

## **The State of Community Media and Community Radio in Fiji Islands**

### **General Country Introduction**

Fiji lies in the heart of the Pacific Ocean midway between the Equator and the South Pole, and between longitudes 175 and 178 west and latitudes 15 and 22 south. Fiji's Exclusive Economic Zone contains approximately 330 islands, of which about one third are inhabited. It covers about 1.3 million square kilometres of the South Pacific Ocean.

Fiji's total land area is 18,333 square kilometres. There are two major islands - Viti Levu is 10,429 square kilometres and Vanua Levu 5,556 square kilometres. Other main islands are Taveuni (470 sq km), Kadavu (411 sq km), Gau (140 sq km), and Koro (104 sq km).

Fiji became independent in 1970, after nearly a century as a British colony. It has suffered three coups in the past 15 years, which has caused serious social and economic problems, especially heightening of racial tension. Tensions between the two main ethnic groups – the native Fijians and Fijians of Indian descent – have led to several coups, in 1987 and 2000 and 2006.

The repressive climate that followed a 2006 coup has eased since democratic elections were held in 2014 and 2018.<sup>1</sup> In the 2018 parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Bainimarama's FijiFirst Party won 50 percent of the total vote and 27 seats in the 51-member parliament.

Fiji Islands is a parliamentary democracy with a President as head of state and a Prime minister as head of government.<sup>2</sup> Fiji Islands is governed under a constitution adopted in 2013. The capital of Fiji Islands is Suva, largest city located on Viti Levu's south-eastern coast.

The president is elected by Parliament, which chooses between two candidates: one named by the prime minister and one by the leader of the opposition. As head of state, the president—who is elected to a three-year term and is eligible for reelection—holds a largely ceremonial role. President George Konrote, from the Polynesian island of Rotuma, was sworn in to a second term in November 2018.

The current population of Fiji is 884,887 with sixty-nine percent of Fiji's population below the age of 40. Men make up 50.7 percent of the population while women make up 49.3 percent. 99 percent of the population is literate (of adults aged over 15). The population is majorly Indigenous Fijians (making up for 56.8 percent), Indo Fijians (descendants of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent) at 37.5 percent, European/part-European at 1.7 percent, Rotuman (Polynesian/other) at 1.2 percent, and Chinese at 0.6 percent.<sup>3</sup>

English, Fijian, and Fijian Hindi were given equal status as official languages by the 1997 constitution. The Fijian language spoken in Fiji is a type of Austronesian language and is part of the Malayo-Polynesian family. The Austronesian languages are normally found among islands in continental and Southeast Asia along with islands in the Pacific. However, less than half of Fiji's population (450,000) speak iTaukei as their primary language, while 200,000 speak it as a second language. iTaukei has an estimated 300 dialects, though the official one is

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/country/fiji/freedom-world/2021>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-fiji/government/>

<sup>3</sup> Fiji Media, Language and Telecommunications Landscape Guide May 2021

Bauan Fijian. This dialect is generally used in broadcasting. This language is spoken as a first language by most indigenous Fijians (57% of the population). Another 300,000 people likely speak Fijian as a second language.<sup>4</sup>

Fiji has the second largest economy in the Pacific Islands Forum, with its economy largely sustained by tourism and agriculture.<sup>5</sup> Tourism is Fiji's biggest source of revenue accounting for nearly 40% of its GDP. Since Cyclone Winston devastated the country in 2016, its economic recovery has been slow but consistent, supported by financial aid from countries across the Pacific region including Australia, Europe and the US. Two more cyclones in 2020 also had an impact on the country's economy.

Fiji was ranked 150 in the world based upon its GDP at the end of 2019. In 2020, the impact of COVID-19 on tourism contributed towards an economic decline of 19%, compared to 2019.<sup>6</sup>

Agriculture is Fiji's second largest economic contributor with both subsistence and commercial farming: the former producing cocoa, tropical fruit and fish; the latter producing sugar cane. According to the World Bank, in 2020, agriculture contributed to 14.89% of Fiji's GDP.<sup>7</sup> The economy is also supported by light-industry for local and regional use such as the construction of small boats.

