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THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION/COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ON DECENT WORK IN FIJI

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Final Report on the Second Phase of the 4th Round Joint Investigative Studies - Compiled for the International Labour Organisation/Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training – Networking of National Institutes for Labour Studies.

April, 2004

Executive Summary

The current trend in global development strategies generally prioritises information and communication technology (ICT), along with the free market system as the engine for growth. Developing economies like Fiji have not been an exception to this trend. However, steady advances in information and communication technology require contingent expansion in national ICT infrastructure, conducive policy environment/with incentives, effective training and labour market institutions; that allow ICT induced employment creation/ human resource development and overall national socio-economic development to materialise. For without work and retooling opportunities the issue of decent work does not even arise in the knowledge economy – especially so in a context like Fiji where work insecurity/sectoral disincentives prevail due to the escalating unemployment/poverty, stagnant foreign investment levels and firm based financial constraints. This is the key message of this report.

This report has been prepared for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training 4h Round Joint Investigative Studies - by the Industrial Relations Programme of the University of the South Pacific. It was initiated in order to examine the impact of ICT on what the ILO has termed 'decent work' using ILO statistical indicators. There are three themes that formed the basis of this study (a) the proliferation of ICT in Fiji (b) state of decent work in the country prior to advent of ICT (c) impact of ICT on decent work. These themes are drawn out through: first ICT decent work conceptual issues/definitions; a brief history on the proliferation of ICT in Fiji in section 3, this is then followed by Fiji's general ICT background, Government's policy objectives on ICT development and decent work agenda in section 4. Section 5 covers decent work issues prior to the advent of ICT. The final section provides the results and analysis of the decent work ICT survey on the implications of ICT on decent work - based on the ILO and the study's decent work measures.

Ten ICT enabled firms (both private/public sectors) located in the capital city Suva, were surveyed in order to examine ICT implications on decent work. Five of these firms were moderately ICT enabled and the other five were more highly ICT enabled. This demarcation was done to allow a comparative base through the implications that levels of ICT use have on decent work. The size of these ten firms from which the analysis is based, varied from small to medium enterprises; with the exception of the sample from the financial services sector a larger firm. This variation was to allow a comparative analysis, on size as a variable to ICT development and the ILO's decent work agenda .The organisations selected were Westpac Bank Corporation, Fintel, Bureau of Statistics, Home Finance, Post Fiji – Management Information Systems, Fiji Sun Limited, Webmasters, Megacom Technologies, Ministry of Justice – Judiciary department and University of the South Pacific, Management Information Systems department. The information was gathered through a blend of desk-based research, using primarily internet sources, and published articles/reports. These were supplemented with workplace observation, questionnaires and personal interviews with key organisational contacts. There were two sets of questionnaires utilised by the researchers, one for employers/managers and another for workers.

The survey results indicate that there has been no substantial evidence of ICT related job losses. Instead there is marginal increase in employment levels at the lower/semi skilled areas. The emergent issues of interest to this study are the: overall retarded rate of ICT related job creation, retention of core skilled ICT personnel, increase in individual contracts in core ICT areas and smaller enterprises, work intensification, lack of advanced ICT upskilling opportunities and ICT market/policy incentives and a mismatch between formal tertiary qualifications and specific ICT industry demands. These coupled with firm based and budgetary financial constraints have impeded the steady development of the ICT sector and the ILO's decent work agenda in Fiji. Moreover decent work issues were prevalent in the lower skill sectors in terms of repetitive tasks, casual employment, OHS ailments and prevalence of industry/job specific training. Trade unions were not sensitised to the specific needs of this female dominated vulnerable sector. Explaining why the smaller ICT enterprises were generally not organised raising issues of social dialogue, worker rights and social protection. The core/skilled sectors despite being generally unorganised showed an improvement in working conditions. But face advanced training/progression constraints and slow rate of personnel uptake. Most business sector respondents indicated that ATH Fiji's monopoly status adds disincentives to ICT investment. And coupled with industry based financial constraints are impediments to skills retention/employment creation and overall sectoral development.

