



Young People



and

Democratic Participation in Fiji

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Executive Summary

This report, commissioned by the Citizen's Constitutional Forum (CCF), sets out to explore an appropriate definition of young people in Fiji and offer a preliminary understanding of young people's understanding and level of interest in democratic activities. Preparations towards the 2014 general elections and the growing discourse around the youth vote act as the backdrop to this study.

The study was guided by the concept of 'generation' and adopted primary and secondary data collection methods. A literature review was conducted to establish the boundaries of the field-work. Primary data collection involved the use of a questionnaire survey and focus group discussions with approximately 300 young people between the ages of 17 and 35 years. Interviews were also conducted with young and adult stakeholders in the four research locations; Labasa, Levuka, Nadi and Suva.

The report is structured around four general sections. The first explored the definitions of young people. It was found that age, in particular 18 to 35 years is preferred as a way of defining youth. The over 40 age category commonly used in village and community settings is least popular with young people. This challenges the idea that maturity is associated with age.

The second section looked at young people's participation and found that whilst young people are highly involved in community activity this has not translated into political involvement. Here lies the challenge, if young people are not politically conscious they will fail to make connections with wider structural issues that impact on their lives.

The third section presents findings on young people's involvement with the constitutional and electoral process. It can be argued that young people's interest in democratic processes is growing. This is reflected in the large number of respondents who indicated to have registered as voters. Whilst the youth vote stands to influence the election results the participation of young people should not be confined to voting alone. The government and political parties need to ensure that young people are imbued with a political consciousness that includes their understanding of the constitution and electoral processes.

The fourth section discusses young people's access to information. It identified that much of young people's participation depends on their access to relevant information. Traditional media in the form of radio, newspaper and television are preferred by the majority of young people. The internet and social media are gaining popularity but access and affordability are challenges to their widespread use by young people.



Whilst young people are highly involved in community activity this has not translated into political involvement.



Recommendations in the report are offered foremost to the CCF. There are wider implications for institutions and organizations that work with young people. The recommendations offered in relation to the four main sections of the report are articulated below:

- (i) **Defining young people** – where an age definition is preferred for work with young people the age category between 18 to 35 years is preferred. Involving those in their forties is context specific and should be dependent on the activity or programme focus.
- (ii) **Young people and participation** – structures and processes to be implemented at different levels of society ensuring that young people’s cultural, community and religious involvement are translated into political participation.
- (iii) **Young people and electoral and constitutional reform** – young people’s political involvement must move beyond voting. The government, relevant organizations and political parties need to create and sustain mechanisms for youth representation and leadership. It is about creating an environment that challenges the distrust and cynicism young people have about politics and politicians.
- (iv) **Young people and political information** – traditional media is the best way to reach young people. However, the internet and social media are also gaining popularity. Organizations and political parties that maximise their use of this media platform will be popular with young people.

An additional section for the research community is offered and calls for future research that builds on the findings of this study. Much of this will depend on research coordination and funding which are at present major obstacles to research about and with young people.



Traditional media is the best way to reach young people. However, the internet and social media are also gaining popularity.



Introduction



1 Introduction

The Citizen's Constitutional Forum (CCF) is a Fiji based non-governmental organization (NGO) working in the area of community education and advocacy on issues of constitutional democracy, human rights, justice and multiculturalism. Young people are at the core of CCF's work. This is particularly significant at this time in Fiji's history as the country prepares for its first democratic elections since 2006. CCF's work with young people in this context is challenging because of the inconsistent definition of young people and the absence of information on young people's knowledge and level of interest and involvement in democratic activities. This report was commissioned by CCF to explore and offer a preliminary understanding of these challenges and suggest practical ways for working with young people around its key advocacy and educational programmes.

The situation of young people in Fiji is diverse. Like other population cohorts they experience challenges and opportunities presented by shifting historical, socio-political and economic realities, technological innovations and environmental concerns. They are constantly under adult gaze, praised for their display of responsibility and initiative and labelled 'deviant' for perceived unruly behaviour. In the lead-up to the September 2014 elections the discourse around young people, officially defined in Fiji as those between the ages of 18 and 35 years has shifted.

Fiji's young people are being propelled into the political limelight. This is partly due to the reduction of the voting age to 18 years and young people comprising 40 percent of the eligible electorate. These factors among others make young people an influential political force. However, voting does not mean that young people are meaningfully participating in democratic processes or that they are equal partners in decision making. The challenge is to understand how the current generation of young people position themselves as citizens against contemporary socio-political realities, in particular the 2014 elections and beyond.

This scenario acts as the backdrop to this study where young people, central to the research, discuss their views, understandings and experiences of four broad areas; who they are, participation and democratic involvement, electoral and constitutional reforms and political information.

“ Fiji's young people are being propelled into the political limelight. This is partly due to the reduction of the voting age to 18 years and young people comprising 40 percent of the eligible electorate. ”

Methodology



2 Methodology

This study adopted two research methods. The first constitutes a literature review of youth specific and youth participatory research from which the study's conceptual approach emerged. The second involved three forms of primary data collection; a questionnaire survey, focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews. Approximately 300 young people were involved with the questionnaire survey and FGDs. Interviews were conducted in person with 15 young and adult stakeholders. Data was collected in four locations, Labasa, Levuka, Nadi and Suva¹.

2.1 Literature Review²

Youth specific and youth participatory related literature available in Fiji were examined³. Although not exhaustive the review offered a glimpse of young people's embedded but shifting realities. The review identified that young people are predominantly defined by chronological age. Whilst this is useful it tells us very little about the dynamics and subjectivities (that include strengths and vulnerabilities) of young people's lives in contemporary Fiji. In addition, very little is known about youth sub-groups or 'severely disadvantaged young people'⁴ whose participation is paramount in an inclusive Fiji. Fiji's contemporary socio-political and economic realities blur definitional applications of who a young person is and results in a limited understanding of what young people are doing.

The literature suggests that young people's participation in Fiji is generally influenced by adult views and structures that govern young people-adult relationships. These structures are increasingly under threat as young people, more so those in urban areas, are increasingly participating as individuals or within new arrangements more suited to their interests. Young people want to be involved in shaping the new Fiji as demonstrated in their share of submissions made to the initial constitution consultations. It appears that for many voting in the 2014 general elections will offer them the opportunity to articulate these issues as well as their many hopes, aspirations and concerns.

Drawing on the challenges of capturing the structural and subjective realities of what it means to be young and involved in contemporary Fiji, the literature review proposed that the study be guided by the concept of 'generation' (Wyn and Woodman, 2006).

1. The locations chosen represent Fiji's geographical diversity, including the different settlement types, places of high growth and development and are areas of population concentration

2. This section is a condensed version of the literature review that was developed as a deliverable for this project.

3. State of Pacific Youth 2011 (Curtain and Vakaoti, 2011); national reports such as the Situational Analysis of Youth in Fiji (SAYF) 2011 (MYS, 2011), 'Scratching the Surface' (CCF, 2011) and 'Fiji: the challenges and opportunities of diversity' (Naidu, et al, 2013) and academic literature on youth citizenship, participation and leadership (Carling, 2009; Vakaoti and Mishra, 2009; Vakaoti 2012, 2013) and democratic development (Boege et al, 2013).

4. They include young women, young people in rural and outer islands, young people with disabilities, young people living with HIV and AIDS, street-frequenting young people and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTs) (Curtain and Vakaoti, 2011:21).

Generation is premised on the idea that whilst the government and adult society condition the experiences of being young, young people at the same time respond, interpret and contest these constructions giving rise to new and distinct socio-cultural and political forms of expression that demarcate them from the previous generation. According to Sloam (2011:4), “‘generational replacement’ is the key driving force behind political change and can offer us a window through which to view the future of our democracies”. This conceptual framework provides the chance to explore the situation and experiences of Fiji’s current generation of young people, commonly referred to as ‘coup babies’⁵, loosely used in this study as those born between 1979 and 1996 or those between 18 and 35 years of age. This cohort of young people bears the responsibility of ushering Fiji into the next generation; post 2014 and beyond.

2.2 Primary data collection

Primary data collection comprised of survey questionnaires and focus groups discussions with young people. Results from these research approaches formed the basis of this report. Face to face interviews were also conducted with relevant youth and adult stakeholders. Their responses have been integrated where relevant in the report. The primary data collection was facilitated by a team of four field researchers.

2.2.1 Survey questionnaire

Two-hundred and one young people completed the survey questionnaire. There were 50 participants in Labasa, Levuka and Suva and 51 in Nadi. Emphasis was placed on an equal representation of gender and where possible included members of ‘youth sub-groups’. Young questionnaire respondents (YQRs) were recruited in two ways: firstly through an ‘invitation to participate’ advertisement and secondly, through availability sampling. The purpose of the survey questionnaire was to identify an acceptable demographic age for defining young people, analyse factors that influenced young people’s participation

Table 1 Survey Participants by Age and Gender

Location	Age Categories				Gender			
	17-23 years	24-30 years	31-35 years	No response	Males	Females	Third Gender	No response
Nadi	25	15	10	1	23	28	0	0
Labasa	24	19	6	1	22	27	0	1
Levuka	21	19	10	0	25	25	0	0
Suva	31	10	7	2	29	21	0	0

⁵Young people born just prior to or after the first coup in 1987.

2.2.2 Focus Groups

Approximately 100 young people participated in FGDs across the four research locations. Participants were recruited via the research advertisement and through CCF's contacts in the field work locations. The focus groups were divided into three age groups; 18-23 years, 24-29 years and 30-35 years. Each FGD aimed at 5 to 10 participants.

In Suva, youth sub-groups (young people with disabilities and wheelbarrow boys) each formed and participated in their own FGDs. The FGD sessions were intended to engage participants in in-depth discussions about the definitions of young people, their participation in activities that mattered to them and their level of interest in Fiji's electoral and constitutional reform process.

Table 2 Focus-Group Participants by Gender

Location	Categories	Gender	
		<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Nadi	17-23 years	4	3
	24-29 years	1	7
	30-35 years	3	7
	Other	0	0
Labasa	17-23 years	1	6
	24-29 years	1	3
	30-35 years	1	11
	Other	0	0
Levuka	17-23 years	6	6
	24-29 years	0	1
	30-35 years	4	4
	Other	0	0
Suva	17-23 years	5	4
	24-29 years	8	1
	30-35 years	4	3
	Other	6	0

⁶Young people with disabilities and wheelbarrow boys

2.2.3 Face to face interviews

Face to face interviews were conducted by the field researchers with youth and adult stakeholders in the research locations. Participants included representatives of government departments, NGOs and faith-based organizations⁷.

The interviews were conducted to determine how young people feature in the policies and programmes of these organizations and groups.