Historically, Fiji's primary sources of trade were sandalwood, coconut oil, sea cucumbers and shipping. Today, Fiji's most significant exports include bottled water, refined petroleum, fish, raw sugar and gold. Australia is among the main countries to whom Fiji exports its goods; others include the United States, New Zealand and Japan.

Over 50% of Fiji's imports are sourced from Singapore. Imports include fuel, natural gas, vehicles, wheat, meat, rice, cane sugar and telecommunications equipment. Other importers include Australia, France, New Zealand and China.

Indo Fijian families dominated the business sector and enjoyed higher average incomes; however, indigenous Fijians were the majority in government ministries and made up the vast majority of members of the armed forces.

Fiji Islands attracts foreign investment and aid from various countries including Australian support to assist its economic stability, including targeted support to the nation's health services, support to education, as well as humanitarian and fiscal aid following natural disasters.

China has provided Fiji financial assistance since the 1970s, and their bi-lateral relationship has grown considerably since 2009. Fiji signed an MoU with China in 2018 as part of the One Belt One Road Initiative and to support Fiji's economic growth.

---

<sup>4</sup> Fiji Media, Language and Telecommunications Landscape Guide May 2021

<sup>5</sup> <https://cove.army.gov.au/article/kyr-fiji-economy>

<sup>6</sup> <https://cove.army.gov.au/article/kyr-fiji-economy>

<sup>7</sup> <https://cove.army.gov.au/article/kyr-fiji-economy>

Today, China is the second largest donor to the region with Fiji being the largest Chinese aid recipient currently standing at US\$291.94 million (Levick 2018).<sup>8</sup>

Other countries which have provided investment and/or aid to Fiji are New Zealand, France, the European Union and the USA.

Absolute poverty is hardly known in Fiji Islands. However, the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBS) preliminary report on the 2019-2020 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) released on 8 February, 2021 estimates the number of individuals living in poverty to be 29.9%. The figure was based using a national basic needs poverty line (BNPL) of \$2,179.39 per adult equivalent (PAE) per year (or \$8717.56 per year for a household with 4 adults equivalent). The survey is based on a representative sample of 6,000 households and was conducted from February 2019 to February 2020.

The rate of urbanization in Fiji has accelerated in the post-independence era and late 20th century, as new village-like settlement forms such as informal and squatter settlements become a more visible feature of Pacific towns and cities. These settlements began outstripping the colonial-designated native and traditional villages as well as planned development in both number and population size. The largest numbers of village-like settlements are in the Melanesian Pacific capitals—Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila, and Suva—and smaller towns of Micronesia, such as South Tarawa. All Pacific towns and cities contain a mix of native and traditional villages and village-like settlements, with the largest proportion being in Port Moresby, where 50% of the population lives in some type of urban village.

According to the 2007 census, most indigenous Fijians, who constitute 57 percent of the population, are Christians. The majority of the country's traditional chiefs belong to the Methodist Church, which remains influential among indigenous persons, particularly in rural areas, where 44 percent of the population lives, according to the 2017 census. Most Indian Fijians, who account for 37 percent of the total population, are Hindu, while an estimated 20 percent are Muslim and 6 percent Christian. Approximately 60 percent of the small Chinese community is Christian. The small community of mixed European and Fijian ancestry is predominantly Christian.

### **Status of Human Rights and Freedom of Speech**

The constitution and law prohibit torture, forced medical treatment, and degrading treatment or punishment. The Public Order Act (POA, see section 1.d.), however, authorizes the government to use whatever force it deems necessary to enforce public order. There were reports security forces abused persons.

