



**PACMAS**

Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

**Fiji**

STATE OF MEDIA &  
COMMUNICATION  
REPORT  
2013



International  
Development

Australian Broadcasting Corporation





Participants at Leaders Workshop. Photo by PACMAS.

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Any opinions represented in this report are those of the authors and research participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government or the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The findings are presented in three sections:

1. Country Context
2. State of Media and Communications
  - Media and Communications Platforms
  - Media and Communications Landscape
3. Summary of Findings

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<sup>1</sup> Not all members of the Fiji media landscape contacted were available or willing to speak to the researcher. We are aware that some perspectives may be missing, and the report should be read with this in mind.

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## Fiji Country Context

Fiji is the second biggest country in the South Pacific. Its developed infrastructure and geographic location has made Fiji a regional hub and a centre for trade. Fiji has 332 islands of which approximately 110 are inhabited. The majority of its population resides on the two main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. The two main ethnic groups are the indigenous Fijians (*iTaukei*) and Indo-Fijians. Since 1987, Fiji has experienced racial tensions leading to three military coups<sup>2</sup> and a civilian putsch in 2000. The most recent coup, in 2006, was led by Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, who in January 2007 became interim prime minister. Fiji's constitution was abrogated in 2009 and Public Emergency Regulations were introduced, limiting freedom of speech. In September 2009, Fiji was suspended from the Commonwealth over its lack of progress towards democracy. During 2012 the government agreed to hold democratic elections in 2014. In preparation the government is currently in the process of drafting a new constitution. Over the past decade Fiji has fallen from 81st place on the UN Development Index, to 96th.

## Key Insights

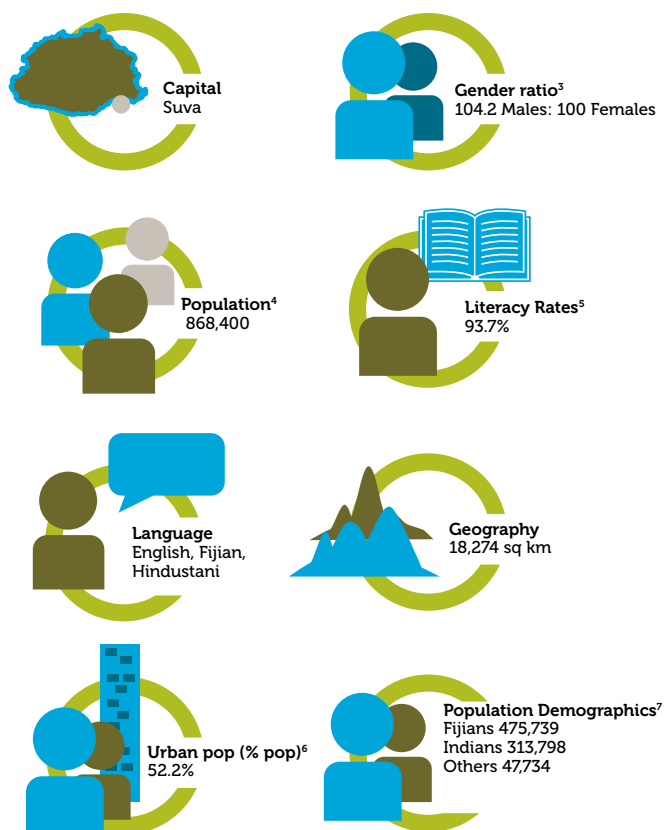
### Communication for Development and Women's Voice

A number of innovative examples of Communication for Development (C4D) projects and practices are evident in Fiji. Community media produce media content (print, video and radio) representing rural women's voices. For example, femLINKpacific operates radio stations, community video initiatives and a mobile 'suitcase' radio station<sup>8</sup>. Participatory theatre and video practices have given marginalised groups and rural women a voice on local issues such as NCDs, income generation and climate change<sup>9</sup>. These activities are quite separate from mainstream media, and journalists generally see C4D as the preserve of NGOs. As a consequence, those who work in C4D are often not invited to events and activities within mainstream media circles despite the persistent efforts of community media practitioners to engage with mainstream media.

### The Complexities of the Fiji Political Context and the Media Environment

Members of the media industry describe an atmosphere of control resulting from various media decrees and subsequent lack of trust of the government. A culture of self-censorship has become entrenched in media reporting as a

Table c.1 Basic Country Data



2 Singh, S. and Prakash, S. Storms in the Pacific: The Volatile Mix of Democracy, Politics and the Media in Three Island States. In South Pacific Islands Communication: Regional Perspectives, Local Issues eds. Papoutsaki, E. & Sundar Harris U. Asian media Information and Communication Centre; Singapore, Aotearoa, Suva pp 117-132.

3 United Nations. 2011. UN Data Country Profile: Fiji. <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Fiji> Accessed April 2013

4 World Bank. 2011. Fiji. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/fiji> Accessed April 2013

5 UN and World Bank data not available for this indicator. See CIA World Facebook for Fiji at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fj.html>

6 United Nations. 2011. UN Data Country Profile: Fiji. <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Fiji> Accessed April 2013

7 2001 census, Fiji Bureau of Statistics. 2012. Fiji Statistics at a Glance. <http://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/>, Access April 20, 2013

8 See <http://www.femlinkpacific.org/fj/>

9 Sundar Harris, U. 2008. Video for Empowerment and Social Change; A case study with rural women in Fiji. In South Pacific Islands Communication: Regional Perspectives, Local Issues eds. Papoutsaki, E. & Sundar Harris U. Asian media Information and Communication Centre; Singapore, Aotearoa, Suva pp 186-205

result of the confusion arising from the implementation of the media decrees. Journalists express confusion about a range of issues in the current political environment and the need to have a clear understanding of their rights, as well as protection and support. There is an undercurrent of mistrust within the Fiji media industry and an atmosphere of suspicion among colleagues from rival organisations. This has its roots in the 2000 coup when journalists became divided around political and provincial affiliations that impacted on the fair and balanced reporting of the coup and those responsible for it. In the current political environment, some media organisations are seen as pro- and some as anti-government, creating further divisions among journalists. This lack of trust has impacted on the formation of a sustainable media association that can effectively represent the interests of media workers especially in relation to journalists' training needs, and pay rates. Journalism educators participating in this research also allude to tension between journalists who have formal education and those that have come up through the ranks with on-the-job training. Employers over the years have strategically used these divisions to control the formation of unions or other bodies, which could negotiate on behalf of media workers for better training and working conditions. The media organisations are owned by some of Fiji's largest corporate entities, which are motivated by commercial interest and unwilling to encourage independent journalism practices so as not to 'get on the wrong side of the regime'.<sup>10</sup> Journalists and others in the media industry express interest in building cohesion among media workers in Fiji.

