

FIJI



KEY FACTS

POPULATION (2017 estimate):

905,502

AREA (UN 2006):

18,274 sq km

CAPITAL:

Suva

CURRENCY:

Fijian dollar (FJ\$)

HEAD OF STATE:

President Jioji Konousi Konrote

HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:

Prime Minister Voreqe (Frank) Bainimarama

FORM OF GOVERNMENT:

democratic republic

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:

unicameral

STATE STRUCTURE:

unitary

LANGUAGES:

Fijian, English and Hindi (official)

NATIONAL ELECTIONS:

last: Sept 2014, turnout: 84%; next: 2018

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (2013):

16.0%

LOCAL ELECTIONS:

last: 2005, turnout: 60%; next: postponed

WOMEN COUNCILLORS:

13.2% (2005)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as percentage of total government expenditure 2014:

1.5%

SUMMARY

Fiji is a democratic republic with three spheres of government: national, provincial and local. There is no reference to local government in the constitution and the main governing legislation is the Local Government Act 1985. The Ministry for Local Government, Housing and Environment oversees the 13 municipal councils (two city councils and 11 town councils) whilst the 17 rural local authorities are overseen by the National Board of Health. The 14 provincial councils are overseen by the Fijian Affairs Board. At the latest local elections in 2005 13.2% of councillors were women and in 2014 local government expenditure was 1.5% of total government expenditure. Local government can raise revenue through user fees and property taxes, and receives a core funding grant from national government as well as grants for specific services and one-off development projects. Many locally provided services are implemented in partnership with other government and non-government agencies, including rural electrification, environmental management, primary health, water and sanitation services, local economic development and tourism, municipal planning and transport, and social protection.

1. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Fiji has a unicameral parliamentary system of government, with a president as head of state and a prime minister as the head of the government.^{13.1a} The president is appointed by parliament under Section 84 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji 2013. The parliament consists of 50 members, elected for a four-year term. Parliamentarians are elected under a multi-member open list system of proportional representation. Following the 2013 national election, 16.0% of MPs were women.^{13.1b}

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions

There is no reference to local government in Fiji's constitution.^{13.2a}

2.2 Main legislative texts

The principal Act is the Local Government Act 1985 (Cap. 125)^{13.2b}, which was amended in 2006 to enable councils to enter into partnership, joint venture or other commercial arrangements with other statutory authorities, companies or other legal entities, to carry out their duties. Other legislation that governs the development and management of urban areas and the maintenance of their services includes the following:

- Town Planning Act (Cap. 139) 1978
- Subdivision of Land Act (Cap. 140) 1978
- Public Health Act (Cap. 111)
- Business Licensing Act (Cap. 204) 1976
- Litter Decree 1991
- Fiji Roads Authority Decree 2012.

2.3 Proposed legislative changes

Following the adoption of the new constitution in 2013 and national elections in 2014, a review of the Local Government Act is underway to facilitate local government elections.

2.4 National urban policy

An urbanisation policy (Fiji's Urban Policy Action Plan^{13.2c} or UPAP 2005) has been implemented to give more decision-making powers and responsibilities to councils, in particular for poverty alleviation, given the limited financial bases and resource capacities of councils.

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government within the state

Local government has a single-tier structure in the urban areas, where councils are designated as either city or town councils. All councils have the same responsibilities. There are two city (Suva and Lautoka) and 11 town councils. In rural areas there are both provincial councils and rural local authorities. At the sub-national level, governmental and administrative activities are undertaken through four distinct systems. The government administration is divided into four divisions, each headed by a divisional commissioner and district officer. There are 14 provincial councils overseen by the Fijian Affairs Board, whilst the 17 rural local authorities are overseen by the National Board of Health. There are 13 municipal councils (two city councils and 11 town councils) Local government was first established in Fiji in 1877 and the Local Government Act was enacted in 1972, two years after independence. Under this Act the governance of local government was transferred from appointed to elected councils. Although local government is a creation of the national government, it remains largely autonomous financially and administratively. Legally each council is a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal. In July 2008, the then interim government initiated a major review of local government with a view to improving governance and service delivery of municipal councils, and also aiming to enhance local government processes.