The police Ethical Standards Unit is responsible for investigating complaints of police misconduct. As of July 2020, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions charged 38 officers for police misconduct.<sup>9</sup>

Impunity remained a problem in the security forces in some politically connected cases. The constitution and POA provide immunity from prosecution for members of the security forces for any deaths or injuries arising from the use of force deemed necessary to enforce public

---

<sup>8</sup> Saber Salem. Chinese Foreign Aid to Fiji: Threat or Opportunity. CHINA REPORT 56 : 2 (2020): 242–258  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341045762\\_Chinese\\_Foreign\\_Aid\\_to\\_Fiji\\_Threat\\_or\\_Opportunity](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341045762_Chinese_Foreign_Aid_to_Fiji_Threat_or_Opportunity)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/fiji/>

order. The constitution provides immunity for the president, prime minister, members of the cabinet, and security forces for actions taken relating to the 2000 suppression of a mutiny at military headquarters, the 2006 coup, and the 2009 abrogation of the 1997 constitution.

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, although the Public Order Act and other laws prohibit actions that incite racial antagonism, and the Government generally respected these rights in practice.

A variety of opinions, including criticism of the Government, are heard in all major media outlets. Political figures and private citizens speak out regarding the country's political situation and against the Government. Letters and editorials critical of the Government are published in the three English language dailies. The Government generally does not interfere in the daily operations of the media.

The political opposition and other critics of the FijiFirst government have accused the state of using its power to silence critics. For example, the vaguely worded Media Industry Development Decree bans reporting that is critical of the government or harmful to “national interest public order.” Restrictive press laws are sometimes enforced by the government, which leads to self-censorship.

The online safety bill was passed in 2018 by Fiji’s Parliament and came into force on the first of January 2019, following a record timeline marking the introduction of the bill before it was passed in Parliament last year. Pacific Freedom Forum has warned that Fiji's Online Safety Act is designed to muzzle, not protect citizens.<sup>10</sup>

### **Communications Landscape**

Fiji has an active media sector, with several private television stations, radio stations, and newspapers. However, the 2010 Media Industry Development Decree has had a significant impact on the communication environment in Fiji.<sup>11</sup>

#### Television

Television broadcasting in Fiji is predominantly commercial, screening mainly overseas programming with some local productions. The main free-to-air station is Fiji Television, which also owns the satellite pay TV service, Sky Pacific Fiji. Mai Television, an independent free-to-air station, began broadcasting in 2008. It covers 80 per cent of the Fiji Islands and has a 24-hour web channel. Fiji Broadcasting Corporation television (FBC TV) was launched in 2011 with government support and provides the best coverage of the islands. Trinity television is the Christian English language station.

The country's television news production is owned and operated by Fiji One, one of only two national noncable television stations. A trust operating on behalf of the provincial governments owns 51 percent of Fiji One; private individuals and interests own the other 49 percent. The Government owns the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation, which operate four radio stations. There are several thriving independent radio stations broadcasting in English, Fijian, and Hindi.

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://ifex.org/fijis-online-safety-law-threatens-to-muzzle-free-speech/>

<sup>11</sup> 2013 State of Media and Communication Report-Fiji. PACMAS  
<https://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/9263784/data/pacmas-fiji-state-of-the-media-report-data.pdf>

The Television Act permits the Government to influence programming content. There was no attempt to use the programming authority during the year. In the past, government holdings in Fiji TV One, the Fiji Post, and the Fiji Sun raised questions regarding the independence of the press. However, these and other media outlets frequently criticized the Government. Muted criticism of the traditional chiefly system has also appeared.

### Radio

Fiji has a diverse radio environment with a multitude of stations catering to its multi ethnic population. The Fiji Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) is the public broadcaster and operates a network of six radio stations, two in each of the three major languages (iTaukei, Hindustani and English): Radio Fiji One and Bula FM (iTaukei), Radio Fiji Two and Mirchi FM (Hindustani) and Gold FM and 2Day FM (English). The private radio network, Communication Fiji Limited, also has a number of multilingual stations. A unique aspect of the Fijian media landscape is FemTALK 89FM. Operated by femLINKpacific, it provides an alternative channel and space for women and communities to speak to each other via the ‘suitcase radio’ 12 at local community level.