### **Fiji's Critical Role as a Regional Hub**

For a range of historic, geographic and diplomatic reasons, Fiji is a regional hub in the Pacific. Airline routes to the Pacific Islands often transit through Fiji, making it among the most accessible countries for Pacific Islanders. It is also a major landing point for the Southern Cross Cable, a submarine fibre optic cable across the Pacific which promises to provide the region with greater and faster internet. Fiji's educational institutions (University of South Pacific and Fiji National University) draw students from across the region for both higher education and vocational qualifications. Several regional and international agencies and organisations have their regional offices in Fiji, including the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) and the United Nations. Continuing political instability and Fiji's isolation from key forums have posed challenges for regional activities. In particular, Fiji's suspension from the Pacific Islands Forum since 2009 has created regional discord (it will be readmitted once the nation returns to constitutional democracy). Organisations such as PINA have been criticised for a lack of political advocacy leading to divisions within the regional association and a fall in its membership.

### **State of Media and Communications**

Fiji has a diverse media scene, however the 2010 Media Industry Development Decree has had a significant impact on the communication environment in Fiji. The decree requires 90 per cent local media ownership. It punishes the distribution of content considered to be against public order with large fines or jail. Since 2009, when the Public Emergency Regulations (PER) suspended the 1997 constitution that guaranteed press freedom and introduced government censorship, a number of local and international journalists have been fined or held in custody for transgressing the boundaries of PER and the media decree.

A new decree introduced in 2012 allows media organisations to air comments by government ministers about individuals without fear of being sued for defamation. It grants immunity to the press to publish any information sent to them by the Prime Minister or any of the ministers. This has drawn criticism from some groups, which view it as giving unfair advantage to the government, especially if members of the public are not given an opportunity to comment or oppose.<sup>11</sup> (see section on legislation below for more details)

### **Media and Communication Platforms**

#### **Television**

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

10 For more on this position, see Wadan Narsey's article <http://republikamagazine.com/2013/05/media-ownership-in-fiji/>

11 see <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/onairhighlights/fiji-media-watch-criticises-new-media-decree>

in 2011 with government support and provides the best coverage of the islands. Trinity television is the Christian English language station.

**Table c.2 Media and Communication Platforms: Television**

Platform	Organisation	Owner/ funding	Language/ content	Sector
Television	Fiji One TV	Operated by Fiji Television Limited	English with some Fijian and Hindustani content; local and international news	Commercial
	Mai TV Fiji Ltd	Owned by Richard Broadbridge	30% local productions, with content from overseas including news from TVNZ, DW-TV and Australia Network	Commercial
	FBC TV	Fiji Broadcasting Corporation Limited	English with Fijian and Hindustani content; local and international news	Commercial
	Sky Fiji	Operated by Fiji Television Limited	17 channels available via Pay TV subscription; foreign content	Commercial
	Trinity Broadcasting Network	Christian Mission Fellowship International (Fiji) through a partnership with Trinity Broadcasting Network (American)	Christian content; English language	Church

## Radio

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

**Table c.3: Media and Communication Platforms: Radio**

Platform	Organisation and frequency (in Suva)	Ownership/ funding	Language/ Content/ reach	Sector
Radio	Radio Fiji One 93FM	Fiji Broadcasting Corporation	Fijian Includes local news	Public Service Broadcast
	Radio Fiji Two 105FM	Fiji Broadcasting Corporation	Hindustani Includes local news	Public Service Broadcast
	Radio Mirchi 97.8FM	Fiji Broadcasting Corporation	Hindustani / targeted to younger Indo Fijian listeners.	Commercial
	Bula FM 102.6FM	Fiji Broadcasting Corporation	Fijian Includes local news	Commercial
	Gold FM 100.2FM	Fiji Broadcasting Corporation	English Includes local news	Commercial
	2Day FM 95.4FM	Fiji Broadcasting Corporation	English Includes local news	Commercial
	FM96	Communications Fiji Limited	English Includes local news	Commercial
	Navtarang 101FM	Communications Fiji Limited	Hindustani Includes local news	Commercial
	Viti FM 102.8FM	Communications Fiji Limited	Fijian Includes local news	Commercial
	Legend FM 106.8FM	Communications Fiji Limited	English Includes local news	Commercial
	Radio Sargam 103.4FM	Communications Fiji Limited	Hindustani Includes local news	Commercial

<sup>12</sup> Empowering Communities, Informing Policy: The Potential of Community Radio – femLINKpacific’s mobile women’s community radio experience: 2003-2008, pdf doc. See also <http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/index.cfm?si=main.gen&cmd=audio>

	ZFM100	Commercial XJ6 Co Ltd	Reaches Viti Levu only. Plays commercial music. Broadcasts in English	Commercial
	Hope FM 97.6FM	Operated by the Seventh Day Adventist Church	Local church news and music. Local content covers health, lifestyle, education and social issues though radio interviews, talk back and discussion shows. In English	Church
	FM97 Harvest Radio	Christian Mission Fellowship International through a partnership with Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN)- US based.	Christian programming, no local news	Church (foreign)
	Radio Rasifik 89.4FM	University of the South Pacific (USP)	Student Radio Music, information, awareness programming, regular local content news produced as part of USP Journalism students training	Education, non-for-profit Community Radio
	FemTALK 89FM	femLINKpacific	Mobile, part-time. Covers women's issues. Local news production focusing on its target audience (women in community and peri-urban centres). Multi-lingual	Community Radio

