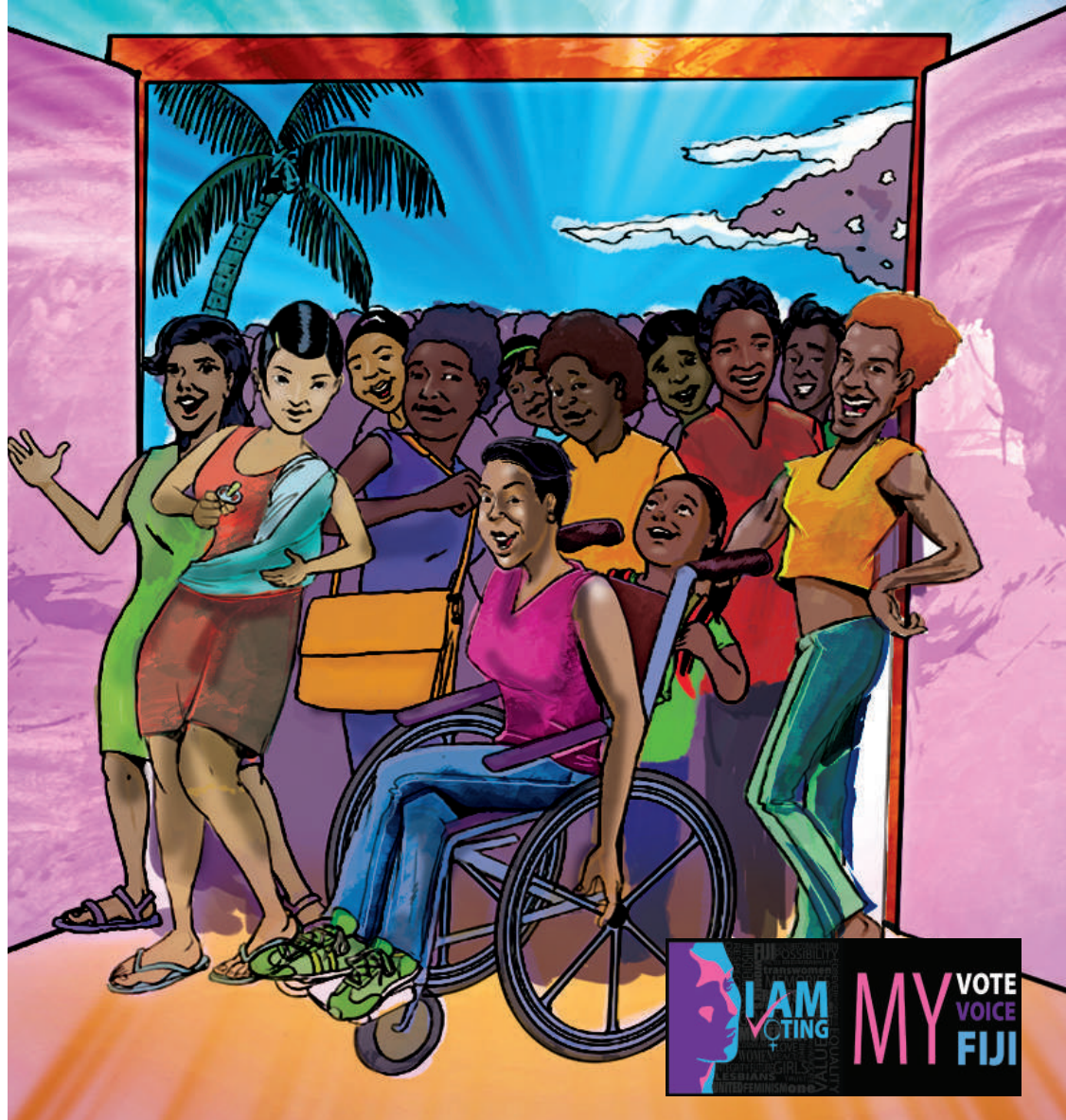


# MY GUIDE to voting

Young Women's VOICES count.





## MY GUIDE TO VOTING

Hi there! Are you 18 or older and planning on voting for the first time this year? We are too!

Elections can be a little bit overwhelming, but don't worry, we're here to go through it together!



Young Women's  
Voices Count!