Table 3 Number of Stakeholder Respondents by Location and Gender

Location	Number of respondents	Gender		
		Males	Females	Third Gender
Nadi	4	2	2	0
Labasa	4	4	0	1
Levuka	3	2	1	0
Suva	4	3	1	0

2.2.4 Opportunities and Limitations of the study

This study is the first to explore with young people how they prefer to be defined and their participation and experiences of Fiji's constitutional and political reforms. Through their participation participants were given an opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions about the objectives of the study. Participants from youth sub-groups like young people with disabilities and wheelchair boys found their involvement empowering. The research assistants, who were university post-graduate students at the time of the survey found their involvement educational. It gave them the opportunity to apply and experience field research methods like administering questionnaires and facilitating focus group discussions.

Budgetary and time constraints prevented the study from recruiting a representative sample for the survey questionnaire and an in-depth analysis of the data. As a result, findings of the study cannot be generalised. Instead the findings offer a snapshot of how young people define themselves and the situation around their participation in democratic activities and processes. The report highlights areas that could be further investigated and guide future conceptualizations for understanding young people and their democratic participation in Fiji.

⁷See Appendix 4

Findings



3 Findings

3.1 Defining Young People

In the contemporary era, definitions of what constitutes a young person are often blurred. Age is used in a fluid way and social markers are constantly changing. The study was interested in how the YQRs defined young people. The findings show that the majority (45%) of the 201 YQRs, are of the view that young people should be defined by a combination of both age categorisations and social characteristics.

Thirty-seven percent identified being young as solely influenced by age categorisations and 13 percent suggested that the definition of being young was based solely on social characteristics (Table 4). Two percent of the YQRs identified other characteristics which include ones state of mind and physical appearance.

Table 4 How young people should be defined

How should young people be defined	Frequency	Percentage
Both age and socially	90	45
Age	74	37
Socially	26	13
Refused	5	2
Other	4	2
Don't know	2	1
Total	201	100

Table 5 shows the distribution of the age categories that YQRs perceive as appropriate to define young people. The majority (26%) chose 18 to 35 years, followed by equal 23% favouring 15-24 years and 18 to 24 years. Only one respondent in the 30-35 year old category identified those between 15 to 45 years as young people. The age of the YQRs was found to influence the age category they thought was appropriate to define young people. The age category 15-24 years was preferred by 57% of 17-23 years olds compared to 13% of 31-35 year olds. The older the age of respondents the higher the preference for their definition of youth age category. Thirty-three percent of 31-35 year olds preferred the definition of youth category to be 18-35 years, compared to 25% of 17-23 year olds.

Some FGDs such as the 30-35 year old group in Levuka supported the 'minority' view that young people are those between the ages of 18 and 40 years. The participants felt that individuals at the age of 40 years were more mature and took responsibilities seriously as a result of life experiences.

Although unpopular with YQRs the ‘minority view’ is a reality in many villages and rural settings, where youth leaders are often aged 40 years and over. A youth group in Vunivau, Labasa, for example, has members aged between 18 and 40 years⁸. However, FGD participants in Labasa and Nadi (18-23 years) agreed that young people are those between 18 to 35 years.

Table 5 Appropriate age category for defining young people

Appropriate age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-35 years	43	26
15-24 years	38	23
18-24 years	38	23
15-35 years	24	15
15-45 years	1	1

The YQRs who preferred that young people be defined socially were asked to identify the social indicator that best appealed to them. The majority (31%) of YQRs choose the successful completion of high school as a marker of being young (See Table 6). Twenty seven percent- identified dropping out of high school, 16% favoured gaining employment and 10% opted for completing university. Only 3% of the YQRs considered voting as an appropriate social indicator of being a young person.

The FGDs highlighted similar responses and suggested other indicators which include being unmarried, dependent on and living with parents. At the same time young people talked about how they are free from responsibilities and are active, creative and energetic, features that distinguish them from the dominant idea of young people as passive. A shared feature of being young is associated with one’s ability to “do good things like helping communities”. A Suva FGD⁹ identified being young as a rebellious phase in life.

Social indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Successfully completing high school	36	31
Dropping out of high school	31	27
Gaining employment	19	16
Completing university	12	10
Voting	4	3
Getting married	1	1

⁸Adult key informant interview, Labasa.

Experiences of being young in Fiji

Over the past two decades Fiji has undergone many socio-political, economic, environmental and technological changes. The YQRs were read some general statements about their experiences of being young in Fiji and were asked to identify how they felt about them (see Table 7). The majority strongly agreed (56%) and agreed (37%) that being young is a normal stage of growing up. Associated with this was an overwhelming 89% (57% strongly agree and 32% agree) of YQRs who related being young as fun. At the same time 86% (57% strongly agree and 29% agree) of YQRs viewed being young as challenging. Part of this challenge includes young people feeling that they are not being taken seriously.

Twenty percent of the young people strongly disagreed (18%) and disagreed (2%) to the statement 'you are taken seriously.' It is worth noting that at least 43% (18% strongly agree and 25% agree) of YQRs thought that they are taken seriously in Fiji. On the other hand 41% (30% disagree and 11% strongly disagree) of YQRs are of the view that they cannot do as they please compared to 36% (13% strongly agree and 23% agree) who think that they can.

The FGD also explored the peculiarities of today's young generation. To do this, the FGD respondents were asked to compare their experiences of growing up compared to what they know of their parents' generation. It was found that there is a marked difference between what young people perceived as being 'young' today compared to what they know of their parents' generation. In Suva and Nadi participants in the 18-23 years category associated being young with dependency and adults with maturity and experience. According to FGD participants in Labasa and Levuka, developments like human rights, technological change, media influence, education and modern values are responsible for this difference.

As a result young people identified themselves as being more exposed, independent, care free and tolerant when compared to adults who they identified to be influenced by traditional and cultural values. Whilst these characteristics allowed for positive expressions in the form of greater interaction with others they could also be responsible for the involvement of young people in perceived 'negative' activities such as peer pressure, smoking and alcohol and substance abuse. Perhaps this is why young people see themselves as lacking in moral values and when compared to adults.

“

Fiji's young people are being propelled into the political limelight. This is partly due to the reduction of the voting age to 18 years and young people comprising 40 percent of the eligible electorate.

”

Table 7 Statements about being a young person in Fiji

Statement	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Don't know %
Being young is fun	57	32	10	1	0	0
Being young is a normal stage of growing up	56	37	3	2	1	0
It is challenging being a young person	57	29	7	4	0	1
You are taken seriously	18	25	29	18	2	5
You can do as you please	13	23	18	30	11	3

Main issues affecting Fiji's young people

In addition to being asked about how they felt about being a young person in Fiji, the respondents in both the survey and the FGDs were asked to identify what they thought were the main issues affecting them and their peers. Table 8 shows that 81% of YQRs identified unemployment. This issue was consistent for all the survey age categories and a recurring theme amongst FGD respondents. In qualifying their answers some young people attributed unemployment to the inability of the job market to absorb the high number of school leavers (including early school leavers) and university graduates.

Other young people suggested that unemployment is closely related to youth crime. Additional issues young people identified as important included substance abuse (65%), sexual and reproductive health (49%), freedom of expression (36%) and staying in school (22%). Only 14% of the YQRs identified political instability as an issue for Fiji's young people, however, this issue was discussed in the FGDs, where participants¹⁰ expressed concerns about the absence of democracy in Fiji and how certain government leaders dictated much of what happens in the country. Other examples of government control given by the FGD participants¹¹ include the Government's banning of the annual Methodist Church conference in 2011 and media censorship.

Social discrimination was raised in the 'other' category (see Table 8) and by young stakeholder participants. According to a young stakeholder respondent, sexual discrimination against Lesbians, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual and Intersex and Questioning (LGTBIQ) individuals is an issue. Out of this has grown organizations like *Drodrolagi*. According to *Drodrolagi's* founder¹², the group was established to support and protect those like him from discrimination.

¹⁰Nadi, FGD 24-29 years

¹¹Suva FGD 30-35 years

¹²The founder of Drodrolagi identifies as belonging to the LGBTIQ network

Table 8 Issues affecting young people in Fiji

Issue	Frequency	Percentage
Unemployment	162	81
Substance abuse	131	65
Sexual and reproductive health	98	49
Freedom of expression	73	36
Staying in school	45	22
Mental health	42	21
Political instability	29	14
Rural opportunities	14	7
Other	9	5

The FGDs identified additional issues for young people. For those between the ages of 24 and 29 years the issues included poor infrastructure, services and opportunities and economic hardship. Specifically, the respondents spoke about poor road conditions and the lack of access to electricity in some communities. Regarding services and opportunities young people expressed concerns about poor outpatient health services in medical centres and gaps in access to quality education, information and job prospects between rural and urban dwellers¹³.

FGD participants also identified disparities in urban areas between those that live in suburbs compared to those in informal settlements. Labasa FGD participants highlighted disparities regarding access to higher education and education resources. Similar sentiments were expressed by young people in Nadi who felt that their peers in Lautoka benefitted greatly from the services of the Lautoka campus of the Fiji National University (FNU).

On economic hardship, FGD participants highlighted rising costs and low income levels. Participants made special mention of the double standards people they know experienced in the workforce. One participant mentioned that “relatives do not receive their wages in time from the Road Department compared to soldiers who were privileged receiving food ration, allowance and support”. In a community in Nadi young people raised concerns about the uneven distribution of lease money which compounds the unemployment situation and is a barrier to those that need financial assistance to boost income generating activities.

¹³Suva and Labasa FDG, 18-23 years

Focus group participants between the ages of 30 and 35 years appeared to be more articulate in their description and discussion of their issues. They found unemployment, lack of access to markets (for local produce), gender inequality and limited opportunities for high-level participation as major issues. On the two latter points the participants agreed that provincial youth groups continued to be male dominated and benefit only a few. The FGD heard that executives of the Youth Assembly of the Fiji Islands (YAFI) and the Provincial Youth Forum of the Fiji Islands (PYFFI) benefit the most, as they were the ones who attended workshops and meetings. A youth advocate¹⁴ further added that this issue is compounded because the meeting attendees are not accountable to members of their organizations because there is no structure and process available for the dissemination of information. The respondents noted that youth organizations like YAFI, PYFFI and the National Youth Council (NYC) have offered young people a platform where their issues can be discussed.

Summary

Whilst there is the strong tendency to define young people in both chronological and social terms, the data suggests that chronological categorizations (in particular 18 to 35 years) are preferred. In part this stems from the dominant perception that age equates to maturity. The decision to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18 years challenges this position by assuming that 18 year olds are capable of making informed political decisions. As the study shows, young people have not warmed to the idea that voting is a marker of being a young person.

The findings in this section also demonstrate that young people think those in their forties are beyond the acceptable age of 'being young'. This challenges practices in most village and social settings where youth members and more importantly youth leaders are often in their forties. There are lessons here for those that work with young people and youth organizations. The issues experienced by young people are not new but the fact that they linger on is concerning. It is encouraging to hear that the majority of young people feel that being young in Fiji is fun and that they are taken seriously. Leaders and decision makers should heed the fact that many young people feel that they 'cannot do as they please'.



Many young people feel that they 'cannot do as they please.'