## Newspaper and Newsletters

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

**Table c.4: Media and Communication Platforms: Newspaper and Newsletters**

Platform	Organisation	Owner/ funding	Frequency of publication/ readership	Type
Newspaper	Fiji Times	Motibhai Group	English, Monday to Saturday	Commercial
	Sunday Times	Motibhai Group	English, Sunday	Commercial
	Na Lalakai	Motibhai Group	English, weekly	Commercial
	Kaila!	Motibhai Group	English, weekly, focuses on youth	Commercial
	Fiji Sun	CJ Patel Ltd and others	English, Monday to Saturday	Commercial
	Na Sigavou	CJ Patel Ltd and others	English, Monday to Saturday insert in the Fiji Sun	Commercial
	Sunday Sun	CJ Patel Ltd and others	English, Sunday	Commercial
	Fiji Magic	Associated Media	English, quarterly, tourist newspaper	Commercial
	Fiji Islands Business	Islands Business International (IBI)	English, monthly, business news	Commercial
	Islands Business	Islands Business International (IBI)	English, monthly, business news	Commercial
	Mai Life		English, monthly, lifestyle magazine	Commercial
	República	Ricardo Morris	English current affairs, opinion and commentary magazine, publishes monthly	Commercial
	Wansolwara	USP	USP student newspaper printed and distributed through Fiji Sun and available online	Community
	THE JET	Publisher: Shalendra Prasad	English, monthly, print and online, Nadi based	Community
Newsletter	Community Radio Times	femLINKpacific	Local non-profit publication linked to community radio network/ feminist media. Published quarterly	Community

## Online and Mobile Media

Both online and mobile media are significant components of Fiji's communication environment. There has been a significant growth in mobile communications in recent years. Digicel entered the Fijian market in 2008 as a

competitor to the state supported incumbent, Vodafone. This resulted in a reduction in call and handset costs and a rapid increase in mobile penetration. Eighty-four percent of the population has mobile phone subscriptions. The ITU has identified Fiji as one of the top ten most dynamic countries in its ICT Development Index, mostly because of strong growth in mobile-broadband penetration<sup>13</sup>. 3G has been available since 2008.

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

Having experienced four coups in 19 years, people have increasingly turned to the internet to voice their concern, register their protest or simply to report on political upheavals. In the current political environment of censorship and control, there has been a surge in anonymous political blogging since 2007. Both pro-democracy and pro-military supporters have used blogs, and blogging has become part of the everyday vernacular<sup>14</sup>. Although blogs are widely read, few citizens comment for fear of being identified<sup>15</sup>. Since posts often include inflammatory and contested information this has led to acrimonious debates and claims and counter claims<sup>16</sup>.

**Table c.5: Media and Communication Platforms: Online and Mobile Media**

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/Funding	Language/Content	Sector
Online	Political Blogs	Individual, hosted internationally, published anonymously	Various	Individual/ underground

### Other Communication Platforms

Like other Pacific Island countries, face-to-face communication remains a key mode of information sharing. Public spaces such as markets are centres for community activity where information of various forms circulates. After legislation was passed prohibiting gossiping, femLINKpacific established the 'Market Communication Spaces' initiative that documents the lives of market vendors. It combines monthly community media network consultations as an important part of its community media process, which has provided a 'safe space' for women vendors and others to meet and discuss national and local issues since the military coup. This has included the ongoing documentation of the lives of market vendors for a range of community media initiatives since 2001 including a regular program titled 'The Market Report'.<sup>17</sup> Pre broadcast consultations and dialogue initiatives with local government officials are also used as an 'on the record' process of combining both community radio and inter-personal communication in the style of 'town hall' meetings which have been valuable since the dissolution of town councils since 2008.

Religious settings such as churches, temples and mosques also provide key spaces for communication within Fiji's dominant ethnic communities. All religious groups run independent schools in Fiji (Catholic, Methodist, Hindu and Muslim). Although, the term Fijian is now used for all citizens of Fiji, in demographic terms or census figures the government uses *iTaukei* for indigenous and Indian for Hindus and Muslims - the two largest religions within the Indian population.

**Table c.6: Media and Communication Platforms: Other Communication Platforms**

Platform	Organisation	Language/Content	Sector
Other	Market spaces	Fijian, Hindustani, English; information exchange	Community
	Religious institutions (churches and temples)	Fijian, Hindustani; ceremonies and festivals.	Community
	Villages	Fijian, Hindustani; storytelling	Community

## Media and Communications Landscape

This section of the report focuses on Fiji's media and communication sector across four key areas: policy and legislation, media systems, capacity building and content. It provides an overview of the state of media across

13 International Telecommunications Union. 2012. Measuring the Information Society. Geneva: ITU <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/publications/idi/index.html>, Accessed February 19, 2013

14 Foster, Sophie. 2009. Who let the blogs out? Media and free speech in post-coup Fiji. In Pacific Journalism Review Vol 13(2) pp 47-60

15 Walsh, C. 2010. Political blogs on Fiji: A 'cybernet democracy' case study. In Pacific Journalism Review Vol 16(1) pp 154-177

16 see Foster, Sophie. 2009. Who let the blogs out? Media and free speech in post-coup Fiji. In Pacific Journalism Review Vol 13(2) pp 47-60, and Cave, D., 2012. Digital Islands; How the Pacific's ICT Revolution is transforming the region. <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/digital-islands-how-pacifics-ict-revolution-transforming-region>.

