

**INCLUSIVE**

# WOMEN ARE AT THE HEART OF FIJI'S TRUTH-TELLING, HEALING

THE FIJI TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION IS ALSO PRIORITISING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AT EVERY LEVEL OF THE COMMISSION'S WORK—FROM LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING TO OUTREACH AND TESTIMONY.



Front, from left: Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission Commissioners Ana Laqeretabua and Rachna Nath. Back, from left: Rajendra Hiralal Dass, Sekove Naqiolevu and chairperson Marcus Brand.

**Opinion**



**Marcus Brand**

Marcus Brand is the chairperson of the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission (FTRC)

**FOCUS**

**F**iji now stands at a historic crossroads. As we engage in the deep and necessary work of truth-telling and reconciliation, we are also shaping the foundations of a more just, peaceful, and inclusive society.

This is not simply about addressing the wounds of the past—it is about building a future in which all Fijians, regardless of gender, are safe, heard, and empowered.

Central to this vision is our commitment to the Women's Human Rights and Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, anchored in United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 and its related resolutions.

The lessons of global peacebuilding are clear: societies that empower women during post-conflict transitions are more likely to achieve sustainable peace.

*“As the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we recognise that political upheavals, violent turmoil, and trauma affect women and girls in unique and often invisible ways. Their experiences are not marginal—they are central to the truth we seek to uncover and the healing we aim to achieve.”*

**Marcus Brand**  
Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission chairperson

For Fiji, this is both a moral imperative and a practical necessity, as was highlighted during the CEDAW review in Suva last week.

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To honour that truth, we are committed to embedding WPS principles across all areas of our work.

This begins with a gender-responsive mandate. The Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act (2024) explicitly includes provisions for gender equality and women's rights, particularly in addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) - a frequently silenced legacy of trauma.

Our procedures will reflect the reality that SGBV must not be treated as secondary but as a serious and systemic

violation requiring dedicated attention and acknowledgement.

We are also prioritising women's participation at every level of the Commission's work—from leadership and staffing to outreach and testimony.

This includes establishing women-only hearings and working closely with grassroots women's organisations to create safe spaces where survivors can speak without fear or shame.

Equally important is how we collect and interpret data. We are committed to disaggregating information by gender, age, and other markers while applying methodologies that recognise indirect and long-term harms—such as trauma, loss of livelihood, or displacement—that women disproportionately endure.

These insights are essential for meaningful redress and informed policy reform.

We should not shy away from the issue of accountability. Gender-based violence must be investigated, documented, and met with appropriate rec-

ommendations for justice, including prosecution, reparations, and institutional reform.

At the same time, we must ensure that psychosocial and medical support is available for survivors, recognising that justice is not only legal—it is also personal and restorative.

Our report will reflect the economic, emotional, and physical harms experienced by women, particularly in rural and marginalised communities, as well as the sectoral impacts the coups had on health, education and the legal sectors, all of which are crucially important for the rights of women and the role they play in society.

We also understand that reconciliation is not a one-time event but a process. That's why we will propose robust monitoring mechanisms to track the gender-specific impact of our recommendations to ensure long-term commitment and accountability.

Finally, our work must remain grounded in Fiji's unique cultural fabric. Cultural sensitivity does not mean preserving harmful norms—it means engaging traditional and faith-based leaders in promoting positive change. We believe that the values of respect, community, and dignity—so deeply rooted in Fijian society—can be powerful vehicles for advancing gender equality.

The members of the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission are committed to ensuring that our nation's journey of reconciliation is not only inclusive but also transformative. The inclusion of women's voices, rights, and leadership is not a symbolic gesture—it is the foundation of genuine, lasting healing and peace.

Feedback: editorial@fijisun.com.fj