An illustration of three young women. One woman is seated in a wheelchair, wearing a pink tank top and blue pants. She is smiling and looking towards the viewer. Two other women stand behind her. The woman on the left is wearing a red tank top and red shorts, holding a blue cloth. The woman on the right is wearing a yellow tank top and green pants, with her hand on the shoulder of the woman in the wheelchair. They are all smiling. A speech bubble above them contains the text 'Young Women's Voices Count!'. The background is a vibrant, abstract mix of pink and yellow brushstrokes.

Everyone in Fiji who is at least 18 and a citizen will have the chance to have a say in how the country is run.

Every single vote counts, INCLUDING YOURS!

So how do you feel about elections and voting? Don't really understand how it works? Looking for more information? Maybe you think politics is boring or too complicated or not something young women should be involved in? If you answered YES to any of these questions, then this guide is for YOU!

Welcome to your own personal guide to voting!

Here we will take you on an election adventure where YOU make the decisions and choose what you do with your right to vote and YOU decide the future of your country.

Look out for the glossary where tricky words are explained; as well the checklists and other tools that may be useful in helping you make your decision.

**LET'S GET STARTED!**



# 2

## ABOUT ME!

It starts with you! Everybody (as long as they are over 18), regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or politics, has the **RIGHT TO VOTE\***!

So WHO are you?

My name is.....

I am

✓ as many as you like and add more if you want!

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A student                | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Looking for work         | <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A young single mother    | <input type="checkbox"/> iTaukei     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A carer                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Indo-Fijian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian                | <input type="checkbox"/> Rotuman     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim                   | <input type="checkbox"/> European    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Person with disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> .....       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Straight                 | <input type="checkbox"/> .....       |

Whoever you are, you have the right to vote as an adult citizen of Fiji.

- Under the Fiji Constitution 2013; (Section 55 (2), (3))
  - A person **cannot register** as a voter if they are serving a 12 months or longer prison term imposed by Fiji court or other courts (overseas), declared to be of unsound mind, and has been disqualified from registration as a voter under the elections law.
  - A person **cannot vote** who has registered if they meet the above conditions

## MY VALUES

Elections are about deciding what you want your Fiji to look like. What issues do you want the new leaders to focus on? Here's a chance to think about what you value.

Things that matter to me (these are just suggestions; add others if you want to):

✓ *as many as you like and add more if you want!*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education                | <input type="checkbox"/> Faith                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Security                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Human rights                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Equality                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Fiji's international relations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment               | <input type="checkbox"/> Sport                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family                   | <input type="checkbox"/> The arts                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment              | <input type="checkbox"/> .....                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Young Women's Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> .....                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> .....                    | <input type="checkbox"/> .....                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> .....                    | <input type="checkbox"/> .....                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> .....                    | <input type="checkbox"/> .....                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> .....                    | <input type="checkbox"/> .....                          |

# 4

## SOME IMPORTANT WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

The language people use when talking about politics can be confusing. Here are a few useful expressions explained:

WORD	DEFINITION
<b>Electoral Act</b>	The law to be released by the state which will explain how the voting system will work and when the election will be held.
<b>Electoral system</b>	The way in which votes are translated into seats in parliament and the government formed.
<b>Campaign</b>	The organised effort of parties and candidates in the lead up to an election to convince people to vote for them.
<b>Political party</b>	A group of people with similar values who join together to attempt to influence law making or even to lead as the government of a country.
<b>Independent candidate</b>	A person who runs for election by themselves, without being attached to a party.
<b>Manifesto</b>	A public declaration of principles and policies which outlines what a party or candidate plans to do if there are successful in being elected to parliament.

WORD	DEFINITION
<b>Secret ballot</b>	System of voting in which each person goes into a separate booth so that their vote can be kept a secret.
<b>Suffragettes</b>	Women activists who fought to win the right to vote for women.
<b>Policy</b>	The principle of a party or candidate outlining how they will act in relation to a particular issue. Eg. An education policy might promise free text books to public school students.
<b>Candidate</b>	A person who is putting themselves forward to be elected to parliament.
<b>Compulsory</b>	Something that you must do.
<b>Polling booth</b>	Place where you go to vote in an election.

WORD	DEFINITION
<b>Parliament</b>	The forum in which all elected representatives sit to discuss and vote on new laws.
<b>Prime Minister</b>	The leader of the government.
<b>Proportional voting</b>	An electoral system in which the number of seats a party wins are directly in proportion to the number of votes they receive in an election.
<b>Constitution</b>	The highest law in a country which sets down the rules for how the government, parliament and judiciary (courts) must run.
<b>Platform</b>	The set of policies and promises of a candidate or party for which they seek to be elected.