This report proposes a plan of action for addressing the emergent impediments to ICT development and decent work in Fiji. This is in terms of:

- The Fiji government's removal of ATH's current monopoly license to allow international/local investment incentives, lowered business operational/costs and allow investments in advanced skills retooling and uptake of human resources-thus enhancing decent work opportunities and the reduction of the current skills drain.
- Social partners to adopt a consolidated tripartite approach in addressing ICT/decent work development constraints. Creative efforts whereby the government could offer incentives for the private/public sectors, in the form of tax breaks and budgetary subsidies to bolster advanced/general ICT mentoring/work experience programmes for new graduates and less skilled ICT personnel. Public sector unions should also seize the emerging opportunities (through Fiji's current civil service reforms programmes) and engage in consensual strategies with government to enable nationally recognised retooling opportunities for disadvantaged ICT personnel – through Fiji's Training and Productivity Authority, Fiji Institute of Technology and University of the South Pacific.
- The training institutions and social partners would have to readopt a consolidated approach to national ICT skills requirement/shortfalls and training needs. Ideally revitalising the training institutions curriculum in the process. Employers/business would have to focus on long-term investment in national ICT HR development needs and tailor firm level training to national requirements.

- Overall trade unions would need to adopt a more novel approach to organising /social protection methods. The approach would need to address the peculiarities of the ICT sector in terms of: upskilling constraints, OHS issues, and the unorganised lower skilled and skilled sectors. This approach would enable safety at work, secure livelihood and social dialogue/protection a central focus of the ILO's decent work agenda.

Finally benefits of these advocated initiatives will accrue in the long term, in the form of more unencumbered development of ICT policies/practices and human resource development. This would be more conducive towards enabling more equitable development and foster decent work by reconciling market potential with social justice.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr Abdul Khan and Mr Felix Anthony of the Fiji Trade Union Congress for their assistance and support. At USP I warmly acknowledge the contributions and assistance rendered by Ms Dolores Prasad, through general research assistance and Dr Anand Chand for assisting with modification of research questionnaires.

I also warmly acknowledge the support and insightful comments provided by Dr. Satendra Prasad of the World Bank, Kabul, various sources from the business community and individuals from the Ministry of National Economic Planning, International Labour Organisation Suva, Westpac, Telecom, FINTEL, Ministry of Labour and Fiji Employers Federation. Without them the collection and verification of materials for this study, would have been a daunting task.

I also acknowledge the support of all the firms and employees who participated in the survey for this study. A list of which is listed in chapter three.

This study was made possible through funding from the International Labour Organisation Regional Office/Asia Pacific (Bangkok) and the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training.

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University of the South Pacific, April 2004.

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Introduction

1. This report examines the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on decent work in Fiji using ILO statistical indicators. It was undertaken for the International Labour Organisation and Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, 4th Round Joint Investigative Study.

The ILO's decent work indicators are of relevance in Fiji's context due to the absence of social security safety nets, rising unemployment and poverty levels which would further exacerbate the 'fallouts' of a 'free market' economy. Decent work drawbacks have been a feature of Fiji's industrial sector even prior to the proliferation of ICT. However the ICT sector offers opportunities for equitable development/social justice due to the knowledge content of work. But to attain these social partners must have in place an environment where policy and practises are conducive to attaining decent work. A quest for productivity and industry should not equate to deterioration in labour standards and decent work, an approach that combines market potential with social justice would enable a balanced approach to development that serves the interest of Fijian/industry and society long-term.

The broad objective:

- To highlight strategies that enhance the holistic development of Fiji's ICT sector in line with the ILO's decent work agenda.

Specific Objectives: examine

- The proliferation of ICT in Fiji
- State of decent work prior to the advent of ICT
- The impact of ICT on Decent Work in Fiji.