17 See <http://www.femlinkpacific.org/fj/index.cfm?si=main.gen&cmd=marketreport2012>





Figure 1: FemLINKpacific 'C4D in practice', the women are live on air and the Fiji TV cameraman is filming the discussion for a current affairs program. Photo by Tait Brimacombe, 2013.

these four Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) program components, as explored through the six PACMAS strategic activities: Technicians, Pacific Emergency Broadcast Systems, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVETs), Media Associations, Climate Change and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Media Systems includes a focus on Technicians and Pacific Emergency Broadcast Systems (PEBS); Capacity Building includes TVETs and Media Associations; and Content looks at Climate Change and NCDs. It provides an overview of media and communication across these areas and aligns them with PACMAS program components.

## Policy and Legislation

*'I believe that if you know your journalism and know what good journalism is, you know what are the limitations imposed by the decree, you shouldn't have any problems. You can even push the limits sometimes and test it which I have done several times and you know if they know you don't have any vested interest in reporting and you don't have any other ulterior motives, its fine...tell it like it is.'* (FIJI11)

The legislation which governs Fiji's media and communication sector are the Media Industry Development Decree (2010), the Television Decree 1992 (with an amendment in 2012), the Newspaper Registration Act, the Regulation of National Spectrum Decree (2009), the Defamation Act, and the Telecommunications Promulgation 2008. The Telecommunications Regulatory Unit within the Department of Communications is responsible for granting broadcast licenses and regulating Fiji's telecommunications sector.

In April 2009, the Public Emergency Regulations (PER) suspended the 1997 constitution, which guaranteed press freedom, and introduced government censorship. In the following year, the Media Industry Development Decree (2010) established the Fiji Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA), which has ongoing responsibility to censor material that is considered threatening to the public interest or order. MIDA has the power to penalise journalists and media companies that publish content considered unsuitable. The PER was lifted in January 2012 to make way for public consultations towards a new constitution.

The 2010 Media Industry Development Decree created many challenges for Fiji's media industry, and regular amendments have led to an unsettling environment for individual media producers and media organisations. The decree constrains media plurality and includes a 90 per cent local ownership requirement for media outlets. It includes some sections of the Fiji Media Council Code of Ethics, which existed before the decree came in. According to a research participant and member of the Panel of Expertise for this study, the proposed constitution does include a guarantee to Article 19 rights but simultaneously allows for the curtailment of these rights if the government so wishes. The Crimes Decree (2010) includes criticism of the government (sedition) as a crime. Laws requiring the disclosure of sources generally discourage whistle blowing, even though information sources for corruption are exempt. Censorship and threats against local and international journalists and editors have been common since the takeover by the military regime. General consensus among research participants is that the MIDA should be an independent group and be the voice of the people. Fiji Media Watch is active in providing media monitoring, media education and a forum for airing media concerns.<sup>18</sup>

Lack of professional unity among journalists, along with the lack of a local professional organisation to fight for journalists' rights, provided a fertile ground for the imposition of the 2010 Media Industry Development Decree. As one research participant described it, *'we're taking each other down at the first opportunity...the powers that be said, look we can bring this in'* (FIJI11). Some sections of the media were *'getting away with outrageous things'* (FIJI11), which provided the government the opportunity to impose additional regulation. In times of crisis, with no local support group or organisation to represent their interests, journalists look to international networks such as Reporters Without Borders, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Pacific Freedom Forum to advocate on their behalf.

Media organisations are taking various approaches in dealing with censorship and the regulations of the Media Decree, while trying to satisfy their audience needs. As one respondent describes, *'In more recent times ... we're faced with differing levels of censorship and that has placed great difficulty.., we're going to work around that, but at all times our focus is on ... "what do our listeners need from us?" [...] We have to stay on the air and we have to play within the rules to stay on the air. However, we will work our hardest to get as much information out as possible within the rules and ... we've used various techniques to do that. So, that's a challenge in itself too.'* (FIJI03)

Under the Telecommunications Promulgation 2008, a regulatory body has been established, the Telecommunications Authority of Fiji. The Government appoints the board of the authority. This legislation provides for a liberalised market open to competition, with the aim of encouraging rapid expansion of reliable and affordable services.

## Media Systems

Media systems take into consideration technical skills, support and infrastructure. It also explores emergency broadcast systems and experience from past disasters and crisis in Fiji.

### PACMAS Strategic Activity: Technicians

There is no institution offering technical training specific to broadcast engineering, and most technicians do not have formal qualifications. Many join the industry after careers in IT and electrical engineering. Technicians can study for a diploma in Electronics at the Fiji National University (FNU). Broadcast training is often done on the job, such as at Fiji TV. Technicians also report obtaining training at conferences or overseas, in particular more theoretical training and technical updates. Electrical engineering training is considered to provide a good basis for technicians, however research participants commented on the lack of training specific to TV broadcast. As one respondent expressed, *'I think there are heaps of technicians out there but [...] the problem that we face is getting them up to speed with TV technology because there is no specific training in the sector'* (FIJI04). There is no association or formal network for technicians. Most issues are solved by referral to more experienced technicians, and by seeking information on the internet and from equipment suppliers..

In an effort to build technical capacity and sustainability, femLINKpacific trains women to run radio stations that use mobile suitcase transmitters. They transmit up to 100 watts, covering a 10 kilometer radius, relying on simple but accessible technology. *'We still use analogue tape recorders that can then ... transfer ... We should be getting some new stuff but basically the technology has been about what [is] most practical and*

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18 See <http://www.fijimediawatch.com>

*accessible to all...each young woman producer ... gets her own tape recorder.'* (FIJI15) Training people in using simple and easily accessible technology is important as it ensures technical capacity remains sustainable.

The Regional Media Centre (RMC) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) has in previous years provided training and production services in the areas of Graphics, Radio and TV/Video in SPC member countries and SPC initiatives.<sup>19</sup> However since 2012 the center, based in Suva focuses primarily on communication and advocacy for the SPC rather than regional media training.