¹⁴Stakeholder interview, Nadi, 31 October 2013.

3.2 Young People and Participation

Democracy and participation

As a preface to the survey questions about respondent's democratic participation, the YQRs were asked to identify three things that came to mind when they heard the word 'participation'. The responses can be grouped into three broad categories in relation to participation. The first referred to 'being part of something', through things like activism, sports and social involvement and volunteering. Secondly, participation was identified with 'being heard' and was mostly about enabling opportunities where young people's ideas and voices could be articulated. Thirdly, there was a focus on 'collaboration and the sharing of ideas and interests'. A number of YQRs stated that they did not have an idea of what the term participation meant.

The challenges for young people's participation in Fiji were explored in the stakeholder interviews and FGDs. Stakeholder respondents identified the lack of funding for youth projects and young people's general passiveness as barriers to their participation. The main concern were social barriers, particularly those concerning gender, disabilities and age. According to the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), "young women are preoccupied with household responsibilities and do not turn up for trainings and other programmes. In rural-areas many Indo-Fijian women do not feel free to express themselves as their male accomplice usually a father or husband speaks on their behalf". This highlights that young women are more likely to experience discrimination than young men.

A FGD with young people with disabilities highlighted their issues regarding participation. The group identified social stigma and accessibility to services as major obstacles to their participation. As an example, a visually impaired young person in Nadi mentioned having to pay someone to guide him on shopping trips, his family being overprotective and discouraging him from doing certain activities and being unable to attend workshops as they cater mostly for 'normal' young people. In Suva, the FGDs heard that while occasions like Iliesa Delana's Paralympic Gold medal win was a proud moment for those with disabilities not much has changed in relation to the overall participation of people with disabilities. The FGD recognized that positive change would take time.

Young people in Suva identified age an issue in the home. One participant stated that an individual who is under 23 years of age cannot voice an opinion or make a decision on something like moving out of the family home. The group agreed that decisions such as moving out of home in their early twenties were considered rude by parents. This reaction is often seen as a culturally motivated response to a young person's quest for independence.

¹⁵Stakeholder interview. 23 October, 2013.

¹⁶Nadi, FGD 30-35 years

¹⁷Suva, FGD 18-23 years

Young People's Involvement in Youth Groups

In an effort to ascertain the level of young people's participation, the YQRs were asked a series of questions about their youth group participation, the types of activities they were involved in and the levels at which they are engaged in.

Youth group involvement, types of activities and levels of engagement

The majority of the respondents (62%) were actively involved in youth groups. There was almost an equal gender representation with 52% males and 48% females. Of these respondents, 26% had been active in their youth group for three to five years and 25% had been involved for more than five years. The remaining respondents had been involved between one (16%) and two (14%) years. Fifteen per cent of YQRs had been involved for less than a year. Whilst young people are known to participate at different levels of society the survey found that the majority (50%) of respondents participated at the local level. This was followed by participation at the provincial level (13%), national level (8%), international level (4%) and regional level (2%). A number of respondents participated in one or more levels (in particular between the local and provincial levels and between the national, regional and international levels).

Involved YQRs engaged in multiple activities as shown in Table 9. From the results, the most popular activities were religious (48%), cultural and traditional (25%) and volunteering (22%). Fewer individuals were involved in environmental activities (15%), creative arts (10%), women's issues (6%), mental health (5%), human rights (3%), disabilities (2%) and politics (2%). The high degree of involvement in religious activities is unsurprising as the majority of YQRs were Christians. Christian churches are known to host youth activities and programmes. On occasions church based youth groups participate in activities supported by organizations like the Ministries of Health and Youth and Sports and the Fiji Red Cross. Almost a quarter of the YQRs highlighted being engaged in volunteer work. The low involvement of young people in politics is also unsurprising, as historically young Fijians have rarely been involved in party politics or political movements.

Table 9 Youth group activities

Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Religious	96	48
Cultural and traditional	49	25
Volunteering	44	22
Environmental	29	15
Creative arts	21	10
Women's issues	12	6
Mental health	11	5
Human rights	6	3
Disabilities	3	2
Politics	3	2

The study did not ask young people about the frequency of their involvement. However, the Nadi FGD with 18-23 year olds revealed that some young people would only be involved in youth groups if they were invited to and if there were direct or indirect benefits as a result of their participation. Those in the same FGD age category in Suva were more involved, a trend that could be attributed to the availability of more opportunities for young people in urban areas and the greater inclination for them to participate in activities that appealed to their interests or supported their situation. For example in Suva, some FGD participants shared being involved with feeding programs for street-frequenting young people, the National Substance Abuse Advisory Council and Give a Child a Book Foundation. Young people identified being members of support groups like the United Blind People's Association, Psychiatric Survivors Association and the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons (FNCDP) and the Wheelbarrow Operation Association¹⁸. In Labasa and Levuka participants in the 18-23 years category all identified as belonging to a faith-based youth group. They reported joining voluntarily for various reasons including spiritual and character development, the opportunity to be involved in community work and for peer interaction.

Youth group membership and involvement is considered significant because it offers young people an avenue to discuss their concerns. When asked who they would turn to to address an issue they felt strongly about, the majority (64%) of YQRs preferred addressing issues as part of a group compared to 18% who prefer to address issues individually. Perhaps this indicates that creating more opportunities and spaces for young people to come together would further enhance and encourage their existing tendency to work things through as a group.

¹⁸The organization collaborates with the community policing network and the Suva City Council on maintaining the safety and security of Suva. The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) assisted the association members with coloured safety vests.

Non-involvement in youth groups

The 37% of YQRs who mentioned not being actively involved in a youth group were asked for reasons for their non-involvement. A combination of reasons were received, the most common was that they were not interested (11%). This was followed by those who preferred to do things on their own (7%), those who felt that they are not taken seriously by adults (3%) and those who thought that there was no leadership in groups (3%). Those who responded in the 'other' category provided answers like; too occupied with family, studies and work; no youth groups exist in their location and youth groups are too social and unproductive as reasons for their non-involvement. These responses mirrored the FGD discussions.

Disinterest and the lack of opportunities were stated as the main reasons for the lack of youth group involvement¹⁹. The FGDs revealed that much youth membership was ethnic, interest and support specific and catered mostly for *i-Taukei* young people. In Levuka, participants raised that often there was nothing specific for Indo-Fijians.

Participation in democratic activities

Democratic participation is a specific aspect of participation. The study was interested to see if respondents' ordinary participation translated into democratic involvement. As a way of introducing YQRs to this topic, they were asked to identify three things that came to mind when they heard the word democracy. Young Questionnaire Respondents identified three broad categories. The first, rights, in particular the right and freedom to information, to free speech and expression and equality. Leadership was identified as the second category, specifically having elected leaders and corruption-free leadership. The third category was governance, where people vote and directly have a voice in how they are governed and the existence of established governance guidelines. Many YQRs stated that they did not have any idea of the term democracy.

Young Questionnaire Respondents were asked about the types of democratic activities that they have taken part in. Table 10 provides their responses. The most frequent response was joining youth groups (48%) followed by voting²⁰ (47%) and signing petitions (18%). The minority participated in more activist pursuits like boycotts, distributing political literature and protest marches. It is worth highlighting that 20% of YQRs identified not having participated in any democratic activity identified in the questionnaire. The majority of these were 17-23 year olds. Non-involvement in any democratic activity ranked third behind voting and joining youth groups for 24-30 year olds. This trend was also raised by some young stakeholder participants. A former beauty pageant winner and now a women's activist²¹ echoed that young people's lack of interest in politics, particularly those born after 1987, stems from the coup cycle and media censorship which limits young people from critical thinking.

¹⁹Levuka FGD, 18-23 years

²⁰Refers to voting at any decision making level

²¹Stakeholder interview, 23 October, 2013.

Table 10 Democratic activities by young people

Activity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Joining youth groups	97	48
Voting	94	47
None of the above	41	20
Signing petitions	37	18
Joining human rights organizations	21	11
Online voting	19	10
Activism	19	10
Protest march	14	7
Distributing political literature	9	5
Boycott	8	4

Comfortable spaces for expressing opinion

YQRs were asked about their level of comfort in expressing their views and opinions in relation to the different spaces they are likely to occupy in Fiji. These spaces included (but are not limited to) the nuclear family, schools, youth group meetings and social media (see Table 11). Nuclear families, schools and youth group meetings appeared to be very popular with the YQRs. Fifty per cent of YQRs were either very comfortable or comfortable about using social media as a way of expressing their views and opinions. When viewed across age categories, social media was ranked as the least comfortable space for 31-35 year olds.

The extended family, community meetings and church meetings were signalled out as places that YQRs would least express their opinions and views. This is despite the fact that young people, are aware of communication channels and protocols in these spaces. For example, Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) members know that they can raise concerns with the local pastor. At the community level, young people were aware that concerns can be raised with advisory councillors for Indo-Fijians and with the *Bosevai-koro* and *Bose-va-tikina* and *Bose-va-yasana* for the *i-Taukei*.

²²FGD Nadi, 18-23 years

Table 11 Spaces for expressing opinion

	Very comfortable %	Comfortable %	Neutral %	Uncomfortable %	Most uncomfortable %	Don't know %
Nuclear Family	65	16	8	4	4	2
Extended Family	21	29	18	16	13	1
Community meetings	24	36	19	10	5	5
Schools	42	37	10	4	2	2
Church meetings	33	29	19	6	6	6
Youth group meetings	45	27	15	1	3	7
Social media	25	25	25	7	11	5

There are some exceptions, however. Young people (24-29 years) in the Nadi FGD identified the current *Tui Nawaka* as a leader they felt comfortable going to because he addressed their needs. The general difficulty by young people to identify individuals they can trust in some locations raises concerns about who they can go to with their issues. Young people in the Labasa²³ and Nadi²⁴ FGDs expressed fears about raising concerns with government authorities. This stemmed from the knowledge that young people have in the past been ill-treated by the security forces.

The FGDs established that age and experience are significant in respondent's awareness of the wider structures around them and those available to facilitate their concerns. Young people (18-23 years) in Levuka were aware of their specific youth governance structures but had limited knowledge of those at the provincial and national levels. Many young people in the 31 to 35 year category in all the locations are members of youth groups with some holding leadership positions in those groups. In addition they are aware of youth governance structures like the NYC and its two affiliate organizations YAFI and PYFFI.

²³Labasa FGD, 18-23 years

²⁴Nadi FGD, 24-29 years

Summary

The survey results and the FGDs show that young people are actively participating. Much of this is carried out in the context of groups, particularly in religious and cultural groups. Many young people are engaged as volunteers and volunteer across the different sectors (religious, cultural, community, schools etc.) that they may be involved in. Some young people are not involved as part of a group and opt to do things as individuals. Whilst the study did not explore their activities, it is important to recognize that many young people engage positively as individuals, a trend that is increasingly being assisted by information technology. However, the reasons for non-involvement in groups need to be considered if groups are to remain relevant as a way of meaningfully engaging young people.