WORD	DEFINITION
<b>Cast a vote</b>	To place your vote in the ballot box.
<b>Informed decision</b>	A decision you make after gathering enough information to have a clear understanding of your options and why you choosing one in particular.
<b>Ballot box</b>	The box into which your vote is placed to be counted.



# REMEMBER!

WOMEN MAKE UP 49% OF THE POPULATION IN FIJI - THAT IS A BIG NUMBER! THIS MEANS THAT WE AS YOUNG WOMEN CAN INFLUENCE THE RESULT OF THE ELECTION. THE WAY WE VOTE WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON WHO THE FUTURE LEADERS OF THE COUNTRY ARE! THAT IS A BIG RESPONSIBILITY AND WE HAVE TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY!

THERE ARE SOME ISSUES, LIKE EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY, WHICH ARE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO YOUNG WOMEN. WHEN WE VOTE, WE MAKE A STATEMENT ABOUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO US AND MAKE SURE OUR LEADERS TAKE THESE ISSUES SERIOUSLY!



AS YOU GET STARTED ON YOUR ELECTION JOURNEY, THERE IS ONE VERY SIMPLE, BUT VERY IMPORTANT THING THAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER....  
**YOUR VOICE COUNT!**


“SO DON'T FORGET...  
OUR VOICES COUNT  
AND THIS ELECTION  
JOURNEY IS ABOUT  
MAKING THEM HEARD!”

# ELECTION 2018

Election campaigning has STARTED. All of sudden the “election” is everywhere! It is all over the TV news, in the newspapers, on the radio. People talk about it at work, at home and in the streets. There is so much information flying everywhere as candidates try to convince you to vote for them. It can be pretty confusing as you try to work out the difference between the candidates and the parties and to decide who you agree with and who you want to vote for.

## *What are you going to do?*

The beginning of the election campaign is where you make your first decision. Are you going to get involved in the conversation about who should run the country, make an informed decision and vote? Are you going to ignore all this talk of elections and stay out of it? Or maybe you're not sure and you want some more information before you decide whether to vote or not.

If you have already decided not to vote, **go to page 17** 

If you think that you are going to vote or you would like some more information before deciding then turn the page and keep reading!

## GETTING STARTED: GATHERING INFORMATION

It is a good idea to get as much information as you can about the candidates who are running for election. This will mean that you are able to make an informed decision and be sure that you know who and what you are voting for.

It can be tricky though. In the lead up to an election there is information coming from television, radio, newspapers, online sources and also released by the political parties and candidates themselves. This is where you need to start making decisions about where you are going to get your information from and how you are going to use it!



You can get information from civil society organisations who will be running voter education campaigns (like this guide!) throughout the lead up to the election. An example is the Fiji Women's Rights Movement "*I am Voting*" campaign which has engaged women from all over Fiji to create awareness of voting rights.

Other civil society organisations will have their own education campaigns too so keep an eye out as they are a really great way to get information!



## THE PUBLIC MEETING

You hear about a public meeting or a 'political rally' which is going to be held at the school hall near your home. A candidate is going to speak about what her policies are and this will be the opportunity to ask questions. You think the meeting will be useful and would like to go to learn more.

**BUT** maybe there are reasons why it is going to be difficult for you to go:

- You feel shy and think that you don't know enough about politics to go
- You have to work
- You have to study
- There is no disability access to the school hall
- Your parents will not give you permission to go
- You don't feel comfortable or safe attending
- You feel tired and want to get some sleep
- You are a single mother. You have to look after your children
- .....
- .....

Some of these things might be possible to overcome. Others are not so easy. Just remember that you don't have to know a lot about politics to get involved. The point of meetings like this is to help voters become informed and everyone has the right to attend, regardless of their personal background. So what do **you** do? **Choose your own path:**

- If you **DO** attend the meeting, **turn to page 11**
- If you **DO NOT** attend the meeting, **turn to page 12**



## AT THE PUBLIC MEETING

At the public meeting the candidate gives a speech about the policies in her party's manifesto and tries to convince everyone present to vote for her. Afterwards some people ask questions.