Table 13.1a Distribution of councils and population

Division	Province	Provincial councils	Rural local authorities	Municipal councils		Population (2007 Census)	% rural (2007)
				City councils	Town councils		
National	Naitasiri	1	1	-	-	160,760	16.0
	Namosi	1	1	-	-	6,898	100.0
	Rewa	1	1	1	3	100,787	11.9
	Serua	1	1	-	-	18,249	62.4
	Tailevu	1	1	-	-	55,692	68.0
Northern	Bua	1	1	-	-	14,176	95.8
	Cakaudrove	1	1	-	-	49,344	85.7
	Macuata	1	2	-	2	72,441	60.3
Eastern	Kadavu	1	-	-	-	10,167	100.0
	Lau	1	-	-	-	10,683	100.0
	Lomaiviti	1	1	-	1	16,461	73.3
Western	Ba	1	3	1	3	231,608	47.8
	Nadroga Navosa	1	2	-	1	58,387	83.5
	Ra	1	1	-	1	29,464	83.2
Outside divisions	Rotuma	-	1	-	-	2,002	100.0
TOTAL		14	17	2	11	837,271	49.3

Source: MLGHE communication with CLGF and 2007 Census^{13.3a}

Of the 83 recommendations approved by cabinet, 33% were implemented and the remainder are ongoing, awaiting local government elections. In 2012 the role of councils in the administration and maintenance of streets under Section 108 of Division 4 of the principal Act was transferred to the Fiji Roads Authority in line with the Fiji Roads Authority Decree 2012.

3.2 Ministerial oversight

Local government falls within the portfolio of the Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Environment (MLGHE).^{13.3b} The Department of Local Government is responsible for administering the Local Government Act 1985 (Cap. 125), including monitoring compliance by councils and providing advice and support. More recently, the Department of Local Government has expanded its mandate to deliver capacity-building programmes to help strengthen governance and leadership within councils. MLGHE has wide authority over councils. The minister has the power to create a council, to upgrade an existing town to city status and to alter boundaries. Where there is a failure of governance in a council, the minister has the power to suspend or dissolve a council and appoint an administrator to carry out the functions of the council.

The minister also has the power to appoint a local government committee to carry out such enquiries as it deems necessary as well as other functions assigned or referred to it under the Local Government Act (Cap. 125). Whilst the Local Government Act enables a council to make by-laws prescribing forms, fees and other matters necessary or convenient for the peace, good order and government of the municipality, the Minister of Local Government must approve all by-laws and regulations made by a council.

3.3 Council types

Local government in Fiji is unitary and comprises three types of council: municipal, rural and Rotuma's own island council. There are also provincial councils which are part of the traditional system. Local government has a special committee system. Section 27(1) of the Local Government Act provides for standing committees. A council may delegate to a committee any of the powers and duties conferred or imposed upon the council by the provisions of the Act, other than those to borrow money, set a rate, make by-laws, execute a contract, or institute an action. Typical committees are: finance; health and markets; town planning and sub-division of land; traffic and public transport; and infrastructure and works.

3.3.1 Municipal councils: According to the Act, members of municipal councils are elected for a three-year term by universal suffrage. The heads of divisions, districts and rural local authorities are appointed public servants.

3.3.2 Rural local authorities come under the Ministry of Health. Their officials are public servants.

3.3.3 Rotuma island council was established under the Rotuma Act 1978. Its membership includes the chiefs of the seven districts on Rotuma and one elected member for each district. The district officer, the most senior medical officer, and the most senior agricultural officer are ex-officio advisory members without voting powers.

3.4 Traditional leadership

The chiefs of the 14 provinces are Fiji's traditional leaders. The people of each province look to them for guidance of the vanua (home land) and tikina (province) in relation to matters governing their mataqali (clan) rights. The Ministry of Itaukei provides the link between traditional leaders at the local level and the national government.

3.4.1 Provincial councils: The members of provincial councils are elected or nominated for a three-year term by the indigenous Itaukei population registered in each province. (A 'turaga ni koro' is nominated from each village or koro; several koros combine to form a tikina, and two or more tikinas comprise a province.)

4. ELECTIONS

Local government elections are overseen by the Elections Commission^{13.4a} established under Section 75 of the Constitution and Electoral Act 1998. The voting age is 18; however voting is not compulsory. Prior to 2008, local government elections were held every three years. An amendment to the Local Government Act in February 2006 extended the term to four years; however this was subsequently reversed in July 2008 (promulgated in December 2009). Local elections were not held in October 2008 resulting in the expiry of the term of the councils and the appointment of administrators in February 2009. There are currently appointed councillors overseeing local government. The next local elections are due to take place upon completion of the review of the Local Government Act (Cap. 125) endorsing the expiry of the term of the administrators of the council (see Section 2.3).

4.1 Recent local elections

The most recent local government elections were held in Oct/Nov 2005 and turnout was 60%. A date for the next elections has not been set.

Table 13.1b Women councillors and mayors following the last two local elections

Election	2002		2005	
	#	%	#	%
Councillors				
Female councillors	na	na	21	13.3
Male councillors	na	na	137	86.7
Total councillors	na	100.0	158	100.0
Chairpersons				
Female mayors	na	na	na	na
Male mayors	na	na	na	na
Total mayors	na	100.0	na	100.0

Source: MLGHE correspondence with CLGF^{13,4b}

4.2 Voting system

A multi-member open list system of proportional representation is used, under which each voter has one vote, with each vote being of equal value, in a single national electoral roll comprising all registered voters.