Young people's involvement in group politics is a case to consider, particularly when in the lead up to the September 2014 elections, young people are being touted²⁵ as a significant group that could dramatically influence the election outcomes. Young people's individual and group participation does not necessarily translate into democratic and political involvement. As evidenced in the findings, only a small percentage of young people are involved in politically inclined activities. This trend can be observed historically in Fiji. Other reasons as identified in the FGDs suggest that young people are unable to link their personal issues to the wider structural context and the wider implications of issues on their lives. This reality will need to be considered particularly by political parties and leaders if young people are to be engaged in active democratic processes and decision making.

Comfortable spaces for young people are critical to their participation. Nuclear families, schools and social media were identified as popular spaces where young people could express their opinion. Adult spaces like community and church meetings were the least comfortable spaces for young people. However, the study found that there are individuals within these somewhat unfavourable spaces that young people are more comfortable approaching if they had issues to discuss. Young people express mixed reactions to their awareness of youth governance structures.

Whilst many are aware of those at the local level others have limited knowledge of those at the provincial and national levels. Increasing young people's awareness of and access to pathways for participation at all levels of society will augur well for their increased societal involvement and in the issues that affect their lives.

²⁵See <http://www.fjitime.com/story.aspx?id=261080>

3.3 Young People and electoral and constitutional reform

Understanding of and interest in electoral and constitutional reforms

Young Questionnaire Respondents were asked about their understanding of the phrase 'electoral and constitutional reform'. Young people understood the phrase as relating to how elections will be carried out, the new voting system and the formulation of a new constitution. Some young people mentioned having no idea of what the phrase meant. A young respondent stated, "I don't know because nobody told me about it and government officials did not bother to come down to our level". Similar sentiments were also expressed in FGDs with young participants (18-23 years), with the exception of university students. Constitutional developments did not appear to have much influence on participants in Levuka, Nadi and Labasa.

Young people's understanding of the electoral and constitutional reforms was reflected in the level of interest they showed in the process. According to Table 12, 37% of the YQRs were very interested and 27% quite interested in the electoral and constitutional reform process. On the other hand 14% were not very interested and 8% were not interested at all. Eleven percent of YQRs were unsure about their level of interest. Very interested and interested responses were dominated by those with a secondary and tertiary level qualification. Many of these respondents looked forward to the prospects that lie with a democratically elected government. Some YQRs articulated, "if elections don't go ahead as planned Fiji might be faced with developmental aid, trade and travel restrictions affecting my life" and "to see what the new elected government will undertake for the country's future. Another added, "I want everything to be normal again". The 24-29 years FGD category in Labasa and Nadi appeared to take an active interest in politics with many registering for the 2014 elections. They are motivated by the prospect of positive change, by challenging corruption, nepotism, discrimination and injustice - reasons some young people dislike politics.

Pessimism summed up the feelings of those YQRs who were either not very interested or not interested at all in the constitutional reform processes. When viewed across the main ethnic groups, 22% of the respondents who chose these options were iTaukei compared to 15% who were Indo-Fijians. A YQR explained, "I have lost interest, we are punished for expressing our views". Other young people are plainly apolitical. Two other YQRs stated, "I am not keen on political issues" and "I don't trust the system". Most FGD participants in the 30-35 year category including young people with disabilities had mixed feelings about the constitutional and electoral process. Others expressed concerns about reactions to the election outcomes. These concerns are based on the government's decision to rescind the Ghai draft constitution in place of its own and with Fiji's history of coups. In Levuka, participants observed that the current government is doing all it can to be elected but there are no guarantees that they will continue with the same policies if they come into power.

²⁶Levuka FGD, 30-35 years

Table 12 Level of interest in electoral and constitutional reforms

Level of interest	Frequency	Percentage
Very interested	74	37
Quite interested	55	27
Neither	22	11
Not very interested	29	14
Not interested at all	16	8
Don't know	3	2
Refused	3	1
Total	201	100

In addition to ascertaining young people's understanding and level of interest in the electoral and constitutional reform process, they were also asked about their opinion on democracy and constitutional reforms. Overall there was strong support for democratic and constitutional reforms. 50% of YQRs either strongly disagreed (24%) or disagreed (26%) that democracy did not affect them and 55% either strongly agreed (20%) and agreed (35%) that constitutional reforms would address their issues. *iTaukei* young people were most optimistic compared to the other ethnic groups.

Despite this optimism, concerns by young people that democracy does not affect them (14% strongly agree and 16% agree) and that democratic activity is boring (6% strongly agree and 20% agree) should be heeded. About an equal proportion of YQRs felt that adults should and should not decide what is best for young people.

About a quarter of the respondents remained neutral in four of the six statements about democracy (see Table 13). These young people are possibly waiting to see what eventuates. It also highlights the reality of Fiji's young people, many of whom are content not to express their opinions or who do not have strong opinions about Fiji's current state of democracy.

Table 13 View on democracy and constitutional reforms

Statements	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Don't know %
Democracy does not affect me	14	16	12	26	24	8
Democratic activity is boring to me	6	20	27	26	16	5
Adults should decide what is best for young people	19	22	16	15	23	5
I have faith in Fiji's democratic process	17	30	29	10	9	5
Constitutional reforms will address young people's issues	20	35	24	11	5	5
Constitutional reforms generate my interest in participatory activities	19	31	26	10	6	8

Participation in the constitution consultation process

Given young people's moderate level of understanding and interest in the electoral and constitutional reform process it is not surprising that the majority (67%) of YQRs did not take part in the constitution consultation process. Only 29% of YQRs participated in the consultations. Comparing involvement across age categories, more (33%) 31-35 year olds participated compared to 22% of 24-30 year olds and 21% of 17 to 23 year olds. Four percent refused to say if they participated or not. Out of the YQRs who participated in the constitution consultations 19% took part in the Yash Ghai²⁷ led consultations, 8% in the Government consultations and 2% in both consultations.

The study found that youth organizations like the Males Empowerment Network (MEN) Fiji and the Drodrolagi Movement made submissions to the Ghai Commission. Apolitical organizations were actively involved in mobilizing young people for the consultations. The FWRM actively campaigned for young women's involvement in the process and the PYFFI stressed the importance of constitutional submissions with *tikina* youth presidents and provincial youth workers.

²⁷The Suva FGDs echoed strong support for Yash Ghai's draft constitution because it was the result of national consultations. According to the participants the 2013 Constitution did not reflect the voices of Fiji's citizens

Of the YQR who took part in the constitution consultations, 16% did so because they felt that it was their responsibility as citizens, 12% said that it was their right as a citizen and 4% said they participated because they had something to contribute. A handful (8%) stated they were asked to participate by the organization they were involved with and by their teachers, village headman and friends (see Table 14). Both the survey and FGDs revealed that university students, in comparison to other groups, were active in the constitution consultation process.

Table 14 Reasons for taking part in the constitution consultations

Reasons for taking part	Frequency	Percentage
It is my responsibility as a citizen	31	16
It is my right as a citizen	24	12
Refused	10	5
I felt I had something to contribute	8	4
I was asked to be involved	8	4
Other	6	3
A once in a lifetime opportunity	3	2
My group was involved	3	2

Table 15 provides reasons for YQRs' non-participation in the constitution consultations; 23% did not know how to take part in the consultations, something that was echoed across the three YQRs age categories. Fourteen percent believed that their view would not be taken seriously and 2% were not interested in the democratic process. Nineteen percent of YQRs offered other reasons for not taking part, these included, being busy with work, having other priorities and commitments, time and venue were inconvenient and not knowing that consultations were taking place. There was consensus in the FGDs that many young people, in particular those in the 18-23 years category, had become accustomed to coups and are politically apathetic. They felt that their voices and choices did not matter. In Levuka, participants²⁸ mentioned that they had no interest in national issues because they could not identify with them. However, if they had more knowledge about the process they might have been interested to participate in the consultations.

²⁸Levuka FGD, 18-23 years

Table 15 Reasons for not taking part in the constitution consultations

Reasons for not taking part	Frequency	Percentage
Didn't know how	47	23
Other	38	19
Views not taken seriously	28	14
Waste of time	6	3
Not interested in democratic processes	4	2

Young people and the constitution

The President, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau on September 6, 2013, assented to Fiji's latest constitution. Soon after, the elections office and related government departments actively engaged in disseminating copies of the constitution to Fiji's public. The survey asked YQRs if they had read the 2013 constitution. Table 16 shows that 49% of YQRs had not read the 2013 constitution. Some reasons for this included; not having access to a copy, not knowing that the copy of the constitution was free or where to get a copy, possessing a copy but not reading it²⁹ and not having any interest in the constitutional document. A respondent stated, "I am just not interested. I guess because I feel like I don't count so I am just not bothered". In Labasa, a youth leader³⁰ shared that many young people in her community have no idea of what the constitution is and where they can get a copy.

Only 19% of YQRs stated having read the constitution. Some had this to say about it; "now I understand the rights of women and children" and "I am happy for the inclusion of rights of the disabled and protection of iTaukei land. Twenty-seven percent identified having partially read the constitution. Their reasons for doing this included; feeling bored after the first few pages, the vocabulary being difficult and that it was too long and time consuming to read. A Nadi FGD³¹ expressed concerns the accessibility of the constitution to those living with disabilities and the reality of having them exercise their right to vote. Young people with disabilities in Suva also expressed this view saying that it is difficult for them to read and understand the constitution because it is not available in braille or in an audio format.

²⁹FGD, Suva Wheel Barrow Association

³⁰Stakeholder interview, Labasa 9 October 2013

³¹Nadi FGD, 30-35 years

Table 16 Those that have read the constitution

Read the 2013 Constitution?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	38	19
No	98	49
Partially	56	27
Refused	5	3
Don't Know	4	2
Total	201	100

Of those that have read the constitution 17% believe they have a good level of understanding and 32% an average level of understanding. The majority of these respondents are either university students or have attained tertiary level qualifications. Some attributed their understanding to the disciplines; particularly law, which they were studying. As one respondent said, "As a law student, I must know these things well". It is interesting that 22% did not or could not rate their level of understanding, whilst 13% recorded having a poor level of understanding (see Table 17).

Table 17 Understanding of the constitution

Understanding of the constitution	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Good level of understanding	33	17
Average level of understanding	65	32
Poor level of understanding	26	13
Don't know	45	22
Refused	32	16
Total	201	100

Young people and political parties

At the time of this study, registered political parties had only just begun mobilizing themselves following the absence of active political party activities since 2006. Young people's sparse membership in political parties is well known, it was therefore unsurprising that 90% of YQRs answered that they were not members of any political party (see Table 18). When asked if they would join and be actively involved in a political party 27% said that they would, 35% would not, 8% did not know if they would and 6% did not answer.