You may like the way the candidate speaks and feel that her policies would be good for the country. On the other hand, you may dislike her suggestions and decide that you do not want to vote for her. Either way, at the meeting you get information which helps you form a view about who to vote for, and the sort of characteristics that you value in a candidate.

The public meeting is a good place to start, but it is just one way of getting information. Skip forward **to page 13** to find out how to learn more about political candidates and their policies.



## YOU DIDN'T MAKE IT TO THE MEETING - WHAT NOW?

So you weren't able to make it to the meeting. As a result, you don't have the information that the candidate provided and you are still feeling unclear about what her policies are and who you should vote for.

Don't worry though – **you still have options!** Your election journey does not have to end here.

### Make your decision....

If you decide that getting the information you need is too difficult and overwhelming and that you are going to give up on voting, **go to page 17**

If you are still interested and want to get information about the election another way, **go to page 13**



## MANIFESTOS – WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW DO I USE THEM?

Politicians will sometimes talk about a manifesto when explaining their policies, but what exactly is a manifesto? [go to page 4](#)

Manifesto can also be used to **hold candidates accountable** if something was promised in a manifesto, but **NOT** done after the election once they have been elected. If you have access to the manifesto of a successful candidate you can compare the principles contained in it with the actions of the candidate after the election.

**But where can I find a manifesto?** It is not always easy to access the manifesto of a political party or an independent candidate. The party's/candidate's website is a good place to start.

**Where can I read a copy of your manifesto?** If you are unable to find the manifesto of a candidate, this is something you can ask them about if you have the opportunity. As a voter you have the right to ask candidates if you can read their manifesto.

**What do manifestos look like?** Here are sections of the manifestos of two made-up parties. You can look at their policies, tick the ones you agree with and cross out the **ones** you disagree with.

Yellow Party	Blue Party
<input type="checkbox"/> More money to be spent on the military	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduced school fees for students in disadvantaged areas
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus on improving relations with Australia and New Zealand	<input type="checkbox"/> Increase the number of women in national decision –making positions
<input type="checkbox"/> Build new rural agricultural training centres	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce stricter regulations to protect the environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that all public school students have access to computers and the internet	<input type="checkbox"/> Raise the minimum wage
	<input type="checkbox"/> Improve legal aid services for people in need

"I would be more likely to vote for \_\_\_\_\_."



## FIJI YOUNG WOMEN'S FORUM DECLARATION

*Check out the Declaration below that you can use as an advocacy document to lobby for young women's issues with candidates! The Fiji Young Women's Forum Declaration was the outcome of 5th FYWF 2018. Declaration by Young Women for Young Women!!!*

### 5th Fiji Young Women's Forum 2018 Declaration

Women are underrepresented at all levels of decision making in Fiji, including formal and informal governance processes. As a result women including young women do not have equal influence over policy decisions that affect our lives. While the country prepares itself for the next General Election in 2018, it is critical that the voices of young women are heard throughout Fiji's development cycle.

Young women are not a homogenous group. We face multiple forms of discrimination because of our gender, age, race, religion, disability<sup>1</sup>, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, location as well as social and economic status.

This declaration below represents the voices of these young women. It captures our lived realities and calls for immediate action to the following demands:

#### YOUNG WOMEN'S EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

We acknowledge our lack of voice at home, in communities including in traditional structures such as land owning units as well as the work place. Lack of financial independence, limited economic opportunities, as well as educational qualifications also affects our autonomy to confidently engage in decision making in these spaces.

##### Recommendations:

- FYWF strongly recommends the inclusion of young women in all our diversities within formal and informal decision making spaces.
- Awareness training and capacity building workshops including leadership programmes must reach us in our communities.
- We must have access to mentoring, coaching and accompaniment strategies to support young women to realise their human rights including freedom of speech and expression.

#### ECONOMIC SECURITY

Our economic security is linked to structural and systematic barriers such as access to equal opportunities and equal pay for equal work.

We also recognise that employers do not take into consideration the health needs and wellbeing of diverse young women.

Due to its unregulated nature, it is important to recognise that young women working in the formal and informal sector in Fiji often cannot easily access social security provisions including Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) as well as paid maternity leave.

