

## **Main Messages of the Fiji VNR Report 2023**

Fiji's second Voluntary National Review (VNR) is motivated by the desire to enhance coordination, strengthen stakeholder engagement, build a robust statistical process, and improved reporting mechanism in comparison to its first report in 2019.

Fiji has been very receptive of the SDGs and has aligned most of its development planning to the goals. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Unit of the Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development, and Statistics established and coordinated a core team to manage the preparation of this report, including consultations within government, civil society and the private sector.

Significant improvements were made in statistics for the VNR 2023. With the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS), responsible for data collection, computation, and analyses, Fiji's SDG progress was measured more accurately. These statistics have been made available online for public access. However, some SDG indicators were unable to be measured, impeding progress towards their targets. More effort is required to close these gaps.

Fiji was performing comparatively well on many of the goals of the 2030 Agenda, though not all of the targets within these goals. For instance, Fiji had done well in providing free education, affordable internet and electricity access, and essential water services to its citizens. Some of these areas still had aging infrastructure issues that demanded immediate attention and investment.

Despite the improvements made, there were a number of areas that required much further effort for Fiji to demonstrate progress, such as those associated with neonatal mortality, sanitation, violence against women and girls, empowerment of women, transition to sustainable energy and transport, clean cooking fuel, energy efficiency and the maintenance of essential infrastructure. At the current pace, Fiji risks missing 75% of the 97 targets that could be measured, with nearly 30% of measurable targets regressing. There were specific areas that required urgent attention such as a decline in the agricultural orientation index. Real GDP per capita growth rate and tourism direct GDP also took drastic declines due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but when more recent data became available there was expected to be a significant improvement. The impact of COVID-19 also resulted in significant spikes in deaths due to disasters which impacted progress for Goals 1, 11 and 13.

Fiji's data availability in the Global SDG Database has shown a remarkable improvement, with an increase of forty indicators with sufficient data from 2019 to 2022. However, it was crucial for Fiji to continue to prioritize data production as 42% of the SDG targets could not be measured due to lack of data. Data availability proved to be more challenging for SDGs. SDGs 5, 11, 13, 14 and 16 have 50% or more of indicators without data.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on Fiji's economy, particularly with the closure of borders, with Fiji's economy being highly reliant on tourism. Recovery has been good; however, it could have been better as the impact of the war in Ukraine on the prices of fuel and food has also impacted Fiji's economy, already fragile following the pandemic. During the COVID-

19 pandemic there was a global realization that things needed to change as the economic model was not serving everyone equally and was creating gaps that were further widened during economic hardships. Unfortunately, as matters normalized following the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been less emphasis on the need to build back better and things seem to be going back to business as usual.

Fiji recognizes that making success on the SDGs is a key part of building resilience. The country is subject to natural disasters, climate change, the global pandemic, & the effects of geopolitical tensions and war. The country supports progress in the SDGs because it's progress in the SDGs enables the country to better confront these challengers.

The country aims to improve on the current progress through a number of measures, including better coordination of efforts, growing the economic pie, increased and better targeted finance, building in-house government expertise, harnessing citizen power, localised improvements, and the continuous update of the SDG database to ensure accurate and timely measurement of progress.

---