© Radio Fiji One

### Newspaper

The 2010 Media Industry Development Decree and the restrictions around foreign ownership had particular impact on newspapers. There were three daily newspapers before the decree. In 2010, the country’s oldest newspaper, The Fiji Times, previously owned by the foreign News Limited (Rupert Murdoch), was sold to local trading company the Motibhai Group. The Fiji

Daily Post closed down in the same year. Since then, The Fiji Sun has held a monopoly on state advertising.

### Online and Mobile Media

Both online and mobile media are significant components of Fiji's communication environment. There has been a significant growth in mobile communications in recent years. Digicel entered the Fijian market in 2008 as a competitor to the state supported incumbent, Vodafone. This resulted in a reduction in call and handset costs and a rapid increase in mobile penetration. Eighty-four percent of the population has mobile phone subscriptions. The ITU has identified Fiji as one of the top ten most dynamic countries in its ICT Development Index, mostly because of strong growth in mobile-broadband penetration. 3G has been available since 2008.

Internet use has, until recently, been limited to the urban centres of Nadi and Suva and to the wealthy or young, who often use internet cafes. The proliferation of mobile phones however is contributing to rapidly expanding groups with access to online media.

Having experienced four coups in 19 years, people have increasingly turned to the internet to voice their concern, register their protest or simply to report on political upheavals. In the current political environment of censorship and control, there has been a surge in anonymous political blogging since 2007.

The Fiji News Council work to improve journalistic standards, safeguard media independence, and resolve complaints from the public. The Fiji Islands Media Association, an affiliate of the Pacific Islands News Association, also provided training opportunities for journalists and implemented a media code of ethics. The Government does not restrict Internet access.

Academic freedom is generally respected; however, government work permit stipulations and University of the South Pacific contract regulations effectively deter most university employees from participating in domestic politics. Many academics write for the media and include disclaimers in their work to preclude contract or work permit problems.

For a small country, Fiji has a relatively extensive media infrastructure. There are three major dailies (The Fiji Times, The Daily Post and The Sun), one commercial television station (Fiji One), eighteen commercial radio stations, three monthly business magazines and a number of other commercial publications. A research media survey carried out in 2000 showed that newspaper readership is generally falling (Pacific Media Watch, April 2000). Yet they have still a major role to play in Fiji society as a source of information. Fiji One TV station claims to access 80% of Fiji's population. Radio is Fiji's most effective medium in terms of coverage; it penetrates into the most isolated island homes. Access to Internet is limited to the better off in urban areas.

The introduction of broadcast television in 1991 marked the final phase of Fiji's initiation into the world of mass media. The effects of the media culture have been striking; in relationships, family life, and life-style among the young. To a great extent, the media have become the dominant culture.

However, the way the mainstream or commercial media works is influenced by the society in which it operates, and by the priorities and directions that each media house itself develops,

based on an understanding of its clientele and role in society. The media must also listen to its consumers.

But, since the deregulation of the Fiji media environment /industry, since the mid-1970s, giving rise to first an additional daily newspaper and then the subsequent rise of commercial radio, and eventually the introduction of television in the early nineties, Fiji society has predominantly remained passive consumers of the evolution of our media industry.

Fiji's political history of internal conflicts has brought about not only an increase in social and economic problems but also in relation to the current situation, the need for people and communities to be able to articulate our issues and stories.

Within the current context of the proposed media legislation process, albeit an outstanding culmination of 3 successive governments proposed / intention to provide a legislative framework through which "future media reform will be considered", it is critical now that media consumers, who are just as accountable for the protection of the rights and freedoms to receive and impart information, are able to contribute in an educated and thought-provoking manner, because while every country has laws and regulatory authorities that place some obligations, if not restrictions, on the way the media operates, we must ensure that as many people as possible are able to participate in the proposed consultations that not only government promises to facilitate, but to initiate our own discussions and submissions.

We are at a critical crossroad in addressing media issues, as users of the mainstream media. As media advocates and lobbyists, given that we want to ensure (a) that the Fiji media industry is more responsive to its consumers (b) the media industry will undertake more tangible socially-responsible mainstream initiatives to contribute to the personal and social development of Fiji's citizenship, we can only achieve so much on our own. We also need to work to empower communities and thus enabling consumer-driven socio-political action, because they will have the knowledge and the skills to be able to understand, critique and analyze the media.