##### Recommendations:

We call upon the State as well as trade unions, the national employment centre and community leaders to recognise and support young women's labour force participation including:

- Providing adequate resources to ensure young women have access to educational opportunities to support their professional development in the work place

<sup>1</sup> Including psychosocial disability

- Collaboration between private sector, government and women's rights organisations in terms of addressing gender inequality and social norms in the workplace including occupational health and safety issues, sexual harassment and formalising grievance processes
- There is a need for employers to take into account the needs of young women with different forms of disabilities and provide a disability inclusive environment such as the installation of Job Access with Speech (JAWS)

### INFRASTRUCTURE

We raised issues in terms of accessing basic services including:

- Poor road and drainage conditions resulting in flooding
- Poor and irregular public transportation services including accessibility of bus services and technical maintenance issues related to e-ticketing systems in rural and remote communities
- High cost of maritime transportation as well as a lack of safety equipment, non-compliance of safety regulation by boat operators and shipping companies
- Insufficient water supplies including the provision of water trucks into communities, as well as a lack of communication by the Fiji Water Authority on water cuts which impact the ability of community members to practice good sanitation and hygiene
- Geographical location for communities is a barrier to connect to the electricity grid

#### Recommendations:

- The State and service providers must recognise and support the voice of young women to be able to address these issues through consultative processes including consultations in communities and villages
- The State must ensure its budgetary processes are in line with the National Gender Policy and Women's Plan of Action and takes into consideration the needs of rural and remote communities including young women's access to basic services.

### HEALTH

We identified several barriers to accessing adequately resourced health services including:

- Lack of health practitioners including well-trained doctors and nurses to provide quality health services
- Discrimination by health practitioners in terms of gender, race and disability
- Lack of prescription drugs, ambulance and other equipment in health centres and hospitals
- Poor sanitary and hygiene conditions of health centres
- Language barriers
- Long waiting times
- Channels for complaints are not accessible to the needs of the public particularly for persons living with disabilities

#### Recommendations:

- Greater collaboration between women's rights organisations and health practitioners through gender sensitisation workshops and trainings highlighting the connections between women's rights and access to quality health services including sexual, reproductive health and rights
- Young women must be supported to work with community leaders to undergo basic emergency first aid training
- Budgetary allocations to the Ministry of Health must reflect and be responsive to the needs of rural, remote, maritime and urban communities in terms of accessing health services

## Check Out **Fiji Young Women's' Forum** Social Media!



Facebook

**Fiji Young Women's Forum**



Twitter

@FJYWF



YouTube

**Fiji Young Women's Forum**

## Access other important information on



FJI ELECTIONS OFFICE

<http://www.feo.org.fj/>

**Fiji Elections Office**



<http://www.fiji.gov.fj/>

**Fiji Government Online Portal - Home**



**FWRM**  
FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

<http://www.fwrn.org.fj/>

**Fiji Women's Rights Movement**

Ok so now you have a lot of information about the candidates and parties, and maybe you are starting to make up your mind about who you are going to vote for.

**Turn to page 18** to continue on your election journey.

## YOU DECIDED **NOT TO VOTE**

Voting is not compulsory in Fiji and there are a whole lot of reasons why young women **DO NOT** vote.

- ? Confusion about the system
- ? Lack of faith in politicians and politics
- ? Feeling intimidated
- ? Difficulty accessing a polling booth
- ? Lack of interest in politics

**HOWEVER**, just remember that if you **DO NOT** vote you are giving away *your right as a citizen to choose the people who represent you*.

Politicians make decisions which will directly affect your life. By **NOT** voting you are saying that you don't care who makes those important decisions about you, your family and your community.

By voting you show respect for fellow citizens by acknowledging that you are part of the Fiji community and you care about how the country is managed.

If young women like **YOU** choose **NOT TO** vote then you will not have *people in the parliament protecting your interests and standing up for your rights*.

If you choose **NOT TO** vote your journey ends here.

BUT if you would like to reconsider your decision and give voting another go,

**turn back to Page 8** and keep reading!





## WHAT MAKES A GOOD LEADER?

When you are deciding how to vote, you will probably be thinking about the sort of person that you want to lead the country. There are many different ways of being a good leader. Below is a list of some different leadership qualities.