Table 18 Youth membership of political parties

Political Party Membership	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	5	2
No	180	90
Don't know	7	5
Refused	9	5
Total	201	100

YQRs who stated wanting to join and be actively involved in a political party were asked how they would want to be involved. The majority (14%), wished to do so as volunteers and 9% as members of party youth wings. Most of these young people are between the ages of 17-23 years and 24-30 years. The minority preferred to be directly involved in party politics either as a campaigner (2%), a candidate (2%) or an executive (1%) (see Table 19).

Table 19 Ways of being involved in party politics

Ways of being involved	Frequency	Percentage
A volunteer	29	14
As a member of the youth wing	17	9
Refused	16	8
Anything	9	5
Campaigner	4	3
A candidate	3	2
As a party executive	1	1

Young people and voting

The youth vote will be significant in the 2014 elections. When asked if they have registered to vote, 67% of YQRs answered yes and 11% answered no. Twenty-two percent refused to answer (see Table 20).

Table 20 Registering to vote

Registered to vote	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	135	67
No	22	11
Refused	44	22
Total	201	100

Those who did not register did so because they are not interested to vote (5%), some were of the view that voting does not result in anything (2%) and that they did not know they had to register to vote (3%). Whilst the percentage of those not registering to vote is small, the reasons are worth considering for future voter registration exercises. For those that have registered to vote, 20% did so because it was their democratic right, 19% just wanted to vote and 17% as it was recommended by the government (see Table 21). 'Others registered because they needed a form of identification and the voter registration card was free and to boost the voter registration numbers. It appeared that registered young people have made informed decisions about voter registration.

Table 21 Reasons for registering to vote

Reason for registering	Frequency	Percentage
It is my democratic right	40	20
I want to vote	39	19
The governments recommends it	35	17
Other	11	6
Everyone else was registering	8	4
I was told by my parents	7	3
Encouraged by other youths	2	1

The high percentage of voter registration is reflected in the popular response (61%) by YQRs who stated that they intend to vote in the 2014 elections. An additional 10% stated that it was likely that they would vote. Twenty-three percent of YQRs refused to say if they intended to vote in the 2014 elections (see Table 22).

Despite some level of apathy expressed by FGD participants the majority expressed intentions to vote in the 2014 elections. Many were supportive of young people as election candidates either as part of a youth party or as independents. Whilst a youth party would offer a collective voice, it was felt that independent candidates would have greater freedom to express themselves and would be more accessible to supporters.

According to participants³² in Nadi and Suva young parliamentary representatives are needed so they can help address youth issues and review and create laws relevant to young people. A young person with disabilities expressed willingness to contest the elections as an independent candidate but identified that resource limitations exist as a barrier to realising this intention.

Table 22 Intention to vote in the 2014 elections

Intention to vote in 2014	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	123	61
Most probably	20	10
Don't know	6	3
No	4	2
Other	1	1
Refused	47	23
Total	201	100

The survey found that the majority of YQRs would be first time voters. When asked if they had voted in previous Fiji general elections 55% answered no and 20% yes. For YQRs that had previously voted in a general election, 12% voted in the 2006, 7% voted in 1999 and 2006, 1% voted in the 1999.

³²FGD, 18-23 years

Understanding of the voting system

YQRs were asked a series of questions and statements to determine their understanding of the voting system³³ influences on their voting and voter preparedness. Despite the encouraging voter registration numbers and high intention to vote by YQRs, their understanding of the voting system is a cause for concern.

When asked if they understood the voting system enough to vote for the candidate of their choice if they were to vote in one month, 40% answered no. The majority of YQRs who answered no were 17-23 year olds. Twenty nine percent and 20% of YQRs stated that they would most probably vote and vote based on their understanding of the voting system (see Table 23).

Table 23 Understanding of the voting system to make informed choice

Do you understand the voting system?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	40	20
Most probably	58	29
Don't know	14	7
No	81	40
Other	2	1
Refused	6	3
Total	201	100

Factors influencing voting behaviour

YQRs were asked about the factors that would have the biggest influence on their voting behaviour if they were to vote in a month. The majority (39%) stated the family. Friends and political parties both accounted for 18%. Politicians and ethnicity were identified as not being influential for young people polling 9% and 13% respectively (see Table 24). Reasons for disparity in the influences of political parties and politicians were elaborated on in the FGDs. According to the FGD participants more is known about political parties compared to party leaders and individual politicians. FGD participants³⁴ in Labasa say that this is because there are no current political campaigns in the Northern Division. They do not believe that political parties are doing enough to engage young people or address their issues in Labasa. They point out that political parties are only active in Suva³⁵.

³³In the study, this is taken to mean one person, one vote, one value under a proportional representation system.

³⁴Labasa FGD, 30-35 years

³⁵Labasa FGD, 24-29 years

Table 24 Factors that influence voting behaviour

Influence on voting behaviour	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Family	77	39
Friends	35	18
Political parties	35	18
Ethnicity	25	13
Other ³⁶	18	9
Politicians	17	9
Media	16	8
Refused	10	5

Issues influencing voting behaviour

If YQRs were to vote in a month, the issues that would most influence their voting behaviour would be employment (see Table 25). This was more critical for 17-23 year olds and 24-30 year olds compared to 31-35 year olds and consistent with YQRs recognition of unemployment as the main issue affecting young people in Fiji today (see Table 8). The other issues are education (37%), health (10%) and transportation (11%). 'Other' responses included the cost of living; the environment; prioritizing rural dwellers and the type of campaigning that parties engage in.

Table 25 Influences on voting behaviour

Issue influencing voting behaviour	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employment	87	43
Education	73	37
Transport	21	11
Health	19	10
Don't know	19	10
Other	11	5
Refused	10	4
Entertainment	7	3

³⁶Other factors included; doing one's research before voting, waiting for political party manifestos and making independent decisions on election day.

Youth voter preparedness

When asked if they were prepared to vote in the 2014 elections 47% answered yes, 29% most probably, 14% no and 5% don't know (see Table 26). It is interesting to note that many YQRs feel prepared to vote even though most do not understand the voting system (see Table 23). This may suggest that understanding the voting system does not factor into voting preparedness for young people. Preparedness in this case may mean turning up on election day to vote, knowing who to vote for and the reasons for one's vote. An understanding of the voting system is also necessary to ensure that votes cast are informed and valid.

Table 26 Voter Preparedness

Voter Preparedness	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	95	47
Most probably	59	29
Don't know	10	5
No	29	14
Other	1	1
Refused	7	4
Total	201	100

Young people and the voting age

The 2013 Constitution stipulates that Fiji citizens 18 years and above can be registered as voters. The YQRs were given a few statements to gauge their view of the voting age. According to Table 27, 54% support the voting age at 18 years with 41% indicating that the voting age should be increased to 21 years. This demonstrates the importance of conducting public consultations on such matters.

Table 27 View on the voting age

View on voting age	Frequency	Percentage
The voting age is best at 18 because young people are mature enough to vote at this age.	108	54
The voting age should be increased to 21 because young people are mature to make informed decisions at this age	82	41
The voting should be reduced to 15 because you can leave school and legally work at this age	2	1

The FGD and stakeholder interviews also discussed the lowering of the voting age to 18 years and whether it was a sign that they were being taken seriously. There were mixed reactions to this question. In Suva, participants³⁷ were supportive of this, giving the example that one can get a driver's license at 16 years. In Nadi, a stakeholder respondent³⁸ agreed that voting at 18 years offered young people the opportunity to gain political experience at an early age. Proponents of voting at 18 years believe that young people are deemed to be responsible at this age³⁹.

Some FGD participants and stakeholder respondents raised two critical issues about lowering the voting age to 18 years. The first is that young people were not consulted about lowering the voting age to 18 years. The second is whether voting at 18 years meant that young people were being taken seriously. In Levuka, a young woman⁴⁰ argued that if the government really wanted to take young people seriously they need to designate a youth representative in government. She added that at present the Minister for Youth could not relate to young people and their issues because he is not a young person.

In Suva⁴¹, participants disagreed that lowering the voting age reflected government's commitment to taking young people seriously. Instead the FGD heard that young people are being manipulated, a government tactic to generate support given its knowledge about the significance of the youth vote. FGD participants in Nadi argued that the government was drawing from developed countries where many young people are independent. They added that the Fiji situation is different as many young people continue to depend on their parents who at the same time can influence a young person's voting behaviour. FGD discussions suggest that the age of 21 years would best reflect Fiji's social reality

³⁷Suva FGD, 30-35 years

³⁸Stakeholder interview, Nadi 26 October 2013

³⁹Stakeholder interview, Suva, 24 October 2013 and Labasa, 9 October 2013

⁴⁰Levuka FGD, 18-23 years

⁴¹Suva FGD, 18-23 years

⁴²Nadi FGD, 24-29 years

Attitude towards voting

YQRs were asked about their attitude towards voting. Table 28 shows that there were mixed reactions to the statements. Most thought that voting was important (61% strongly agree and 27% agree) because it was their democratic right (50% strongly agree and 32% agree), however others felt that voting was a waste of time because of the repeated coups (18% strongly agree and 18% agree) and that it did not address their problems (13% strongly agree and 23% agree).

Table 28 Attitude towards voting

	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree	Don't know %
It is important to vote	61	27	8	4	1	1
Voting is a democratic right	50	32	11	3	3	1
Voting is a waste of time because we have coups when people are	18	18	17	29	14	4
Voting does not address my problems	13	23	24	20	12	6

Focus group participants expressed concerns about the proposed voting system and electoral processes. In Suva⁴³, participants were worried about not understanding the voting system. In Labasa, Nadi and Suva there were reservations about having one polling day considering the infrastructural and geographical constraints and poor understanding of the voting process⁴⁴. Concerns were also raised about political candidates. Young people made the point that it was important to vote for educated candidates and those who are more likely to fulfil their election promises. At the same time there are those⁴⁵ who remain unexcited about the prospects of the 2014 election and unsure as to whether voting in the election would address their issues.

⁴³Suva FGD, 18-23 years and 30-35 years

⁴⁴FGD, 24-29 years and 30-35 years

⁴⁵Labasa FGDs

View of politics in Fiji

Table 29 shows the responses by YQRs when asked about what comes to mind when they think about politics in Fiji. In explaining their responses many young people appeared pessimistic about politics and were distrustful of politicians who, as one young person said, were “only filling their pockets”. The majority identified politics with corruption (52%), followed by land (44%), ethnicity (42%) and religion (38%). In addition a YQR (17-23 years) stated that “politics is all about power and false promises”. Another added, “I think politics in Fiji is confusing right now. There is a lot of chaos”. Some YQRs perceived politics in a more hopeful light linking it to freedom (33%) and peace (19%).

Table 29 Young people’s view of politics in Fiji

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Corruption	104	52
Land	89	44
Ethnicity	85	42
Religion	77	38
Freedom	67	33
Nationalism	61	30
Peace	38	19
Nepotism	26	13
Provincialism	22	11

“ Many young people appeared pessimistic about politics and were distrustful of politicians ”

View of political decision makers

Young people were asked their position about people who made political decisions. According to Table 30, many YQRs trust people in government (21% strongly agree and 30% agree) and think that they are doing their best for Fiji (22% strongly agree and 30 agree). Twenty-two percent disagree and 11% strongly disagree that people in government are honest with Fijians. It is worth noting that a high percentage of YQRs opted to remain neutral in relation to the statements.