Community media is a relatively new concept to Fiji, even though there is small community television station operating out of Nadi Town, and there are two community stations operating – one under the auspices of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Community Education Centre (as a training of trainers programme) and the Emperor Gold Mines community radio station. However, whether these community-media operations are actually in-tune with the principles and participatory development approach that community media advocates, is still unclear.

Fiji is ranked 52nd out of 180 countries in RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index.<sup>12</sup>

### **Media Law and Regulation**

The media legislation of Fiji includes the Media Industry Development Decree (2010), the Television Decree 1992 (with an amendment in 2012), the Newspaper Registration Act, the Regulation of National Spectrum Decree (2009), the Defamation Act, and the Telecommunications Promulgation 2008. These reforms aim to ensure political stability in the

---

<sup>12</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-reminds-fiji-press-freedoms-importance-tackling-covid-19>

area of media and communications but in reality, has resulted in a complex media environment, subject to differing levels of censorship.<sup>13</sup>

The Media Industry Development Decree (2010) enables the Fiji Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) to enforce and investigate possible violations by media outlets. The decree requires 90 per cent local media ownership. It punishes the distribution of content considered to be against public order with large fines or jail. Since 2009, when the Public Emergency Regulations (PER) suspended the 1997 constitution that guaranteed press freedom and introduced government censorship, a number of local and international journalists have been fined or held in custody for transgressing the boundaries of PER and the media decree.

The Crimes Decree (2010) includes criticism of the government (sedition) as a crime. Laws requiring the disclosure of sources generally discourage whistle blowing, even though information sources for corruption are exempt. Censorship and threats against local and international journalists and editors have been common since the takeover by the military regime. General consensus among research participants is that the MIDA should be an independent group and be the voice of the people. Fiji Media Watch is active in providing media monitoring, media education and a forum for airing media concerns.

A new decree introduced in 2012 allows media organisations to air comments by government ministers about individuals without fear of being sued for defamation. It grants immunity to the press to publish any information sent to them by the Prime Minister or any of the ministers. This has drawn criticism from some groups, which view it as giving unfair advantage to the government, especially if members of the public are not given an opportunity to comment or oppose.

Legislation pertaining to the press is contained in the Newspaper Registration Act and Press Correction Act. Under these acts, all newspapers must be registered with the Government before they can publish. The acts give the Minister of Information sole discretionary power to order a newspaper to publish a "correcting statement" if, in the minister's view, a false or distorted article was published. A newspaper refusing to publish the minister's correction can be sued in court and, if found guilty, fined. Individuals in such cases can be fined, imprisoned for 6 months, or both. These acts authorize the Government to arrest any person who publishes "malicious" material. This would include anything the Government considered false that could create or foster public alarm or result in "detriment" to the public. However, this authority has never been used.

However, a new decree introduced in 2012 allows media organisations to air comments by government ministers about individuals without fear of being sued for defamation. It grants immunity to the press to publish any information sent to them by the Prime Minister or any of the ministers.

The Ministry is responsible for developing and introducing new media legislation to develop a more vibrant media industry. The introduction of new media laws will help facilitate transparency and accountability in the media.

---

<sup>13</sup> 2013 State of Media and Communication Report-Fiji. PACMAS  
<https://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/9263784/data/pacmas-fiji-state-of-the-media-report-data.pdf>



## **Community Broadcasting**

Broadcasting began in the Colony of Fiji in 1935, when Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd opened station ZJV through its subsidiary Fiji Broadcasting Company. A studio and 500-watt transmitter were operated from a 2-room location in Suva. From this small beginning, the people of Fiji were gradually introduced to the marvel of "wireless".<sup>14</sup>

World War II had immediate and long-term effects on the Fijian broadcasting scene. The need for ready communication of the war situation to the population led to the recruitment of Hindi and Fijian translators and announcers. When the war ended, the Fiji Broadcasting Company applied to the Colonial Government for funding assistance to extend its limited services. Two viewpoints developed out of this - one was that the national broadcasting service should be independent of government; the other was that broadcasting should be nationalised and run as a government department.