- ☒ **HONESTY** – Do you believe what the leader says?
- ☒ **TRANSPARENCY** – Does the leader allow access to information which helps you to understand what is going on in the government and why certain decisions are made?
- ☒ **INTEGRITY** – Does the leader stay true to her/his values and always behave in a way that is moral and ethical?
- ☒ **NEGOTIATION SKILLS** – Is the leader good at reaching decisions with people from different political parties?
- ☒ **COMPASSION** – is the leader understanding and sympathetic to the challenges and problems faced by people in Fiji?
- ☒ **GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS** – Is the leader easy to understand?
- ☒ **RESPECT** – Does the leader respect the diversity of Fijian society?
- ☒ **ACCOUNTABILITY** – Does the leader deliver the promises that s/he makes?
- ☒ **INSPIRATION** – Does the leader make you feel excited and hopeful about the future of Fiji?

Which qualities would **YOU** most like to see in the next leaders of Fiji?

## POLITICS – YOUNG WOMEN NEEDED?

Some people believe that young women should not be involved in politics because traditionally this has been men's role in society. During the lead up to the election you may hear people, maybe even members of your family, expressing opinions like this. You may notice that there are fewer women candidates running in the election and that women's opinions and issues receive less coverage in the media.

### ***A herstory of fighting for space!***

Women, particularly young women, have a history of being excluded from participating in politics. All over the world women suffragettes had to fight to be allowed to vote long after men were given this right. Today there are still fewer women than men representing their fellow citizens and holding leadership positions. Women politicians and candidates receive less coverage in the media and are less likely to be interviewed by journalists about political issues. Often women who do enter politics are criticised for their appearance rather than their policies.

Because of all this, we get a strong message that that there is no place for women in politics. Faced with this kind of discrimination it is easy to feel discouraged. So, it is here that you have another choice to make...

- If you give up and decide to keep out of politics and **NOT VOTE**, turn to page 17
- If you believe that there is a space for young women in politics and you would like to be able to tell people about it, turn to page 20 to read just some of the reasons why it is essential that young women's voices are heard!



## YOUR VOICE REALLY COUNTS!

Young women are an important group in Fiji's society. We have unique and valuable experiences, perspectives and values. By voting as a young woman we are making sure that our perspectives are represented amongst the people who will be making big decisions for the country. For the new Fijian parliament to truly represent Fijian society, it is essential that young women be involved in electing the new members.

Everyone's vote is worth the same. As young women we are protected, under international and Fijian law, and have the same human rights as everyone else. Research shows that when **WOMEN VOTE, MORE WOMEN** candidates are elected and those women who are elected are the ones who will stand up and fight for the rights of women in Fiji. **Your rights and the rights of other young women** will be best protected if there are people for whom you voted representing you in Fiji's parliament!

We've got the power!

Everyone is equal!

right to vote!