Table 30 Position on people making political decisions

	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Don't know %
People in government can be trusted to do the best for Fiji	21	30	23	17	6	3
People in government are doing the best for Fiji	22	30	31	11	5	1
People in government are honest with Fijians	9	18	32	22	11	8
People in government don't care about Fiji citizens in general	10	10	27	28	19	6

FGD participants were asked what they thought made good politicians. The young people identified qualities like honesty, trustworthiness, integrity, fairness, patience, kindness and being people centred. Former Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase was identified as someone who reflects these qualities⁴⁶.

The current Prime Minister, Voreqe Bainimarama was identified in the disability FGD as a good politician, action oriented and one who delivers on his promises. On the whole, politicians were detested by the participants, some going to the extent of labelling politics as a 'dirty game'. Politicians were accused of making false promises. A young person⁴⁷ in Nadi noted that "politicians are seen during campaigns but when they get up there, they can't come down, their legs must be heavy". Wheelbarrow boys are aware of false promises by past politicians and echoed that they will only vote once they are assisted with their needs. They receive advice from benefactors to be

⁴⁶Suva FGD, 18 to 23 years

⁴⁷Nadi FGD, 18 to 23 years

Supporting young people's participation in politics

YQRs were asked about what could be done to support their political participation. They suggested; having youth forums⁴⁸ (40%), strengthening political party youth wings (32%), enshrining youth parliamentary representation in the constitution (28%) and investing in youth leadership (26%) (see Table 31).

Table 31 Supporting young people's participation in politics

Supporting participation	Frequency	Percentage
Youth Forums	79	40
Strengthen political party youth wings	64	32
Enshrine youth representative in constitution	56	28
Youth leadership	52	26
Provide incentives	34	17

The FGD also suggested ways that young people could be supported to participate politically. In Levuka⁴⁹ participants suggested that political parties need to ensure that there is security so faith in the national political system can be restored. There is also the need to work on eliminating the risks of coups. Whilst having said this, the participants did not say how this could be achieved.

Young people in Labasa and Levuka identified that they do not have sufficient information about Fiji's electoral reform process. They suggest that there is a need to improve media awareness and visits by awareness teams to villages, schools, churches and places of employment. A passionate young woman in Levuka⁵⁰ questioned the pressure on young people to register and vote without knowledge on how to vote, who to vote for and why they should vote. Other participants in Levuka raised concerns about choosing a representative given the single constituency provision in the 2013 Constitution.

In Nadi a young person⁵² suggested raising the profile of politics as a career path to encourage the involvement of more young people. In Suva, participants⁵³ suggested that young people's increased engagement in politics can be facilitated by them joining political party youth wings. Registered political parties like the Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) now have active youth wings.

⁴⁸A women's organizational collective made up of Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVA), Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA), Young Women Producers and Broadcasters – FemlinkPacific and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) have hosted two young women's forums, in November, 2013 and March 2014. The forums have aimed at preparing young women for the elections. A third forum is planned for after the 2014 elections.

⁴⁹Levuka FGD, 18-23 years

⁵⁰Levuka FGD, 24-29 years

⁵¹Levuka FGD, 30-35 years

⁵²Nadi FGD, 30-35 years

⁵³Suva FGD, 30-35 years

Summary

The electoral and constitutional reform process has not gone unnoticed by young people. It is encouraging that a reasonable number of the study participants are aware of, show interest in and support Fiji's democratic reforms. However, it is concerning that many young people do not know what the reforms are. The pessimism expressed by some young people in the reform process should be addressed as they will continue to exist as challenges to their meaningful participation in Fiji's democratic processes.

The constitution consultations offered Fiji's citizens the opportunity to link their personal experiences to the wider structural context and to make recommendations on how Fiji should be governed. The low participation of young people in the constitution consultations provided an indication that many young people are not able to link their personal lives with public issues and take a political position about them. The high number of respondents who have not read, let alone understood, the constitution is concerning given the government's active and extensive distribution of the constitutional document.

Young people's lack of interest in democratic processes is also reflected in their poor involvement in politics and political party affiliation. This is critical information for political parties, many of whom will be developing strategies to attract the youth vote. Part of this strategy could include strengthening party youth wings. Voter education is also important because despite the high number of respondents who have registered and intend to vote, many do not understand the voting system. Party manifestos will also need to consider factors and issues that young people say will influence their vote. Political parties and politicians will need to adopt a cautious approach with young voters as many view politics as a 'dirty game' and politicians as corrupt and lacking integrity.

⁵⁴SODELPA has established a National Youth Council Forum and recently distributed a youth questionnaire with the results to influence youth based policies in the party's manifesto.

3.4 Young People and Political Information

The young people were asked how they received information about Fiji's electoral and constitutional process. According to Table 32, young people received information from the three main mediums of communication, radio (80%), television (76%) and newspapers (61%). Websites (46%) are also gaining popularity as an information medium for young people. YQRs are not receiving as much information from those close to them. Only 28% identified family members and 17% identified friends as sources of information about the electoral and constitutional process.

Table 32 Source of information on electoral and constitutional process

Information source	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	160	80
Television	153	76
Newspapers	122	61
Websites	92	46
Family	56	28
Friends	35	17
Politicians	25	12
Blogs	20	10
Church	16	8
Electoral office	16	8
School teachers	14	7
Siblings	11	6
Decide on my own	5	3
Don't know	2	1

Social media is popular with young people and this study explored its impact on their participation. In response to statements about technological developments and social media, 40% strongly agreed and 35% agreed that online information is very useful and that mobile technology (36% strongly agree and 35% agree) is an effective way of reaching and mobilising young people. Blog sites received reasonable support (15% strongly agree and 24% agree) as a source of credible information. More YQRs believed (13% strongly agree and 34% agree) that many young people do not have access to social media (see Table 33).

Table 33 Impact of technological development and social media on participation

	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Don't know %
Information on the internet is very useful	40	34	14	6	2	4
Blog sites offer credible news on developments in Fiji	15	24	34	12	7	9
Mobile technology is effective as a way to mobilise young people	36	35	19	6	2	2
Many young people do not have access to social media	13	34	15	16	15	5

The young people were asked how they would like to receive future information about political, electoral and constitutional developments in Fiji. The YQRs prefer multiple sources of information (see Table 34). Citizen education in schools was the most popular (45%). The other sources include community visits by staff of the electoral office (38%), pamphlets in public places (37%) and via youth councils (31%). The favourable response to information disseminated via text messages (42%), websites (32%) and email alerts (28%) was interesting to note.

Table 34 Future source of political, electoral and constitutional information

Future information source	Frequency	Percentage
Citizen education in schools	91	45
Text messages	85	42
Community visits by the electoral office	76	38
Pamphlets at public places	75	37
Websites	65	32
Youth councils	64	31
Email alerts	57	28
Don't know	2	1
Refused	7	4

Summary

Radio, newspapers and television remain important as mediums of information dissemination for young people. The internet is gaining popularity as a relevant and credible information source but access in terms of coverage and costs create limitations. As election preparations intensify stakeholders might want to consider how young people prefer to receive political and electoral information.

Whilst community visits, online messages and instant messaging are preferred the long term emphasis on citizenship education in schools, as suggested by the young people, might be the most sustainable way of educating children and young people about democracy and its associated values and processes.

“ *The internet is gaining popularity as a relevant and credible information source but access in terms of coverage and costs create limitations.* ”



Recommendations



4 Recommendations

The recommendations in this section are derived specifically from this study. They are grouped according to the four findings sections of the report: (i) defining young people, (ii) young people and participation, (iii) young people and electoral and constitutional reform and (iv) young people and political information. A fifth category on suggestions for the research community is included. It is envisaged that the recommendations will be useful foremost to the CCF. Other NGOs, political parties, the government and its relevant departments, regional and international organizations, donor agencies and other relevant parties that prioritise the democratic participation of young people may also benefit from the recommendations.

Defining young people

- There is no specific definition of young people. When including young people in activities it is important to consider both age categorizations and social dimensions. The category of young people involved will depend on the purpose of the activity or occasion.
- Where the age definition for young people is prioritized as a policy or programme focus, the age category between 18 to 35 years is preferred.
- Individuals in their forties are considered to be beyond the acceptable age of 'being young'. This has implications for groups and governance structures that involve and favour individuals in their forties as youth leaders. This practice cannot be drastically changed but should be progressively modified. Two suggestions are offered, the first to codify membership criteria with an emphasis on age and secondly to develop youth leadership initiatives. This will ensure that older age as a reflection of maturity is not used as a 'default' justification to having 'older' youth as youth leaders.

Young People and Participation

- Young people in Fiji actively participate. Little of this translates into political or democratic participation. Concerned authorities, interest groups and organizations should consider embedding structures of democratization in their work with young people. At the national level schools can play this role through civic education. At the community level, organizations can engage in the conscientization of young people.



When including young people in activities, it is important to consider both age categorizations and social dimensions.



- Many young people prefer to do things in groups. It is suggested that youth group involvement should be acknowledged and continue to be supported.
- It is proposed that transparent pathways be established for young people's involvement at the local, national, regional and international level. This will ensure that every young person has an equal chance at leadership opportunities and address the dominant view that youth leadership is the domain of the 'privileged' few.
- Youth forums and coalitions should be supported and integrated into mainstream decision making structures.
- Efforts should continue to be made in ensuring that spaces like the extended family, community and church meetings are safe for young people to express themselves in.
- A database/directory of youth organizations needs to be developed and appropriate information about the services offered disseminated to young people.

Young People and Electoral and Constitutional Reform

- Ensure that the constitution or at least its basic tenets are understood by ordinary citizens.
- Ensure that the voting system is well understood by the electorate.
- Ensure that voting is supported by other genuine mechanisms for young people's democratic participation. This could include reassessing the potential of developmental forums like the National Youth Parliament and advisory bodies like the National Youth Advisory Board.
- The government needs to be conscious of its rhetoric around youth development. The emphasis on individual responsibility (translated broadly to include immediate youth groups) for development has the potential to limit young people's social connectedness and thus undermine its efforts on building democratic engagement.
- The government through the Ministry of Youth needs to explore how it can harness and develop young people's ordinary participation into political activism.
- Political parties should work on positively influencing young people's negative perceptions of politicians.

Youth forums and coalitions should be supported and integrated into mainstream decision making structures.



- Political parties should strongly consider establishing youth wings where they do not currently exist. Where political party wings exist, strategies should be put in place to promote young member's engagement in party activities. This may include recruiting, campaigning, fund-raising and organizing. Young people should also be included in party management positions and contribute at the decision making level.
- Design ways of engaging politically active young people who are 'doing' politics outside of the traditional party politics landscape.