### **PACMAS Strategic Activity: Emergency Broadcast Systems**

Fiji is exposed to annual cyclones and flooding, occasionally causing the relocation of villages. In response to the UN decade of disaster in the 1990s, Fiji produced a Disaster Management Plan (1995) followed by the Disaster Management Act (1998). The Fiji National Disaster and Emergency Plan complies with international standards and is generally considered effective. As one research participant summarises, *'Fiji has had a lot of experience in disasters. [...] you will be amazed with how these communities respond. And that's why Fiji, in terms of the number of deaths compared to other countries ... we are in one of the least in terms of death – casualties. [...] that shows the resilience of our people.'* (FIJI14)

The National Disaster Management Council (DISMAC) coordinates the central planning. It works in partnership with other responding agencies such as the Red Cross, Public Works Department (PWD), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, the military and the police. DISMAC has representatives at national, divisional, district and community levels. Every municipality has a disaster management plan and takes responsibility for its own towns and communities. Information is provided by groups such as the weather office, issued as warnings for broadcast. A working team liaises with the meteorological service and the FPC to agree on the nature of the news broadcast before warnings are issued for broadcast. The Ministry of Information disseminates information pre-approved by the Disaster Management Office, but media also works directly with a DISMAC spokesperson, who is accessible to media during times of national disaster, and is responsible for providing regular updates.

Communication of disaster plans, response and warnings to the public occurs through radio, TV and other media and communication channels, including telephone, internet, warning sirens, short wave equipment, human resources and key individuals, cars with speakers, word of mouth and NGOs. Radio, TV, newspapers and telephone facilities, both landline and mobile, combine to cover most areas with disaster warning messages. Radio Fiji and FM96 communicate natural disaster warnings. DISMAC is their first point of contact and provides regular updates. FM96 is committed to playing a supportive role during disasters and national emergencies, *'We understand that there's styles of programming that we need to deliver to our listeners ... that provides them with information that they need to improve their lives'* (FIJI03). During disaster events, radio stations such as FM96 become information hubs with people calling the station to request rescue. For TV, all three channels broadcast regular updates (usually every eight hours) whenever a situation report is issued. A range of media is also now being used for disaster awareness and campaigns in the region. During Fiji's disaster preparedness week, posters, flyers and brochures are used to reach residents in cities, towns, communities and villages. See for example the Women's Weather Watch, a project by femLINKpacific.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of challenges in reporting during times of disaster, research participants note that although experts are easily accessible during training or workshops, when it comes to seeking advice during an emergency situation there is a reluctance to provide information. This may be due to political sensitivities: *'[...] one focal point from within government's DISMAC agency, we find during times of natural disaster that... experts from regional organisations are sometimes hesitant to give their professional opinion or views, for fear that maybe they'll be encroaching to the government's national policies... so sometimes we ask them "ok we just want independent views, like what, you know... could be the scenario"'* (FIJI10)

Although Suva is now covered through warning sirens and people know about their assembly areas, the coverage of the rest of Fiji is not yet complete. Villages have their own systems, which are very effective. Essential services are protected by backup power and all individuals are reminded to hold sufficient batteries to cover any situation. Because they are used to living this way, rural communities are usually well prepared. Traditional early warning signs are interpreted and used locally alongside new technologies. For example, traditionally, a beehive close to the ground is considered an early warning that there is going to be very bad weather. NGOs play an important role in assisting communities to develop their own disaster management plans and enabling a flow of

19 <http://www.spc.int/rmc/trainingmenu>

20 <http://passblue.com/2012/12/24/women-the-storm-sentinels-of-the-south-pacific/>

information between DISMAC and communities. NGOs are represented in DISMAC by the Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS).

Telecom companies assist with restoration of power and communication and give concessions on bills during disasters. Telecom has assisted DISMAC to improve its communication with outer islands through the use of satellite phones. Telecom coverage is about 95 per cent of the country. Mobile phone providers assist with emergency messages. Agreements are in place with Telecom Fiji, Vodafone and Digicel whereby emergency calls are free. Vodafone sends messages to all its subscribers, including emergency numbers. Digicel also allows use of its network whenever required. Telecom Fiji allows use of its lines to contact outlying villages and settlements. The networks do not charge for these services. The Ministry of Health has its own system connecting health centres, and the Red Cross makes its satellite phones available.

The internet has assisted in faster and wider dissemination of information with the use of emails (instead of photocopying and distributing) and social networking. NDMO has a website with regular reports and it also uploads reports on SOPAC's Pacific Disaster Net. During the 2011 floods, social network sites are reported to have had noticeable impact with increased information circulation, becoming an information source for mainstream broadcasters.

DISMAC organises an annual disaster preparedness awareness week from September to October, in anticipation of cyclones, flooding and landslides that regularly occur between November and April. All media channels are used as well as posters, flyers and brochures to reach residents in cities, towns, communities and villages. Activities include talkback radio, visits to communities, and training in how to make assessments. A main focus is on Eastern Division, and includes Levuka, Kadavu and Lau. The Pacific Community Integrated Focus Disaster Risk NGO shares the activities, which include face-to-face meetings, drills and exercises. Materials are available for distribution to district officers (DOs), provincial administrators and schools. Statistics kept by the Red Cross are considered more accurate than those offered by the government. A difficulty mentioned by respondents is that each of the government departments, whether it is the police, navy or the Ministry of Health, has a different set of communication equipment.

## Capacity Building

Capacity building includes an understanding of the level of qualifications among existing media and communication practitioners, training and capacity building support and organisations providing such support. It also takes into consideration media associations and TVETs in Fiji.

Fiji operates as a regional hub in regards to journalism and media education, with a variety of journalism and communication training initiatives on offer. The main institutions include the University of the South Pacific (USP) and the Fiji National University (FNU), where journalists receive on-the-job training in specific areas (e.g. how to report on NCDs and climate change). SPC and UN agencies sponsor journalists to report on issues overseas, while Fiji Media Watch works on a grassroots level teaching people about the role of media. In high schools the media education program includes Media Awareness Clubs where children monitor media production.