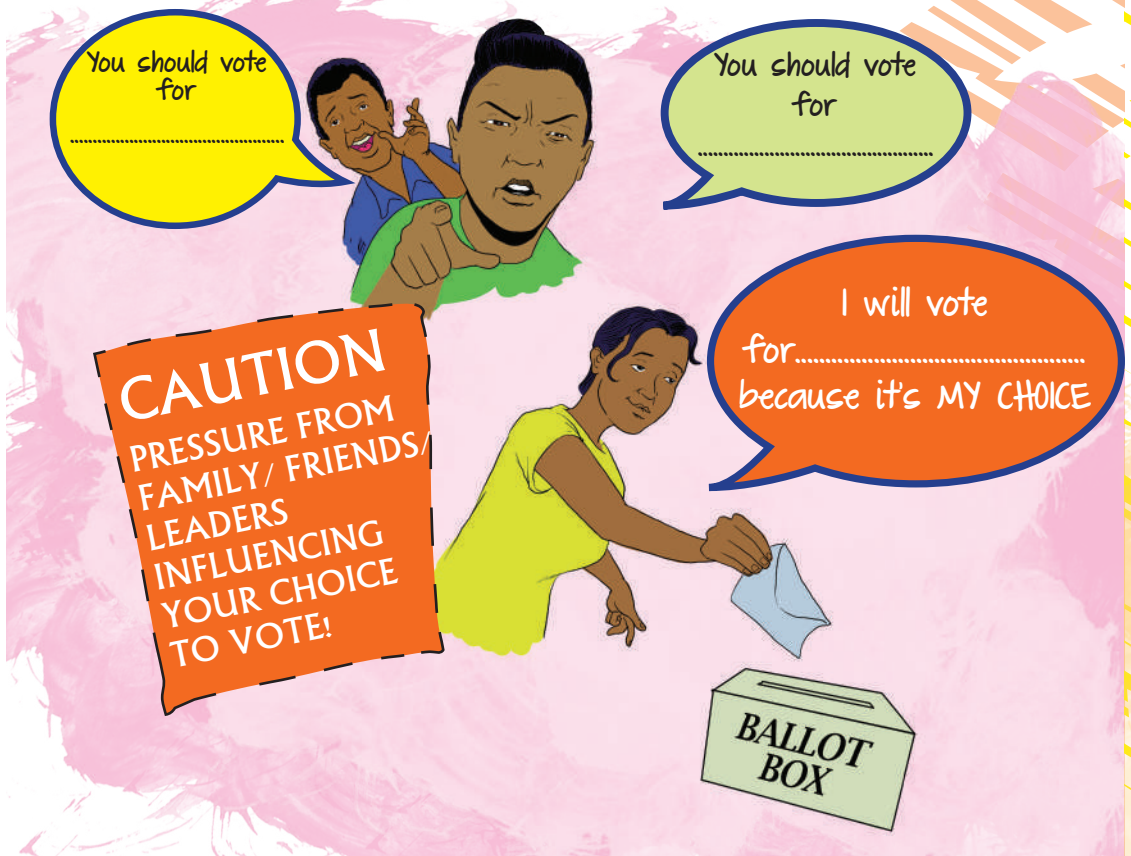
free and fair elections



## WHO YOU SHOULD VOTE FOR...

A problem comes up for many young women when someone else, maybe a family member, tells them who they must vote for. When we are placed in this position, often we follow the advice we are given, especially when we are voting for the first time. It is understandable that we want to follow the advice of people around us, but it is not the best thing for democracy.

Discussing politics with friends and family can be a really useful way of exchanging information, sharing ideas, and clarifying your thoughts about who to vote for. In order for democracy to work, each person must vote for the candidate they personally feel best represents their values and vision for the country. Political discussions with friends and family are important, but remember that **no one can dictate who you must vote for** and you have the right to keep your vote a secret.



**SO WE MADE IT! THE ELECTION HAS ARRIVED!** Hopefully after all this preparation, you have made up your mind about who to vote for and **you're ready to go!**

Here are some **Dos** and **Don'ts** to help you prepare to go and vote...

- ☒ **DO** work out where you are going to vote before the election happens
- ☒ **DO** check your registration to make sure your details are correct. This can be done online at <http://www.feo.org.fj/> or in person at the Fiji Elections Office.
- ☒ **DO** remember to take your voter registration card
- ☒ **DO** go to the voting place with friends and family if it helps you to feel comfortable
- ☒ **DO** inform your employer of your intention to vote.
- ☒ **DO** remember that it is your right to vote and who you vote for is your choice!
- ☒ **DON'T** tell anyone who you are voting for unless they are someone you trust and you want to tell them
- ☒ **DON'T** let anyone pressure you into voting for any particular candidate
- ☒ **DON'T** go into the voting booth with anyone else, you must go in alone

People with access to internet can also check their voter details on the elections office website. Others can get it physically checked.

<http://www.feo.org.fj/>



**YAY!! I HAVE A PLAN!!....  
NOW I KNOW HOW TO VOTE!!!!**



## MY ELECTION PLAN!

When you are prepared and ready to vote, here is a space for you to fill in some details and make some plans about what is going to happen on Election Day for you!

- The place where I am going to vote is.....
- I am going to get there by.....(how will you get there?)
- I am going to go to vote on..... (which day)  
at .....am/pm (what time)
- I am going to go to vote by myself/with.....(who are you going to go with?)
- I have my voter registration card and I am ready to go! (tick box)

### WHERE YOU WILL VOTE

Every registered voter will be assigned to a polling station that is close to where they live. You must vote at this polling station and this polling station only.

The locations of the polling stations will be published in the newspapers and broadcast on radio and free-to-air television.

The Elections Office will conduct an extensive public education drive to make sure all voters know what polling station they have been assigned to before Election Day.

It  
doesn't end here!

When a new government is elected, it is very important that young women like us remain interested and engaged in the conversation about the direction that the country is carried in. Elected representatives need to be held accountable for their actions and you can do this by staying involved, writing letters to newspapers or politicians themselves, attending political rallies, and signing petitions. You may even like to join a political party or an organisation that supports issues that you are passionate about. It is up to you, you have the power, as a young woman, to have your voice heard and by voting in the election you've made a great start!



## NOTES





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