Young People and Political Information

- Political information should continue to be disseminated using the radio, newspapers and television
- Young people's connectivity via the internet and their use of social media continues to grow. Political parties should consider actively using social media platforms to raise awareness and mobilise young people. On the other hand political parties need to develop innovative ways to engage young people who may be technologically challenged or do not have access to information technology.
- Young people strongly suggested that citizenship education should be a source of information on democratic values, principles and processes. The government currently implements this in its educational curriculum. There is a need to ensure that the curriculum has scope to facilitate the formation of critical minded citizens.

For the research community

This study has explored issues relating to young people's participation and engagement with political and democratic processes at a very basic level. There is scope for future research that builds on the findings of this report. This could focus on the following areas:

- The relationship between ordinary participation and political participation. It is necessary to further explore the challenges and opportunities around this issue.
- Exploring the why and how of young people's involvement in political parties
- The impact of government's decision to lower the voting age to 18 years should be evaluated. Has voting at 18 years enhanced young people's sense of social and political autonomy?
- Young people's understanding of the constitution and electoral processes
- What citizenship means to young people in particular marginalised groups
- The impact of technology on young people's participation
- Funding and support for youth research are limited. Reliable information is necessary to meaningfully engage with young people. It is suggested that the government, NGOs, regional and international organizations adopt a coordinated approach to youth research, should it be in their interest.

Conclusion



5 Conclusion

This report has offered a snapshot of how young people propose to be defined, their participation and experiences and understanding of Fiji's constitutional and electoral reform processes. The preference for a definition of young people as those between the ages of 18 to 35 years positions young people as an influential population cohort in the upcoming general election. The study shows that young people's interest in constitutional and electoral reforms is high. More young people have registered as voters and express the intention to vote than those who have not registered nor have the intention to vote.

However, voting is not the only measure of young people's meaningful involvement as citizens. The challenge lies in developing a democratic culture that meaningfully involves young people. At present there is a piecemeal approach in the involvement of young people in democratic processes and political participation. There are many historical and structural reasons for this. If young people are going to be the drivers of Fiji's new democracy then decision makers need to acknowledge ordinary youth involvement and develop ways of transferring this into active democratic participation. Part of this involves imbuing a culture of critical consciousness with Fijian young people, one that enables them to link the issues they identify as important and align these to decision making structures that affect their lives. In addition, decision makers owe young people the equal opportunity and provision of resources to enable their meaningful participation at every level of society.

The return to constitutional democracy offers a timely opportunity for young people of this generation to chart a new course in their history and that of Fiji as a whole. However, many questions remain unanswered. Is their growing political interest in democratic processes driven by their belief in democratic principles or is it because elections have become a feel good term, the panacea in coup prone Fiji. Will young people display political tendencies that are linked to identity and issues based politics played out in loose and informal organizations or be influenced by and involved in party politics, a mainstay of Fiji's political history? How will young people mobilize themselves, how and who best represents their interests particularly the marginalized? Answers to these questions will offer a window into understanding the future of Fiji's democracy. This is critical given the lack of young people's historical representation in parliament and the current youth leadership crisis.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Research Advertisement

Research Participants Needed

Young People's Democratic Participation in Fiji Study

The Citizen's Constitutional Forum (CCF) is conducting a study that explores how young people define themselves, their participation in national issues and their level of interest in Fiji's elections and constitutional reform process.

If you're between the ages of 18 and 35 years, CCF would be very interested to hear your views about democratic participation in Fiji.

Your participation will involve:

1. Completing a survey questionnaire OR
2. Being part of a focus group discussion OR
3. Completing a survey questionnaire and being part of a focus group discussion

If you require further information or interested in participating in the study please contact the CCF Research Officer on (679) 3308379 or email: research@ccf.org.fj

The expression of interest to participate will close on October 2, 2013. CCF will contact you directly regarding your participation.

Thank you for your interest and feel free to tell you your friends about this study.

Appendix 2 Questionnaire Survey for Young People

Young People's Democratic Participation in Fiji Study

Introduction

This survey is being carried out on behalf of the Citizen's Constitutional Forum (CCF). It sets out to explore the issues around how young people define themselves, their participation in national issues and their level of interest in Fiji's elections and constitutional reform process. The results of the survey are intended for youth stakeholders, particularly for potential leaders in the lead up to the 2014 election and beyond.

If you agree to answer the survey, please understand that your participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or your participation at any time. You also have the right not to answer any question(s) that you don't want to answer. The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete. (The questionnaire looks long but it is because of all the options).

You will not receive any compensation for your participation in the survey but it is hoped that your knowledge will offer a better understanding of young people's participation in Fiji.

Your participation in this survey is anonymous as your name is not required. Please be assured that your identity and your answers will be held in the strictest confidence. There are no right and wrong answers.

Do you have any questions?

Do you agree to take part in this survey? If yes, complete the oral consent form below. If no, thank the respondent.

-
- I have read the information/consent sheet to the individual
 - I have answered the individual's questions (if any)
 - Individual agreed to take part in survey

Researcher's signature _____

Date: _____

Interview Location

Division: _____

Province: _____

Location: _____

Part 1 Demographic Information

I would like to begin by asking you some information about yourself.

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Third gender

2. What is your age?

- 17-23 years
- 24-30 years
- 31-35 years

3. What is your ethnic group? (allow a maximum of four multiple responses)

- i-Taukei
- Indo-Fijian
- Rotuman
- Banaban
- Chinese
- Part-Chinese
- European
- Part-European
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

4. What is your religion?

- Christian (optional to specify denomination) _____
- Hindu (optional to specify denomination) _____
- Muslim (optional to specify denomination) _____
- Sikh
- Other (please specify) _____

5. What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Living with Partner
- Separated
- Divorced
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

6. Do you attend school?

- Yes (If yes, go to Q.7 then Q.9)
- No (If no, go to Q.8 then Q.9)

7. What educational institution are you attending?

- High School
- Vocational
- University
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

8. What is the highest education level you have attained?

- Primary School
- Secondary School
- Vocational training
- Tertiary education
- No formal education
- Other (specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

9. Are you currently working? Full or part time?

- Not working
- Full-time employment
- Part-time employment
- Full-time self-employment
- Part-time self-employment
- Casual worker
- Domestic and subsistence work
- Seeking employment
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

Part 2 Defining young people

I would like to ask you some information about the definition of young people and how you think young people are being defined in Fiji.

10. How do you think young people should be defined?

- By age (go to Q.11)
- Socially (go to Q.12)
- Both age and socially
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

11. If by age, what would the appropriate age category be?

- 15 to 24 years
- 15 to 35 years
- 15 to 45 years
- 18 to 24 years
- 18 to 35 years
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

12. If socially, what social criteria would make someone a young person?

- Dropping out of High School
- Successfully completing High School
- Completing University
- Gaining employment
- Voting
- Getting Married
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

13. Do you define yourself as a young person?

- Yes (please explain) _____
- No (please explain) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

14. I am going to read out a number of statements about being a young person in Fiji. As I read out each please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree. Don't know is 0.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Being young is fun						
Being young is a normal stage of growing up						
It is challenging being a young person						
You are taken seriously						
You can do as you please						

Part 3 *Young people and participation in democratic activities*

I would like to ask you some questions about your understanding of democratic participation and your participation in democratic activities.

15. Can you tell me three things that come to mind when you hear the word democracy?

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

16. Can you tell me three things that come to mind when you hear the word participation?

(d) _____

(e) _____

(f) _____

17. Are you actively involved in any youth group?

Yes (go to Q.18 to Q.21)

No (go to Q.22)

Don't know

Refused

18. If yes, what kinds of activities is the group involved in? (allow for multiple responses)

Culture and tradition

Religion

Creative arts

Environment

Women's issues

Disabilities

Mental health

Volunteering

Politics

Human rights

Other (please specify) _____

Don't know

Refused

19. At what level is the group working in?

- Local
- Provincial
- National
- International
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know
- Refused

20. How long have you been involved with this youth group?

- Less than a year,
- One year
- Two years
- Between three and five years
- More than five years
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

21. What does being involved mean to you? (Go to Q.23)

22. What are your reasons for not being involved in a youth group?

- Not interested
- Prefer to do things on my own
- No leadership in the group
- Not taken seriously by adults
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

23. If there was an issue you felt strongly about would you attempt to address it as an individual or as part of a group?

- Individually
- As part of a group
- Neither
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

24. Which of the following democratic activity have you taken part in? (allow a maximum of four multiple responses)

- Voting
- Signing petitions
- Protest march
- Boycott
- Online voting
- Activism
- Distributing political literature
- Joining youth groups,
- Joining human rights organization
- Other (please specify) _____
- None of the above
- Don't know
- Refused

25. As far as you are concerned what do you think are the main issues facing Fiji's young people today?
(allow a maximum four multiple answers)

- Unemployment
- Staying in school
- Political instability
- Freedom of expression
- Mental health
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Substance abuse
- Rural opportunities
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

Notes (if participants explain their answers):

26. What comes to mind when you think about politics in Fiji? (allow a maximum of four multiple responses)

- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Land
- Nationalism
- Provincialism
- Nepotism
- Corruption
- Peace
- Freedom
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know
- Refused

Notes (if participants explain their answers):

27. I am going to ask you about where you're most comfortable about expressing your views and opinions about the things that are important to you. As I read out each tell me how very comfortable or uncomfortable you are with the space using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is very comfortable and 1 is most uncomfortable. Don't know is 0.

	Very comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Most uncomfortable	Don't know
Nuclear Family						
Extended family						
Community meetings						
Schools						
Church meetings						
Youth group meetings						
Social media						

Part 4 Young people and electoral and constitutional reform

In this section I would like to talk to you about views concerning Fiji's electoral and constitutional reform process.