An increase in tertiary level qualifications amongst Fijian journalists has been noted in the last decade. According to Singh's 2012 survey,<sup>21</sup> although 51 per cent do not have any tertiary qualifications or any other formal qualifications, of those who do (49 per cent), 18 per cent held diplomas, 17 per cent degrees, 11 per cent certificates, and three per cent held postgraduate qualifications. Only one-third of Fijian journalists had a degree or diploma a decade ago.<sup>22</sup> One of the contributing factors to this increase in formal qualifications is the increased availability of journalism courses at certificate and diploma levels at universities and training institutions in Fiji and the region. Prior to that, journalism courses were offered only by three institutions in the Pacific – USP in Suva, Fiji; and UPNG and Divine Word universities in Port Moresby and Madang in PNG, respectively.

Some research participants indicated that tension exists between university educated and on-the-job trained journalists: *"[...] the USP or the FNU ... said to teach journalism or media you have to have this kind of degree ... at the end of the day you need to be able to figure out how the media works, that's got to come with a doctorate [...] You can have the kids that come out with gold medals and receive all these awards and they walk into even my media centre and I think what the hell have you learned, to be perfectly honest".* (FIJI15)

21 Communication with Singh, S (17 June 2013), also see Singh, S. 2013, Responsible conflict reporting: Rethinking the role of journalism in Fiji and other troubled Pacific Societies. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 19 (1), pp111-131.

22 Robie, David. 2005. *Mekim Nius: South Pacific Media, Politics and Education*. University of the South Pacific Book Centre, Fiji and AUT University.



Figure 2: FNU Film Studio. Photo by Usha Harris, September 2012

It is a challenge for journalists to keep abreast of the Media Decree and amendments. As one research participant describes, *'We've had session with [a law professional] – she came in right at the early stages of when the Media Decree was put out to tell us basically the do's and don'ts in the current situation [...] Since then there's been a few other amendments, so what we've tried to do is inform our journalists on what these new amendments are...'* (FIJI05). Apart from understanding the laws and regulations under the decree, young journalists lack language skills, grammar and the ability to think critically, which stems from a perceived weakness in the education system. There is a perception that graduates often prefer public relations or NGO work to media broadcasting because of low salaries. Media organisations find it hard to offer competitive salaries and often lose staff members.

### **PACMAS Strategic Activity: TVETS**

FNU offers courses in journalism, media production, communication and technical skills, and film production at Diploma level (minimum six months) and Certificate level (minimum three weeks). The completion rate is around 80 per cent. Recruitment is on campus or online. The gender ratio is 50:50 and the teacher-student ratio is 1:40. The pathways from secondary school include a Certificate course at fourth form and Journalism from sixth form. FNU accepts local and overseas students. Facilities include journalism labs, radio studio, TV studio and digital editing facilities in Raiwai. Internship is a compulsory requirement.

FNU has a comprehensive graduate database with all the key indicators including a tracking system, which updates graduate career movements. Graduates have high rates of employment; but often leave before the completion of their training.

The general consensus is that graduates avoid working for print media because they perceive it as a dead-end job with low pay. Some research participants mentioned a lack of competency in English language and grammar. Generally at TVET level, there is a shortage of competent trainers. It was suggested that *'industry people need to receive training in how to teach and then they could be used.'* (FIJI09)



Figure 3: A Squatter Settlement in Fiji\_Photo by UNDP.

In terms of broadcast engineering training, there is a severe shortage regionally. FNU is one of a few places in the Pacific that has the facilities and expertise to train broadcast engineers in the region. However, according to one research participant it is challenging to get sufficient enrollments from the region, due to lack of scholarships and relative high costs of living while studying at FNU.

In recent years FNU has invested heavily in its radio and TV stations, which are used for training. A well-equipped film and TV facility funded through AusAID was opened in 2010. FNU has recruited a core group of trainers who specialise in film production from India and receive funding by the Indian government. Students are taught all aspects of filmmaking; direction, cinematography, sound recording and sound engineering, digital editing, art direction, costume design, hair and make-up.

### **PACMAS Strategic Activity: Media Associations**

The current political climate and regulations present ongoing challenges in establishing a body that can represent journalists on a national and international level. Currently, there is no media association in Fiji. The Fiji Media Council, which was generally considered an effective body, ceased operation in 2009 as a result of new regulatory policies. The council operated independently and was working on a media code of ethics. Membership came from media industry representatives, the Ministry of Information, USP members and representatives of the (then) Fiji Institute of Technology (now FNU), and an equal number of public members. The council worked in cooperation with Fiji Media Watch and the Pacific Island News Association (PINA). However, due to the passing of the Media Decree (2010) and the establishment of the Media Industry Development Authority, the Fiji Media Council was disbanded.

Attempts to bring media representatives together have been challenging due to the new regulations, including the Public Emergency Regulation in 2009. Currently, media organisations and employees are considered to be politically divided. As one respondent expressed '*everybody's doing their own thing and it's not conducive to a healthy media environment*' (FIJI03). There is also criticism that some media houses have taken a leaning towards the government. Having its base in Suva, PINA, the regional media association, provides membership

to many Fiji journalists. In the absence of a Fiji Media Association, PINA provides an avenue for Fiji journalists in terms of training and professional support.

## Content

Media content focuses on communication platforms and ways to address issues related to climate change and NCDs - two strategic activities in the PACMAS program. People in outlying islands depend on radio to keep informed about weather conditions, health and agricultural development as well as for personal messages such as death notices to distant kin on Fijian, Hindi and English language stations. There is lively talkback radio on commercial stations. Fiji TV currently produces a daily one-hour news item, news highlights and weekly news reviews in Fijian and Hindi, a weekly current affairs program in English as well as local sports coverage, one hour children's show and school quiz shows.

### PACMAS Strategic Activity: Climate Change

*'We are having trouble in getting people to understand that climate change is moving to a whole new state. That it's not just the daily weather that we experience but we're talking about a long-term trajectory towards a completely different state and that it's not just temporary.'*  
(FIJI08)

Climate change is a high priority for the government as demonstrated by the launch of its National Climate Change Policy. The government is trying to coordinate various climate change activities by bringing together all stakeholders under a National Climate Change Country team, which meets quarterly. The key climate change issue is sea level rise leading to inundation of low-lying areas and coastal erosion. Other issues include changing rainfall distributions, increased intensity and frequency of cyclones, flooding, and depletion of marine resources.