This report therefore examines the (a) the proliferation of ICT in Fiji (b) state of decent work in the country prior to advent of ICT (c) impact of ICT on decent work. These themes are drawn out through: first ICT decent work conceptual issues/definitions; a brief history on the proliferation of ICT in Fiji in section 3, this is then followed by Fiji's general ICT background, Government's policy objectives on ICT development and decent work agenda in section 4. section 5 covers decent work issues prior to the advent of ICT. The final section provides the results and analysis of the decent work ICT survey on the implications of ICT on decent work - based on the ILO and the study's decent work measures.

Methodology

2. Ten ICT enabled firms (both private/public sectors) located in the capital city Suva, were surveyed in order to examine ICT implications on decent work. Five of these firms were moderately ICT enabled. And the other five were more highly ICT enabled. This demarcation was done to allow a comparative base through the implications that levels of ICT use have on decent work, or to establish whether there are other factors that impinge on decent work. These sampled firms also have a significant presence in Fiji. The size of these ten firms from which the analysis is based, varied from small to medium enterprises; with the exception of the sample from the financial services sector a larger firm. This variation was to allow a comparative analysis, on size as a variable to ICT development and the ILO's decent work agenda. The survey was designed to meet study objectives by providing data on: past, current and future ICT employment; skill levels/ ICT based skill re-tooling and social protection.

The organisations selected were Westpac Bank Corporation, Fintel, Bureau of Statistics, Home Finance, Post Fiji – Management Information Systems, Fiji Sun Limited, Webmasters, Megacom Technologies, Ministry of Justice – Judiciary department and University of the South Pacific, Management Information Systems department.

The information was gathered through a blend of desk-based research, using primarily internet sources, and published articles/reports. These were supplemented with workplace observation, questionnaires and personal interviews with key organisational contacts. There were two sets of questionnaires utilised by the researchers, one for employers/managers and another for workers. Employers' questionnaires focussed on the proliferation of ICT within the organisation, changes to work forms and impact on productivity. A predominant focus was also on employee characteristics: demographics; skill levels, contract status – permanent; casual or part-time; resignation/emigration levels of ICT staff; recruitment challenges; ICT development constraints/internal and external; training potential for ICT upgrade and future ICT staffing requirements. The employee questions entailed the impact of ICT on work tasks; benefits; drawbacks/loss of skills; basic demographics; job description - satisfaction levels, internal ICT and OHS training/support provisions; promotion/career advancement prospects through ICT; internal constraints to ICT development and social protection status/constraints.

Informal face-to-face interviews were also used to gain in depth information/qualitative data from key informants. And these devices were further complimented through work process observation which enabled impressions about aspects of decent work. For example job content, supervision, physical layout, sexual division of labour and general OHS compliances review. Efforts were also made to obtain information on current developments in ICT related labour market/policy issues, from the ILO Fiji office, national trade union organisations and various government ministries. These sources also revealed ICT/decent work developmental constraints and current strategies being formulated by social partners, which should have long-term positive effects on the decent work agenda.

The field work phase encountered challenges in terms of the completion of employer questionnaires. Survey questions on organisational labour supply turnover/forecasting

and skill composition were deemed confidential information, and completed with measured reluctance in some instances. Other drawbacks were the limited availability of specific ICT/past and present decent work baseline data on Fiji. But the secondary and primary materials utilised in this study does provide an indication of past decent work issues and the development challenges of ICT, related infrastructure/policies and the current state of decent work in Fiji.

ICT and Decent Work – Conceptual Issues/ Definitions

3. The ILO describes decent work deficits as the gap between the world of work and peoples aspirations for a better life. Manifestations of which may be through inadequate social protection, insufficient employment opportunities/progression, inadequate dialogue and denial of rights in the workplace.

ILO recommendations towards bridging the decent work gap are: through decent work plans of action/agenda at the national level, that is incorporated into national development plans; government's collaboration with the ILO; maintenance of reliable labour market/employment related data; and concerted efforts towards recognition of rights at work coupled with employment creation and 'lifelong learning' (ILO, 2003:4-5

In this report the term 'lifelong learning' is used to include continuous up-skilling in order to meet skill levels required in a technologically/skill driven work environment; that match peoples' aspirations towards promotion/progression in the workplace. Traditionally, these learning opportunities would be via in-house programmes, libraries and through tertiary/technical institutions. However learning tools and materials are now available through the internet and through distance and flexible satellite education. This coupled with the acceleration/re-organisation of work would imply that information/communication technology is an enabling force; by the choices/ease it offers employers/employees. But how this benefits translates to the work place and its distributive benefits on categories of employees, addresses one of the main objectives of this study - the implications of ICTs on decent work. I therefore discuss the term ICT to also emphasise concepts/ developments discussed and to reflect both its inclusiveness and drawbacks on decent work.

