violence impinges on the lives of women worldwide cutting across cultural and religious barriers, impeding the right of women to participate fully in society. In the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995, the Platform for Action’s core document stated that Governments declared that “violence against women constitutes a violation of basic human rights and is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace”.

Commitment by Governments at the Beijing Conference, agreed to the adoption and implementation of national legislations to end violence against women and to work actively to ratify all international agreements that relate to violence against women. A key feature of this agreement was the establishment of shelters, legal aid and other services for girls and women at risk, counseling and rehabilitation for perpetrators. In the Pacific Platform of Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality with regards to Women’s Legal and Human Rights, the goal to eliminate sexual and family violence and attitudes towards such forms of violence, would require having policies and programmes to prevent these forms of violence. This could include the analysis of legislation regarding violence, seminars for lawmakers, the police and the judiciary in reforming attitudes towards sex and violence, the changing of public attitudes, government programmes to support victims of violence, prevention of trafficking of women and children, sex and pedophilic tourism.

4. ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES:

(I) HEALTH and HIV & AIDS
i. Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS

Reproductive health implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this is the rights of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice and further other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law. It also includes the right of access to appropriate health care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant.

Government recognizes that HIV and AIDS is a barrier to Fiji’s overall national progress and development. It’s commitment to an accelerated, comprehensive, multi sectoral, multi level response is shown by providing a specific budget line for HIV and supporting an appropriate legislative framework affirming that only through a well coordinated partnership with local and international partners, Fiji can respond effectively to the challenges of HIV & AIDS and
STIs. This is envisaged to accelerate the reversal of the spread of this pandemic. In addition to Government funding, UNICEF, UN AIDS and SPC also provide funding and technical assistance for HIV and AIDS programmes.

The National Advisory Committee of AIDS (NACA) in its policy framework the Fiji National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2007 – 2011 articulated five Priority Areas namely: Prevention of HIV infection; Clinical Management of HIV and AIDS; Continuum of Care for People Living with or affected by HIV; Research, Surveillance and Monitoring and Evaluation; and Coordination and Good Governance.

Health continues to be a growing and increasingly complex field of competing priorities from all perspectives: from the individuals to governments, businesses, health professionals and the health services system. A healthy and productive population is a key for sustainable economic development. Despite consuming a major portion of governments budget (3% of GDP and 9% of total budget), health care funding continues to be lower as compared to other countries in the region. Whilst many efforts have been made to improve health outcomes, review of health performance indicators suggests that Fiji lags behind in achieving key MDG Goals. This suggests substantial challenges remain in terms of both the health benefits received by the people and the effectiveness of the health service in delivering improved health.

(II) EDUCATION.

There is also a need to incorporate gender into education curricular including tertiary institutions and also promote the elimination of gender biases in educational materials. Generally, urban women have higher levels of education compared to those in rural areas. With that level of education, most of the rural women participate in handicraft making and small scale activities as a source of income, in addition to their domestic and traditional roles. However, women in rural areas including those with disability would like to have access to education particularly TVET.

In terms of education service delivery, the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET), Leadership & Management and Enterprise Education (EE) pilots have shown increased benefits to schools, students and the community at large. Such modes of education require further encouragement by having a national policy for TVET, resourcing and coordination between government and agencies with responsibility for TVET. TVET and enterprise education is considered as life long learning process in enforcing the concept of education. The Plan of Action identifies the need to recognize and support mechanisms that will strengthen gender equality in access to formal and non-formal education and training.

(III) Other Basic Services (Water, Sanitation, Housing and Transport).

Water and Sanitation. Although it is reported that in 2004 approximately 47% of the population had access to improved water source, many rural areas and provinces still lack access to potable water with the exception of Rotuma. Provinces located closer to urban centres have a high percentage of obtaining access to metered water supply whilst the remaining populations in these provinces have communal standpipes, roof catchments water tanks, wells, rivers and creeks. The majority of the population who still lack access to potable water instead use communal standpipes, draw from wells, rivers and creeks.

Wholesome water is the basic necessity of life. Apparently, there is a need to improve the water supply system in rural areas. Women will also spend less time fetching water from wells, creeks and rivers. The provision of piped water system for individual homes will enable the people to have improved sanitation as well. In 2004 the percentage of the population using improved sanitation was 72% compared to 68% in 1990.

Housing: Housing is a basic necessity of life. Government is committed to provide equal opportunity and access to adequate, quality and affordable accommodation for all citizens with a particular focus on low income groups and the poor (SEEDS 2008 – 2010). The need for housing is exacerbated by the increasing number of informal settlements in peri urban centres.