Several sources are available to the media, including the Department of Environment, the Mamanuca Environment Society, Seaweb and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). Many agencies and NGOs are working collectively on mitigation and adaptation, encouraging action at community levels in Fiji and across the region. USP is leading with a participatory approach to information dissemination through community networks and school programs, including adding climate change to existing curricula, and running a climate zone competition to raise awareness. The university's communication and scientific staff are available for media consultation, as part of the effort to ensure research and scientific information reaches the population.

Fiji has also been the site of several innovative Community Based Adaptation projects, which prioritise local decision making and responses. The Pacific Centre for the Environment and Sustainable Development (PACE-SD) at USP runs one such initiative, which includes climate change awareness training. They employ a participatory method that enables communities 'to help themselves' identify and implement adaptation strategies and assists communities to develop climate change action and adaptation plans. One of the techniques is to develop a peer-to-peer network for climate change adaptation whereby communities that are successful can then mentor other communities.<sup>23</sup> The PACE-SD also uses media to reach out and involve youth in content around climate change. The USP local radio station runs a weekly climate change program hosted by a youth group. Fiji TV broadcasts a climate change quiz show for secondary school students every Sunday afternoon at 5 o'clock.

Language, translation and use of scientific terms in climate change awareness campaigns have been a challenge. USP's translation project makes an attempt to address this and translate key terms into local languages. They work with several partners including South Pacific Community (SPC), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), SPREP, the German Development Office (GIZ), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and local NGOs and CSOs.

Research participants from the media sector suggest that authorities demonstrate a lack of understanding in relation to the information needs of various parts of the population. Despite the growing awareness of climate change, there is a lack of understanding of how it is affecting daily life. Awareness raising efforts seem to be concentrated on urban areas. A 2012 study by Lata and Nunn<sup>24</sup> indicated that while urban communities have exposure to climate change news and information through the media, only 50 per cent of rural people had

23 For another example see Dumar, Patrina. 2010. Community-based adaptation: enhancing community adaptive capacity in Druadrua Island, Fiji. Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change Vol 1(5) pp 751-763

24 Lata, S & Nunn, P. 2012. Misperceptions of climate-change risk as barriers to climate-change adaptation: a case study from the Rewa Delta, Fiji. Climatic Change Vol 110(1-2) pp 169-186

heard of climate change. Some Christian narratives, as observed elsewhere in the region, were also identified as a barrier to climate change awareness among older Fijians.

Research participants from the media commented on the importance of journalists working more closely with scientists to improve reporting on the issues communities face. Fiji TV encourages a specialisation in climate change for one of their journalists. This journalist helps authorities convey their messages, bridging the 'jargon gap' or 'technical term gap' between scientist and journalist.

### **PACMAS Strategic Activity: NCDs**

Communicating health messages presents a challenge in Fiji's multi-ethnic society.<sup>25</sup> Poor nutrition as a result of changing lifestyles and eating habits, and economic circumstances are leading to less reliance on locally farmed produce and fish. Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, obesity, diabetes, hypertension and related mental health issues are on the rise, particularly amongst the over 30s, and evidence indicates people are dying younger as a result.

The Non-Communicable Disease Prevention and Control National Strategic Plan 2010-2014, 'From Womb to Tomb with a Double Edged Sword'<sup>26</sup> has listed 'reducing the burden of NCDs' as the first objective. It addresses risk behaviours related to NCDs including smoking, poor nutrition, alcohol consumption and lack of physical activity. It focuses on improving medical interventions for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and accidents and injuries. The Ministry of Health oversees information disseminated strategically by sub-units within the National Centre for Health Promotion. The NCD project office coordinates all programs at the strategic level.

Major health initiatives include screenings at work and schools, with individuals receiving a health audit. Several NGOs, including faith-based and community organisations, and Westpac Bank, work with the NCDs project office. Media organisations work with the Minister of Health and a number of charitable organisations on fund-raising campaigns. The FM96 campaigns, designed to raise funds for children with cancer, covered real life stories and raised about FJD \$250,000 over one weekend. Fiji TV produced a half hour documentary on how a rural village is teaching their children about growing food and taking the right foods to school, involving the Ministry of Health and an NGO. Vodafone, the mobile network operator, has commenced an initiative through mobile phones where they send text messages alerting people about health checks.

While television, radio and newspapers are used to create awareness, message delivery is recognised as not always effective in behavioural change. The National Centre for Health Creation prefers one-on-one 'interpersonal' health communication as the most effective strategy. The centre does use media during its campaigns as part of its overall strategy; it has a weekly page in the Fiji Sun and airs ads on TV.

The effort put into NCDs does not compare to that for HIV/AIDS. Some media organisations have developed internal NCD campaigns for their own staff, ensuring the availability of nutritious food and providing regular health checks. Some research participants commented on a lack of analysis in news stories that might bring a broader understanding of how issues around NCDs are connected.

Media coverage is limited because of time and distance, particularly in rural areas, '*...we have to send someone out into an area like that – that's like a whole day trip*' (FIJI05). There is no targeted training around NCDs for journalists. They sometimes gain further understanding while reporting on NCD related conferences. The National Centre for Health Promotion ran a training session for journalists during the PINA summit in 2011 but attendance was low because of the cost of training. As one participant describes, '*NCD workshops, that we go and cover as a journalist, there's very little training as such... like specific for journalists to train. The last one that happened was during the PINA summit late last year, which was, I think that was a PACMAS one also on NCD stuff, but aside from that there was nothing else. So my journalists will go out and I'll send them on a shoot, they will cover this big NCD conference, right? And there are various issues, so probably they'll learn something about NCDs while covering the issue themselves. But as far as learning specifically, there's no targeted training as such.*' (FIJI05)

Participants also comment that when reporting on NCDs there is a need to connect economic security with