Following the findings of a Review Committee in 1947, a proposal for a BBC-type statutory body was finally accepted, and a Bill to this effect was passed by the Fiji Legislative Council in 1952. The Fiji Broadcasting Commission assumed control of broadcasting on 1 July 1954.

Headquarters of the FBC is Broadcasting House in Suva. The main transmitter site is at Naula, some 9 miles from Suva. This was once the location of FBC's colony-wide Shortwave Service, but the use of shortwave was phased out in the early 1970's following the inauguration of additional medium wave transmitters in Rakiraki, Sigatoka and Labasa, to complement the older Suva and Lautoka installations.

Television broadcasting in Fiji is predominantly commercial, screening mainly overseas programming with some local productions. The main free-to-air station is Fiji Television, which also owns the satellite pay TV service, Sky Pacific Fiji. Mai Television, an independent free-to-air station, began broadcasting in 2008. It covers 80 per cent of the Fiji Islands and has a 24-hour web channel. Fiji Broadcasting Corporation television (FBC TV) was launched in 2011 with government support and provides the best coverage of the islands. Trinity television is the Christian English language station.

---

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.radiodx.com/articles/station-profiles/pacific/the-voice-of-the-islands-radio-fiji/>



© Bula FM

Fiji has a diverse radio environment with a multitude of stations catering to its multi ethnic population. Radio broadcasting began in 1935. The Fiji Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) Limited is the public broadcaster operates six stations: two in each of the three major languages (iTaukei, Hindustani and English): Radio Fiji One and Bula FM (iTaukei), Radio Fiji Two and Mirchi FM (Hindustani) and Gold FM and 2Day FM (English).

National public broadcasting service is offered on two of the stations and the government buys airtime when needed. Communications Fiji Limited runs five stations, broadcasting in English, Fijian and Hindi. Communications Fiji Limited operates five commercial stations. Church and university radio stations are also available. FM96 has previously broadcast emergency or humanitarian information during emergencies.

There are no recent official statistics on the number of radios or households with a radio. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported half a million radio sets in 1997. Projecting forward, there were some 550'000 sets in 2002 or 68 sets per 100 inhabitants. Assuming four radios per household, then 90 per cent of households could have a radio by this measure. However, a 2015-2016 study suggests 73% of households have a radio<sup>21</sup>. In addition, various mobile applications are now available for listening to Fiji radio stations online from the Google Play store (at the time of writing, most have been downloaded less than 10,000 times).<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Fiji Media, Language and Telecommunications Landscape Guide, May 2021

<http://www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/7cc20d10-567a-4743-85cb-652bd93c3ed0/attachedFile>

Radio is an important source of everyday news and information in urban and rural areas and in remote island communities. Radio provides a useful platform for discussion, as well as a source of local information. The peak periods for radio listening are the early morning (5-8am) and evening (4-7pm). Many Fijians listen to the radio while travelling to work in the early morning and going home in the evening. Women and elderly who stay at home are the main daytime audience.

Fiji's private press, which includes English-language dailies and Fijian- and Hindi-language weeklies, is vigorous in its reporting. As a result, some newspapers have come under fire from politicians. The government has a stake in several publications.

Radio is a key source of information, particularly on the outer islands. There are both publicly and privately-owned stations. The BBC World Service and Radio Australia are available via FM relays.

The 2010 Media Industry Development Decree and the restrictions around foreign ownership had particular impact on newspapers. There were three daily newspapers before the decree. In 2010, the country's oldest newspaper, The Fiji Times, previously owned by the foreign News Limited (Rupert Murdoch), was sold to local trading company the Motibhai Group. The Fiji Daily Post closed down in the same year. Since then, The Fiji Sun has held a monopoly on state advertising.

### **Challenges Faced By Media**

Fijian media have long struggled with censorship and draconian media regulations. In April 2009, when the constitution of the country was suspended, the government posted censors in various publication offices, and deported several foreign journalists.