Transport remains to be a vital component of the economy contributing to around 10 percent to GDP. The transport sector includes land, sea and air transport.

Land Transport. Major developments included the completion of the 50 KM Kings and Lodoni roads, upgrading on portions of roads and bridges within the Suva/Nausori and Lautoka/Nadi corridors together with the rehabilitation of most of the road sections around the country. Progress on the FRUP III is anticipated to be completed in December 2009.
The rural roading programme will continue to provide basic all weather access roads to rural dwellers and villages in a cost effective manner. This will improve the quality of life of the rural population and promote economic growth by reducing rural transport costs. The priority is to connect all rural communities and villages in the interior of Vitilevu and Vanua Levu by road. The special needs of women and girls with disabilities to access public transportation has to be addressed also.

Shipping. The rural and outer islands suffer from inadequate infrastructure, either due to poor design or through lack of capital and maintenance budget allocations. Government infrastructure spending on the transport sector has been focused on land transport, with only about 1.4% spent annually on sea and shipping related activities. Shipping spending is limited to maintenance; most of this small budget is shared between Suva, Lautoka, Savusavu and Levuka – the international ports of entry – rather than to develop inter-island shipping.

The outer islands do not have substantial markets on their own, the main market for most products being Suva or Viti Levu. However the only means to access this market is by sea, leading to un-satisfied demands and needs for better shipping services and maritime infrastructure. This requires a rural sector wide project to increase access to human and financial assets to better utilise the natural resources in addressing increased market opportunities provided by better infrastructure provision to the rural communities and, especially, the outer islands.

5. WOMEN AND THE LAW.

Key issues arising from the WPA consultations which are pertinent to legislations and human rights include the following:

a) Review of Legislation, there is a need to review some legislations to be more gender sensitive and to comply with the requirements of CEDAW, MDGs and other international and regional commitments. Some of these include:
   • Marriage Act 1969 to be reviewed to increase the marriage age for young women from 16 years to 18 years which is also in line with the General Recommendation of the UN CEDAW Committee and CRC;
   • Mental Health legislation (proposed) must take into account the different needs of women and men who may require services and treatment;
   • The Public Health Act is currently under review, it may be prudent to engage a gender consultant with a legal background to provide the gender dimensions on the key provisions of the Act;
   • Review the Statistics Act to make provisions for gender sensitive census data collection and analysis.

b) Human rights awareness programmes for men and women including the disabled;

c) Access to justice and legal services for all women in rural and remote areas.

d) Promulgation of Domestic Violence Bill.

The Plan of Action identifies the need to recognize and support mechanisms that will strengthen and ensure the achievement of the goal of ‘Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women’
## Annex 1 Proposed Membership of the Inter agency Committees (Taskforces)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FSEL</th>
<th>EPIDM</th>
<th>Access to Services</th>
<th>EVAW</th>
<th>WAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Public Service Commission</td>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td>SG’S Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Min of Labour</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Enterprises</td>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Dept. of Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fisheries Dept.</td>
<td>Ministry of Home Affairs</td>
<td>NACA</td>
<td>Family Court Division</td>
<td>Judicial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Poverty Alleviation Unit</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Fiji Disabled Persons Association</td>
<td>FNCDP</td>
<td>Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics (FIBOS)</td>
<td>Min. of Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>FNCDP</td>
<td>NACA</td>
<td>FIBoS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ministry of Provincial Development</td>
<td>Dept of Multi Ethnic Affairs</td>
<td>NCW</td>
<td>NCW</td>
<td>NCW</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Dept. of Co-operatives</td>
<td>PM’s Office</td>
<td>SSV</td>
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<td>9. FDB</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour</td>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>Fiji Disabled Persons Association</td>
<td>FWRM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. NCSMED</td>
<td>NCW (Femlink)</td>
<td>RRRT</td>
<td>FWCC</td>
<td>FWCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Fiji Employers Federation</td>
<td>SSV</td>
<td>FWRM</td>
<td>IJALS (USP)</td>
<td>IJALS (USP)</td>
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<td>12. Fiji Trade Union Congress</td>
<td>FNCDP</td>
<td>TPAF</td>
<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>UNIFEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Fiji Islands Council of Trade Union</td>
<td>Ministry of Youth</td>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>RRRT</td>
<td>RRRT</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. FWRM</td>
<td>USP (Mngmt)</td>
<td>Ministry of Youth</td>
<td>FNCDP</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. NCW</td>
<td>Fiji Disabled Persons Association</td>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>Fiji Disabled Persons Association</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. SSV</td>
<td>FEF</td>
<td>FWRM</td>
<td>Fiji Law Society</td>
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<td>17. ECREA</td>
<td>FTUC</td>
<td>Fiji Law Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. USP (Economics)</td>
<td>FICTU</td>
<td>Fiji Law Society</td>
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<td>19. UNIFEM</td>
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<td>20. Dept. of Culture</td>
<td>FWRM</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. TPAF</td>
<td>Ministry of National Planning</td>
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</table>