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25 Pacific Health Voices SPC. 2009. Pacific NCD Forum Meeting Report. [http://www.pacifichealthvoices.org/files/PacificNCDForumReport09\(1\).pdf](http://www.pacifichealthvoices.org/files/PacificNCDForumReport09(1).pdf) accessed April 2013

26 Fiji Government. 2010. Non-Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control. National Strategic Plan 2010-2014. <http://www.health.gov.fj/PDFs/ncd%20national.pdf> Accessed April 2013



health security and gender, '[...] because... if you ask a woman "you got two dollars what are going to buy, some fresh vegetables?", [she replies] "no I'm gonna buy noodles cause I can feed more people" ... the lack of women's access to land means she can't just go and start planting' (FIJI15). Participatory theatre has been successfully employed as an awareness tool in addressing the connection between lifestyle choices and NCDs. Women's Action for Change in partnership with Friend, an NGO in Western Viti Levu, have used Indian and Fijian traditional stories to highlight the effects of lifestyle choices, with positive results.

### Cross-Cutting Issues: Disability, Gender and Youth

Interviewees did not identify disability as a key issue in Fiji and representatives from the media and communication for development initiatives noted only limited specific programming or outreach to people with disabilities, such as femLINKpacific's work with video and TV with women with disabilities<sup>27</sup>.

Women make up almost half of Fiji's population and have a literacy rate of 91 per cent, one of the highest in the Pacific. Fiji has a very high suicide rate among women and one of the key causes is understood to be domestic violence. Traditional barriers to gender equality in Fiji can be understood to play a part in the lack of women and women's issues in the media. Women in traditional practices, for instance, wait for men to speak for them. The traditional power structures and intergenerational tensions pose a challenge for women: *"...women being able to engage directly in interactive dialogue with the...town council chief executive, the...town council representatives, the divisional planning officer ... that's the change we want to see"* (FIJI15).

Efforts by femLINKpacific to address these gender-based challenges through media focus on bringing about change not at an individual level, but on gradually changing how women are perceived. They do this by bringing women and decision makers together at the local level, and *'by making a radio program that holds ... government officials accountable as well'* (FIJI15). However, efforts to address gender inequality are hampered by the fact that the Fiji government does not have a national gender policy and no budget allocation to promote gender equality.

Young Fijians are becoming adept in using new technologies. Mobile phones are being integrated in the dissemination of messages about NCDs and disasters plans. Mobile phones have increased social contact both at local and transnational levels, but are also being blamed for social fragmentation such as extramarital affairs, and elopement amongst the young. Internet cafes enjoy vigorous business from young people in urban centres such as Suva and Nadi. More than 70 per cent of internet users are young adults and school students who use it for emailing, chat lines and to research school projects. This indicates not only an urban-rural divide with higher concentration of internet access in urban areas but also an age divide where younger people are more exposed to internet use<sup>28</sup>.

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27 This does not mean disability does not exist as a key issue elsewhere, but does reflect the observations of those who took part in this research, who work in key media and other relevant organisations, as detailed in other parts of the report.

28 See: Rahman, Mohammad Habibur; Naz, Rafia, 2006. Digital Divide within Society: An Account of Poverty, Community and E-Governance in Fiji. E-Learning, v3 n3 Symposium Journals.

## Summary of Findings

The media and communication environment in Fiji is politically complex, facing regulatory and governmental challenges. The main findings across the four areas of policy and legislation, media systems, capacity building, and content is summarised below.

### Policy and Legislation

- Since the introduction of the government's Media Decree in 2012, the Fiji Media Industry Development Authority censors and controls the media industry.
- The constitution guaranteeing freedom of the press has been suspended since 2009.
- Threats against local and international journalists and editors have been common since the military take-over.
- Some sections of the Fiji Media Council Code of Ethics are included in the Media Decree but others are left out.
- Regular amendments create a tense atmosphere in the Fijian media industry.
- Fiji government representatives nevertheless argue that the various decrees, which were put in place, have empowered the general population by giving them greater voice and improved their access to information.<sup>29</sup>

### Media Systems

- Fiji has had a National Disaster Management Plan since 1995.
- Radio Fiji and FM96 are used to communicate emergency warnings during natural disasters. The Early Warning System also includes SMS messages, warning sirens, cars with speakers, and word of mouth.
- Fiji has agreements with telecommunications companies to provide emergency calls for free.
- During 2011 floods, social network sites were used by people to access information.
- Most technicians have no formal training and there is no institution in Fiji offering broadcast technicians training. Technicians with formal training may have qualifications in related fields from Fiji National University.
- There is no formal network of technicians in Fiji. Informal networks and internet forums are used to seek advice and information.
- FemLINKpacific trains women in content production using radio, video and mobile suitcase transmitters.

### Capacity Building

- Several education and training initiatives are available in the area of media and communications in Fiji; the main institutions are USP and FNU.
- Fiji is an education hub for the region.
- Journalists also receive on the job training, and access training and workshops offered by SPC and UN agencies.
- Recent training has focused on media law training in relation to the new regulations and amendments.
- FNU offers vocational courses in journalism, media production, and technical skills, and film production.
- FNU's completion rate is 80 per cent. Graduate outcomes are recorded. Many graduates choose to work in the NGO sector.
- FNU is challenged by a shortage of teachers.
- There is no media association in Fiji. The Fiji Media Council closed following the changes in legislation in 2009 and 2010.

### Content

- Climate change is a national priority.
- USP is playing a leading role in using participatory approaches to climate change communication.
- There is a lack of awareness of the impacts of climate change in the general community.
- There is a reported 'jargon gap'; bridging this gap is seen as important.
- There is no targeted training around NCDs for journalists.
- Climate change communication occurs across many media outlets including radio, TV. Several communication initiatives on the topic of NCDs have been broadcast in Fiji, including radio campaigns and TV documentaries. These are in conjunction with inter-personal communication methods.

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29 <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2012/s3403560.htm>



## Research Partners





Further information:  
<http://www.pacmas.org/>  
<http://www.abcinternationaldevelopment.net.au/>