4.3 Elected representatives

There are currently no elected councillors.

4.4 Women's representation

Following the local government elections in 2005, 13.3% (21/158) women were elected countrywide. Three councils (Sigatoka, Nausori and Tavua) had no women representatives.

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Legal requirement and 5.2 Implementation

The Local Government Act 1985 and other Acts make provision for involving and informing people and civil society. These include:

- publicising proposals for boundary changes, with objections being heard at public hearings organised by the Local Government Committee
- publication by the council in a local newspaper of its balance sheet, and a statement of income and expenditure, together with the report of its auditor
- inspections of valuations entered in the rate book
- public notification of planning schemes and proposals for re-zoning land use
- public consultation on specific issues.

Councils have also developed special initiatives to involve the public in particular programmes, such as community safety and crime prevention, and for environmental management including clean-up campaigns.

5.3 ICT use in citizen engagement

There is currently no formal e-government programme for local government, although a few councils have ICT budget plans in place. All councils have email addresses and two councils – Suva, and Nadi – have websites.^{13,5} Investment has also been made in public libraries as a facilitator of e-government, and as a result libraries in nine of the 13 councils have been stocked with computers and internet access donated through a partnership between the Commonwealth Local Government Forum Pacific Project and New Zealand Libraries.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

6.1 National local government association

There is currently no local government association in Fiji.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Intergovernmental relations between councils and the MLGHE are predominantly formal. The legal relationships are set out in the Local Government Act 1985. The capacity-building activities currently being facilitated by the Department of Local Government have resulted in improved informal relations with councils over the

last three years. Certain council functions link with those undertaken by statutory authorities (eg the Housing Authority, the Sports Council and the Visitors' Bureau), but councils have no representation on the boards of these bodies.

8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

The Local Government Act's Section 57 details the auditing requirements of councils. Council accounts are audited annually by the Auditor General and, together with the Auditor General's report, are tabled in parliament.

Although councils are financially independent, the Minister of Local Government has powers over certain financial matters and councils are required to submit for approval:

- annual budget estimates
- monthly financial statements and activity reports
- annual financial reports
- resolutions to increase fees or charges or create new fees or charges
- loan applications that exceed 5% of the recurrent estimated gross revenue of the council (applications exceeding 15% require the approval of the Minister of Finance).

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

9.1 Local government expenditure

In 2014 aggregate local government expenditure was 1.5% of total government expenditure. The main items of expenditure are administration, ratepayer services, maintenance, interest on borrowings, and debts/depreciation.

9.2 Locally raised revenue

The total aggregate revenue for 2014 was FJ\$58,154,468. The main sources of revenue are typically rates, market fees, business licences and parking meters. Councils are responsible for collecting rates and user fees. As at 31 December 2013, over half of all ratepayers in the country were in arrears with their rates.

Table 13.2a Aggregate income and expenditure for local government 2013/14

Income	FJ\$	Expenditure	FJ\$
Centre-local transfers		Administration	
Restricted	na	Staff	na
Unrestricted	na	Property	na
Locally raised revenue		Services	
Property taxes	na	Interest on borrowings	
Licences and fees	na	Water	na
Other	na	Road maintenance	na
TOTAL INCOME	58,154,468	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	42,425,647

Source: MLGHE communication with CLGF



Table 13.2b Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure 2013-14

	2014 actual FJ\$m
Total government expenditure	2,883.3
Total local government expenditure	42.4
Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure	1.5%

Source: MLGHE communication with CLGF and the national budget statement^{13.9}

9.3 Transfers

There is no formal policy of revenue-sharing. However, councils are required to transfer to national government 5% of revenues collected under Section 16 of the Business Licensing Act 1978 (Cap. 204). In 2014 the government allocated FJ\$3m of grants to be shared among the 13 urban councils through its Challenge and Invest Fund for specific capital works, under the Urban Policy Action Plan.

9.4 Loans

Councils are permitted to set deficit budgets, but it is not encouraged.

9.5 Local authority staff

Local government staff are recruited by the council administrator, who also has the power to dismiss. In 2010 national government staff were deployed to local government, particularly new townships such as Rakiraki. The Local Government Act's Section 35 requires each council to appoint a town clerk/chief executive officer, a building surveyor, a health inspector and other such officers as the council considers necessary for the efficient discharge of its functions. The national government determines the salary of the town clerk/chief executive officer and those of other senior staff. Each council determines its own staffing structure. With the exception of Suva City Council, Lautoka City Council and Nasinu Town Council, none have in-house professional staff for planning, engineering and legal functions. A number of councils find it difficult to retain a full establishment of professional staff, and there is strong support for the creation of a pool of professional planners, urban designers, engineers, lawyers, accountancy/audit staff and environmental/waste management specialists who could be contracted out to councils to deliver the required services. .

