



CONCEPT NOTE

National Forum on Women in Politics 2021

“What Obstacles Women Politicians Must Overcome to Be Successful in Elections?”

Background

Some of the countries in the Melanesian region has low percentage of women representation in the parliament when compared to the global average. There are countries which do not have any women in the parliament after the latest elections. While Fiji is among the better ones, this trend shows that there is need for concerted efforts to address the obstacles that women candidates face in elections. Women representation in Parliament is essential as women population in Fiji is more than men. Equal representation is essential so that half of the population is properly represented and have equal inputs in decision making which will affect them directly and indirectly.

This Annual Forum was started by International IDEA and the Media Watch Group under the European Union-funded C³ - Fiji Project in 2018. Since then, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) had organized it with different partners once a year. This year, the Forum is organised under the **“Building Public Confidence in Elections in Fiji through Civil Society Action”** project, funded by the United Kingdom and in partnership with Dialogue Fiji. These forums are intended to address the need to attract more women into politics and to inform the public on issues related to women’s rights and facilitate openings for women political advocates.

This year’s Forum precedes general elections in Fiji expected to take place next year and therefore will focus on women’s aspirations to participate in the elections. It builds upon Webinar #6 of the Democratic Development in Melanesia webinar series entitled “Challenges faced by Women in the Path of Politics in Fiji”, which was held on the 30 September 2021. The 27 October 2021 Forum in Suva will again feature female MPs, as well as females from civil society organisations, academia, and youth groups to have a discussion surrounding the Forum’s theme.

Objective of the Forum

This forum will discuss ideas on how to strategize on the difficulties that is faced in the path of women’s political journey. Broadly speaking, some of the questions that will be addressed are:

- Cultural obstacles in Fiji - how can this be changed?

- Political obstacles - the need of women to be actively involved in politics through political party
- How should women prepare to run in an election?
- How to encourage women to vote for women.

The above are some, but by no means all the issues that are likely to arise at the Forum. It will not only allow participants to understand the broader concerns that affected female candidates in elections, but how at least some of them could be addressed.

Methodology

The Forum will be based on presentations emanating from personal and professional knowledge as well as experiences in the field. The speakers and the audience alike are expected to offer deep insights and supplement the discussions based on their own filed experiences and insights. The presentations will be followed by discussions and interactive sessions amongst the participants. The Forum will be livestreamed in Facebook and Zoom for remote speakers and participants to join in.

Date and Location

The event will be held on the 27 October 2021, 9.30am - 4.00pm at the Holiday Inn Suva

Agenda

Time	Action	Presenter
09:30-10:00	Registration	International IDEA
10:00-10:30	Opening Ceremony	<p>Welcoming Remarks by Ms. Leena Rikkilä Tamang, Regional Director for Asia & the Pacific, International IDEA</p> <p>Opening Speech by H.E. Mr. George Edgar OBE, British High Commissioner to Fiji</p> <p>Keynote Speech by Hon. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji (TBC)</p>
10:30-11:00	Morning Tea	
	Panel Discussion 1: Obstacles to Success <i>Moderator- Losana Tuiraviravi, Team Leader, Intergenerational Women in Leadership Programme, Fiji Women's Rights Movement</i>	
11:00-11:15	Topic: Cultural obstacles in Fiji - how can this be changed?	Speaker: Ms. Mereani Rokotuibau, Team Leader, Balance of Power Project
11:15-11:30	Topic: Political obstacles - the need of women to be actively involved in politics through political party	Speaker: Ms. Monica Raghwan, Vice President, Fiji Labour Party

11:30-12.30	Discussion	
12:30-1:30	Lunch Break	
	Panel Discussion 2: What are some strategies aspiring women can use to overcome the obstacles? <i>Moderator- Romulo Nayacalevu, Pacific Director, Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, University of Queensland, Australia</i>	
1:30-1:45	Topic: How should women prepare to run in an election?	Speaker: Ms. Leonie Morgan, Founder, Emily's List Australia
1:45-2:00	Topic: Encouraging women to vote for women	Speaker: Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua, Member of Parliament, National Federation Party
2:00-2:15	Topic: How can women election candidates take advantage of online platforms?	Speaker: Anne Dunn, Online Safety Commissioner / Fiji First Party Candidate in 2018 Elections
2:15-3:30	Discussion	
3:30-4:00	Programme Closing, Afternoon Tea and Break	