Furthermore, the "Media Industry Development Decree 2010" promulgated by the Government of Fiji on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010 severely restricts media freedom and ownership on the small Pacific Island.

The media faces external threats that includes government, non-government sectors, foreign interests and society at large. Besides the ruling national power, government includes the various state ministries, departments, subsidiaries, proxies and representatives, whereas non-government sources include the corporate and non-corporate sectors. The other type of external threat like social and cultural pressure are equally prevalent.

More recently, social media has emerged as a major challenge and potential game changer for the news media sector across four Melanesian countries—Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, both in positive and negative ways.

While governments could be accused of censorship, they have some real concerns about social media abuse, and the damage to individuals, communities and society. These concerns are shared by the public. Fiji's Online Safety Act implemented in January 2019 to address cyber stalking, cyber bullying, revenge porn and internet trolling had a measure of public support (Tarai, 2019).

Likewise, internal threats emanating from within the news media sector include long-standing, unaddressed issues such as underqualified and inexperienced journalists, uncompetitive salaries, high journalist turnover and some media companies' often weak financial positions,

largely due to the small advertising markets. The Fiji study observes a fairly heavy media dependence on the government as a news source. This is regarded as a threat to the media's watchdog role (Larson, 2008).

Another internal threat is the media companies' commercial priorities and the effect on news coverage. The question is whether the pursuit of profits compromise and/or override editorial obligations and the public interest. In Fiji's case, the national newspaper, the Fiji Sun, is often accused of pandering to the government, which advertises exclusively in the newspaper (Morris, 2015). But the Sun insists that the advertising tender was won in a fair process.

Dr Shailendra Singh, Associate Professor, University of South Pacific while speaking at 5th webinar of the Melanesian Webinar Series 2021 on 2 September 2021 opined that Fiji media exercise a greater level of self-censoring after the 2006 coup and the punitive 2010 Fiji Media Industry Development Act which can be attested with International IDEA's GSoD Indices data on Media Integrity. He added that the Fiji media have been bolder since 2013, marking departure from the past.

Likewise, Dr Steve Sharp, International Media Expert and Trainer, one of the speakers at the webinar said that Fiji's journalists (with some exceptions) lack authoritative reporting which can lead to developing trusted platforms for leaders and citizens to engage in deliberative dialogue and build consensus on the key issues facing the nation.

## References

- <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/fiji.htm>  
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Fiji-republic-Pacific-Ocean/History>  
Fiji Media, Language and Telecommunications Landscape Guide May 2021  
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/fiji/freedom-world/2021>  
<https://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-fiji/government/>  
<https://cove.army.gov.au/article/kyr-fiji-economy>  
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/fiji/>  
<https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/fiji-population>  
<https://cove.army.gov.au/article/kyr-fiji-economy>  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341045762\\_Chinese\\_Foreign\\_Aid\\_to\\_Fiji\\_Threat\\_or\\_Opportunity](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341045762_Chinese_Foreign_Aid_to_Fiji_Threat_or_Opportunity)  
<https://www.radiodx.com/articles/station-profiles/pacific/the-voice-of-the-islands-radio-fiji/>  
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/fiji/>  
<https://ifex.org/fijis-online-safety-law-threatens-to-muzzle-free-speech/>  
[http://www.fijihighcommission.org.uk/about\\_3.html](http://www.fijihighcommission.org.uk/about_3.html)  
<https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/what-extent-are-there-diverse-and-critical-media-fiji>  
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=FJ>  
<https://devpolicy.org/no-poverty-reduction-in-fiji-over-the-last-six-years-2020210216-2/>  
<https://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/9263784/data/pacmas-fiji-state-of-the-media-report-data.pdf>  
The Emergence Of Pacific Urban Villages Urbanization Trends In The Pacific Islands – ADB Report, 2016  
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/fiji/>  
<https://ifex.org/fiji-authorities-reminded-about-press-freedoms-importance-in-tackling-covid-19/>  
Fiji State of Media and Communication Report 2013  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-14919686>  
Pacific Journalism Review Vol 26(1), July 2020