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

10.1 Overview of local government service delivery responsibility

The powers and duties of councils are set out in the Local Government Act 1985, Section 88(1). This requires a council to 'do all such things as it lawfully may and as it considers expedient to promote the health, welfare and convenience of the inhabitants of the municipality'. Specific functions elaborated in the Act include the establishment and maintenance of public utility services, including public transportation and public works; public health; markets; recreation facilities; refuse collection; town planning; environmental management; education; housing schemes to provide dwellings for persons of limited means; and the construction and maintenance of streets and drainage. Councils may exercise all or any of the functions set out in the Act. It is common for councils to contract a number of services out to the private sector – for example waste removal, street cleaning, and other maintenance activities

10.2 ICT use in service delivery

No information is available.

10.3 The role of local government in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The prime minister's statement to the UN General Assembly confirmed that 'Fiji's commitment to the 2030 global sustainable development agenda is absolute and is a cornerstone of our national policies'.^{13.10a} This commitment was reconfirmed in July 2017 when the prime minister stated that 'national governments alone cannot achieve the transformation needed. Which is why the Grand Coalition that Fiji is leading is so important. Because decisive climate action must also come from state and local governments throughout the world, from civil society, from business and citizens everywhere'.^{13.10b}

REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

- 13.1a Fiji government www.fiji.gov.fj
- 13.1b Women in national parliaments. www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm
- 13.2a Constitution www.fiji.gov.fj/Govt-Publications/Constitution.aspx
- 13.2b Fiji Local Government Act <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/fij99044.pdf>
- 13.2c Urban Development Planning www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/79548/47237-001-tar.pdf
- 13.3a 2007 Population Census www.statsfiji.gov.fj/index.php/social/9-social-statistics/social-general/113-population-and-demography
- 13.3b Ministry for Local Government, Housing and Environment www.fiji.gov.fj/Government-Directory/Ministries-and-Department.aspx
- 13.4a Fijian Elections Office www.feo.org.fj
- 13.4b Women's participation and leadership in local government, Asia and the Pacific 2013 UNDP
- 13.5 Suva City Council www.suvacity.org; Nadi Town Council http://nadi town council.com.fj/2016/
- 13.6 No reference for this section
- 13.7 No reference for this section
- 13.8 No reference for this section
- 13.9 Based on figures in Table 2 and FJD2.8833bn for total government expenditure in 2014 in the annual budget statement [www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/a515fdb6-9878-4603-872d-48d27ecfb274/2014-Budget-Estimates-\(pdf\).aspx](http://www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/a515fdb6-9878-4603-872d-48d27ecfb274/2014-Budget-Estimates-(pdf).aspx)
- 13.10a Prime minister's statement on achievement of SDGs www.foreignaffairs.gov.fj/media-publications/media-release/869-pm-s-statement-on-achievement-of-sdgs
- 13.10b Prime minister's speech at the SDG Exhibition www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Center/Speeches/HON-PM-BAINIMARAMA-SPEECH-AT-THE-LAUNCH-OF-THE-SUS.aspx
- 13.11a UN statistics surface area <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf>
- 13.11b Knowledge hub www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/knowledge-hub
- 13.11c UNDP HDR Fiji profile <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/FJI>

Annex 13a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in Fiji

Services	Delivering authority			Remarks
	National government	Provincial government	Local government	
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION				
Police	■			
Fire protection	■			
Civil protection	■	■	■	
Criminal justice	■			
Civil status register	■			
Statistical office	■			
Electoral register	■			
EDUCATION				
Pre-school (kindergarten and nursery)	■		■	
Primary	■		■	
Secondary	■		■	
Vocational and technical	■			
Higher education	■			
Adult education	■			
SOCIAL WELFARE				
Family welfare services	■			
Welfare homes	■			
Social security	■			
PUBLIC HEALTH				
Primary care	■		■	
Hospitals	■			
Health protection	■	■		
HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING				
Housing	■		■	
Town planning	■	■	■	
Regional planning	■			
TRANSPORT				
Roads	■	■	■	
Transport		■	■	
Urban roads	■	■		
Urban rail				
Ports	■			
Airports	■			
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION				
Water and sanitation	■			
Refuse collection and disposal		■	■	
Cemeteries and crematoria	■			
Slaughterhouses		■	■	
Environmental protection	■	■	■	
Consumer protection	■			
CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS				
Theatres and concerts			■	
Museums and libraries	■	■	■	
Parks and open spaces			■	
Sports and leisure facilities			■	
Religious facilities				
UTILITIES				
Gas services				
District heating	■			
Water supply	■			
Electricity	■			
ECONOMIC				
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	■		■	
Local economic development/promotion	■	■	■	
Trade and industry	■	■		
Tourism				

■ sole responsibility service ■ joint responsibility service ■ discretionary service