**Key:**
- **FSEL** – Formal Sector Employment & Livelihoods
- **EPIDM** – Equal Participation in Decision Making
- **Access to Services**
- **EVAW** – Elimination of Violence Against Women
- **WAL** – Women and the Law
Annex 2

The following is recommended to be the appropriate mechanism to facilitate the implementation of the revised Women's Plan of Action.

Secretariat
The secretariat of the 5 taskforces shall be provided by the Department of Women and it shall be responsible for:
1. Facilitating the appointment of members of the taskforces;
2. Co-ordinating the meeting and other schedules for each taskforce;
3. Taking minutes and follow up action on the outcomes of TFs meetings and decisions;
4. Assist the Chairpersons and Team leaders in providing regular reports to the Executive Gender Management Team.

Gender Focal Points
These are key persons in line ministries and departments and NGOs who are expected to advocate and pursue gender issues in their respective organizations. They will be responsible for ensuring that these issues are not only acknowledged and recognized but factored into their respective policies, plans and programmes. Gender Focal Points are to be members of the Inter agency committee (taskforces).

Inter agency Committee
Gender Focal Points from line ministries and departments and representatives of statutory boards, non government organizations and civil society will make up the Committee. Formal Sector Employment and Livelihoods; Equal Participation in Decision Making; Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children; Access to Services; Health; Education; Water & Sanitation; Housing; Transportation; Women and the Law.

Terms of Reference
1. To assist the WPA taskforce by providing advice on sectoral gender issues
2. To facilitate gender analysis training in their respective Organizations
3. To take the lead role in inculcating women and gender issues into sectoral policies, plans and programmes
4. To disseminate to the taskforce the progress of gender issues on the implementation of WPA in their respective organizations.
5. The taskforce will monitor the implementation of the WPA and recommend changes where necessary;
6. To prepare annual budgets for the taskforce and submit to Executive Gender Management Team for approval;
7. To provide regular reports to the Executive Gender Management Team.

Executive Gender Management Team
Under the current structure of the Ministry for Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation, the members of the EGMT to include: the Permanent Secretary for Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation, the Director for Women, Director for Social Welfare and Director Poverty Alleviation.

Terms of Reference
1. To provide technical advice and directions to the WPA inter agency committees and secretariat; 1.
2. To approve and allocate resources for the implementation of appropriate commitments under the 2. WPA;
3. To monitor the progress of the WPA implementation and submit relevant updates to DSC, the National Advisory Committee, and Cabinet as directed by the Minister.

National Women’s Advisory Council
It is recommended that there be a 12 member NWAC who will be appointed by the Minister on the advice of the Permanent Secretary. The women shall be experts in their own fields and shall be appointed on merit.

The role and responsibilities of the National Advisory Council on Women are to:
1. Provide leadership to the work of the Minister responsible for Women to ensure that Government • receives expert policy advice on identified policy and program issues and to develop a positive and active policy agenda for women in Fiji;
2. Provide recommendations, information and advice to the Minister for Women and the Ministry for Women, to facilitate a whole of Government approach to ensuring that programs and services match women’s needs;
3. Monitor all Government policies and programs relating to women and measures of women's progress against set indicators;
4. Develop strategies for dealing with the causes of inequalities for women and to provide leadership to influence and shape women's policy;
5. Assist the Minister for Women to develop and maintain appropriate consultation/engagement mechanisms across Government, with the community and with stakeholders that ensures a broad based, inclusive process;
6. Provide advice and information to assist in research activities;
7. Report on a quarterly basis to the Minister for Women.

The functions of the 12 member Council are as follows:
1. The Minister will appoint members for a two-year term, subject to a review of performance every twelve months. Council members cannot be appointed for more than two consecutive terms.
2. The Council will meet at least quarterly. More frequent meetings may be required in the initial stages of operation. Sub committees may be set up to deal with specific issues.
3. The Director for Women will attend each meeting.
4. Public communications by the Council will be through the Chair of the Council in consultation with the office of the Minister for Women, consistent with agreed and established protocol.
5. Administrative and project support will be provided to the Council by the Department of Women.

In the long term it would be prudent to consider legislative provisions to give the Department of Women the legal mandate to pursue women's issues and address gender gaps in Fiji. However, a thorough analysis must be undertaken first.