28. Can you tell me what you understand by the phrase electoral and constitutional reform process?

29. How interested are you in Fiji's electoral and constitutional reform process?

- Very interested
- Quite interested
- Neither
- Not very interested
- Not interested at all
- Don't know
- Refused

Please explain your answer: _____

30. I am going to read out a number of statements about democracy and constitutional reforms in Fiji. As I read out each please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree. Don't know is 0.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Democracy does not affect me						
Democratic activity is boring to me						
Adults should decide what is best for young people						
I have faith in Fiji's democratic process						
Constitutional reforms will address young people's issues						
Constitutional reforms generate my interest in participatory activities						

31. Did you take part in the constitution consultation process?

Yes (go to Q.32 and 33)

No (go to Q.34)

Refused

32. Which of the constitution consultations did you take part in?

The Yash Ghai Commission in 2012

The Government process in 2013

Both of the above

Refused

33. Which of these statements best describes your reason for taking part?

It is my responsibility as a citizen

It is my right as a citizen

I felt I had something to contribute

It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to contribute to national level decision making

I was asked to be involved (by whom?) _____

My group was involved so I had to (what group?) _____

Other (please specify) _____

Refused

34. Which of these statements best describes your reason for not taking part?

- It would be a waste of time
- I am not interested in democratic processes like this
- My view won't be taken seriously
- I didn't know how to take part
- Other (please specify) _____
- Refused

35. Do you know of other young people who took part in the constitution consultation process?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Refused

36. How would you rate your understanding of Fiji's electoral and constitutional reform process?

- Good level of understanding
- Average level of understanding
- Poor level of understanding
- Don't know
- Refused

Please explain your answer: _____

37. Have you read the 2013 constitution?

- Yes (go to Q.38)
- No
- Partially
- Don't know
- Refused

Please explain your answer: _____

38. How would you rate your understanding of the constitution?

- Good level of understanding
- Average level of understanding
- Poor level of understanding
- Don't know
- Refused

Please explain your answer: _____

39. Are you a member of a political party?

- Yes
- No (go to Q.38)
- Don't know
- Refused

40. Would you join and be actively involved in a political party?

- Yes (go to Q.41)
- No
- Don't know
- Refused

1. In what way would you like to be involved?

- As a member of the youth wing
- As a party executive
- A volunteer
- Campaigner
- A candidate
- Anything
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

42. Have you registered to vote?

- Yes (go to Q.43)
- No (go to Q.44)
- Don't know
- Refused

43. Why did you register?

- It is my democratic right
- I want to vote
- Everyone else was registering
- I was told by my parents
- The government recommends it
- I was encouraged by other young people
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

44. Why haven't you registered to vote?

- I am not interested
- Voting does not result in anything
- I didn't know you had to register, to vote
- Other
- Don't know
- Refused

45. Do you intend to vote in the 2014 elections?

- Yes
- Most probably
- Don't know
- No
- Other (please specify) _____
- Refused

46. Have you voted in a previous Fiji general election?

- Yes (if yes go to Q.47)
- No
- Don't know
- Refused

47. Which general election did you vote in?

- 1999
- 2006
- 1999 and 2006
- Don't know
- Refused

48. If you had to vote in a month, do you think you understand the voting system enough to vote for the candidate of your choice?

- Yes
- Most probably
- Don't know
- No
- Other (please specify) _____
- Refused

49. If you had to vote in a month, which of the following factors would have the biggest influence on your voting behaviour?

- Friends
- Family
- Ethnicity
- Media
- Politicians
- Political parties
- Other (please specify) _____
- Refused

50. If you had to vote in a month, which of the following issues would have the biggest influence on your voting behaviour?

- Jobs
- Education
- Health
- Transport
- Entertainment
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

51. Do you feel prepared to vote in the 2014 elections?

- Yes
- Most probably
- Don't know
- No
- Other (please specify) _____
- Refused

52. Which of these statements best describes your view about the voting age?

- The voting age is best at 18 because young people are mature enough to vote at this age.
- The voting should be reduced to 15 because you can leave school and legally work at this age
- The voting age should be increased to 21 because young people are mature to make informed decisions at this age

53. I am going to read out a number of statements about your attitude towards voting. As I read out each please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree. Don't know is 0.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
It is important to vote						
Voting is a democratic right						
Voting is a waste of time because we have coups when people are unhappy with results						
Voting does not address my problems						

54. What could be done to support young people’s active participation in the political affairs of Fiji?
Record the answer verbatim first.

If respondent cannot answer then prompt with the list below (allow a maximum of four multiple responses):

- Strengthen political party youth wings
- Enshrine youth parliamentary representation in constitution
- Youth forums
- Youth leadership
- Provide incentives
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don’t know
- Refused

55. I am going to read out a number of statements about people who make political decisions. As I read out each please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree. Don’t know is 0.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don’t know
People in government can be trusted to do the best for Fiji						
People in government are doing the best for Fiji						
People in government are honest with Fijians						
People in government don’t care about Fiji citizens in general						

Part 5 Young people and political information

In this final section I would like to talk to you about how young people receive political information.

56. In general how do you receive information about Fiji’s electoral and constitutional process? (allow a maximum of four multiple responses)

- Radio
- TV
- Websites
- Blogs
- Newspapers
- Church
- Family
- Politicians
- Decide on my own
- Electoral office

- Siblings
- Friends
- School teachers
- Other (specify) _____
- Don't know

57. I am going to read out a number of statements about how technological development and social media impacts on your participation. As I read out each please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree. Don't know is 0.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Information on the internet is very useful						
Blog sites offer credible news on developments in Fiji						
Mobile technology is effective as a way to mobilise young people						
Many young people do not have access to social media						

58. In future how would you like to receive information about political and electoral and constitutional developments in Fiji?

Record the answer verbatim first.

If respondent cannot answer then prompt with the list below (allow a maximum of four multiple responses):

- Citizenship education in schools
- Community visits by the electoral office
- Website
- Pamphlets at public places,
- E-mail alerts
- Text messages
- Youth councils
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know
- Refused

The interview is now over. Thank you very much for participating in this survey. Your answers have been very useful and will be used with other responses to develop a consensus of opinion on the issues discussed. Please give me your email address if you wish to receive a copy of the final research report. Do you have any questions?

Appendix 3 Focus Group Guide and Questions for Young People

Young People's Democratic Participation in Fiji Study

Introduction

This focus group discussion is being carried out on behalf of the Citizen's Constitutional Forum (CCF). The focus group is part of a research that is looking at three things in particular: first how young people define themselves, second how they participate in national issues and third their level of interest in Fiji's elections and constitutional reform process. The results of the survey are intended for youth stakeholders, particularly for potential leaders in the lead up to the 2014 election and beyond.

If you agree to take part in the focus group please complete the participant information sheet provided.

Before we begin here are some guidelines for the discussions

The focus group discussion, which will be recorded should take about an hour and a half to two hours to complete. You will not receive any compensation for your participation in the discussion but your contribution will be useful in understanding young people and the dynamics of their participation.

Every participant has the right to contribute to the discussion and the facilitator will ensure that this happens. Your opinion is as important and valuable as any other participants. There are no right and wrong answers. Note that any abuse of others' opinion and views will not be tolerated. The facilitator may ask you to leave the discussion should you fail to respect the views of others.

Please be assured that your identity and your answers will be held in the strictest confidence by the researchers. In addition, members of the group are expected to keep individual opinion and views of the group confidential and should not be disclosed to others.

Please understand that your participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or your participation at any time. Does anyone have any questions about or objections to the guidelines?

To begin the interaction

You may do the following:

1. Ask each participant to introduce themselves, their name, the youth activities they are involved with and why they're attending

OR

2. Ask participants to pair up and for two minutes find out their partners name and what youth activities they're involved with. Ask each one to introduce their partner using the recently gathered information.

Part 1 Definitions of young people

I would like to begin by asking you some questions about how young people are defined in Fiji.

1. How would you define a young person?

For those that use an age definition, probe as to what these age categories should be and why?

For those that use a social definition, identify the social markers and probe the reasons why these markers are used? Are these markers rigid or flexible?

2. What is the difference between a young person and an adult?

3. Do you think growing up as a young person today is different from growing up as a young person during your parents' generation? Why?

Probe the structural influences (and examples) if they identify them.

Probe individual agency (and examples) if they allude to them.

Part 2 Youth Participation in National Issues

Now I would like us to talk about young people's participation in national issues.

4. How many of you are members of youth groups?

Why did you decide to join a youth group?

What is the focus of your youth group?

Does your youth group have existing networks with other groups in your community and nationally?

Do you know if your youth group communicates its issues directly with decision makers? If so explain this process.

5. For those who are not members of youth groups, are you involved in any community based work? If so, why do you decide to take this path? Is it easy to do things individually?

6. Do you know of available structures (for example Tikina and Provincial councils for i-Taukei youths) where your individual and group issues and concerns can be raised with decision makers? Can you describe this process? Is this process effective?

7. Do you think there is a relationship between your personal issues and things that are happening at the national level? (You might want to trigger participants by saying for example, ones inability to find employment and the absence of an elected government).

8. What are some of your issues and how do they affect your participation? Do they encourage or act as barriers to participation? (Probe structural influences, government, religion, education, culture, gender, employment etc.)

9. Do you think some groups of young people are more privileged than others when it comes to being involved and having their voices heard?

(Explore gender issues, rural vs. urban divide, youth sub-groups)

10. Do you think having 18 year olds to vote in elections is a sign that young people are being taken seriously?

11. Is there someone in a position of authority that you can talk to freely about an issue that you feel strongly about? Yes, who and why that person? No, why not?

Part 3 *Interest in elections and constitutional reform process*

In this final section I would like us to talk about your involvement in elections and the constitutional reform process.

12. Do you make connections between your personal issues and politics? (This is related to Q.7 but the focus here is specifically on politics)
13. How do you feel about Fiji's constitutional reforms? (Give an overview of what is meant by constitutional reforms - the process of establishing a constitutional commission, listening to submissions, drafting a constitution, government reactions to the first draft constitution, the government's own constitutional process resulting in the 2013 constitution).
14. How do you feel about the 2014 elections?
15. Do you think young people are interested and involved in politics? Probe for reasons. If no, why not. If yes, why and how are they involved?
16. Have you voted previously? (for those in the 31 to 35 year old category)
If yes, and if you're thinking of voting in 2014 is there a difference between your anticipation to vote back then and now? Will the influences on your vote remain the same?
If no and you were eligible to vote, why didn't you vote? Would you vote in 2014?
17. To others who haven't voted. Would you vote in 2014? If yes, why? If not, why not?

18. Do you understand how the 2014 electoral system will work? If yes, explain. If no, why not.
19. What is your view about available information regarding Fiji's electoral process? (Is there sufficient information? Is there insufficient information? What can be done to improve the current situation? How do you think information is best conveyed to you?)

20. How do you feel about politicians?
21. What do you think makes a good politician?

22. How do you feel about young people standing as election candidates?
23. Are any of you considering standing as candidates in the 2014 general elections? Why?
24. Do you think youth candidates stand a better chance as independents or as members of a political party?
25. Are political parties doing enough to engage young people?
26. Do you think youth issues are better addressed by politics and politicians than by individuals and organizations?
27. Should young people be more involved in politics? Yes, why. No, why not?
28. How can young people be more engaged in the political process?

Part 4 *Conclusion*

29. If you had the power to change/do something about the way young people deal with their issues in Fiji today, what would you do?

Thank the participants.

Appendix 4 List of organizations involved in stakeholder interviews

Labasa

1. Macuata Provincial Youth Council
2. Vunivau Paras Point Youth Club
3. Youth Assembly of the Fiji Islands, Youth Adviser Savusavu
4. National Youth Council, Northern Branch

Levuka

1. Fiji Red Cross, Levuka Branch
2. Provincial Administration, Lomaiviti
3. Judicial Court House, Levuka Branch

Nadi

1. Fiji Red Cross, Nadi Branch
2. National Youth Employment Centre, Nadi
3. Nadi District Council
4. Youth Assembly of the Fiji Islands

Suva

1. Drodrolagi Movement
2. Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Young Women's Office
3. MEN Fiji
4. Pacific Conference of Churches



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