Employment opportunities and job creation is also viewed as an important focus of this report. For decent work would not even materialise without employment opportunities. Employment levels are influenced by so many forces, including policy environment, political/economic stability and ICT is only one of the many forces, but is an increasingly important component. Micro studies, in particular, are ill equipped for such a task. While this report may not be able to fully track macro-trends, it will ascertain whether employment has expanded or contracted in selected firms and in areas of expansion, the nature of employment created. The nature of employment is as important as employment itself. An example of which would be the 'temporization' of work- a move away from full time employment towards a variety of temporary and casual employment contracts. Temporisation of work is especially relevant to this study as it reduces the prospects for full time employment; this has obvious consequences for earnings/employment conditions and therefore the prospect for decent work. One of

Fiji's national trade union umbrella organisations, Fiji Trade Unions Congress (FTUC) also has strong views towards the maintenance of decent work; in an environment where technology has transformed the employment structure and has consequent implications for employment security. Respondents expressed the need to incorporate all eight-core ILO conventions into labour legislation and developmental policies. Moreover current efforts being made by stakeholders to develop a national decent work agenda, was also deemed crucial – with minimum work standards, employment security, ILO core conventions and social protection forming the basis of this national plan of action (FTUC, 2004; Prasad2001: 5).

Information and communication technology can be defined as computing and telecommunications technology that provide automatic means of handling information to a wide range of users (Heeks, 1998:5). This report uses the term ICT broadly to represent: computers, telephone/fax, internet/email, teleconferencing, and satellite communication learning networks. The ADB (2003) views the internet as the basis of ICT, which provides mechanisms for data transportation, in text, sound, images and video. However in terms of a means to development, this depends on accessibility, costs and human resources.

3.1 Challenges and Opportunities

The Asian Development Bank (2003) argues that advances in ICT offers new opportunities for developing economies. Through the use of ICT, small developing island states could reduce fundamental barriers to development in terms of distance and size. This is through development of human resources through integrated satellite tertiary education programmes, the exchange of data/information via internet between small islands, increases the reach of development activities – through economies of scale and integrated approach to trading by a cluster of island states. It also allows small and medium (with underdeveloped marketing strategies) enterprises aggregate production through access to world markets. In an ideal context this would translate to opportunities for socio-economic development, but this would require an ICT network that is distributive/cost effective and tailored to local conditions. Without which disparities and inequalities in access to ICT, associated drawbacks or 'digital divide' will continue to exist (ILO, 2002; Alacantra, 2001). A general perception with most studies is retarded ICT growth/exposure exacerbates the growing socio economic gap within and between countries.

Moreover, the ADB considers four strategic policy initiatives as crucial towards a holistic approach in the development of an information society. These are: financial considerations/costs to end users- would ensure overall sustainability long-term; national/organisation based ICT policy that is pragmatic and acceptable to stakeholders; human resource training is essential to ensure life long learning, maintenance of systems, equitable benefits and technology must be appropriate to the needs/conditions or culture of a particular economy (2003:5).

All these perspectives highlight the importance of equity and social protection of people/labour in an ICT enabled environment. The ADB whilst advocating the need for ICT development as a means for poverty alleviation and socio-economic advancement in

developing island states; also reiterates the need for holistic development which should also translate to human resource development. Its current strategy on ICT for the region is to ensure that South Pacific island developing states (SIDS) utilise ICT to overcome constraints due to size and isolation and to realise potential gains offered by links to a global market (ADB, 2000: 39). The ADB also advocates skill retooling, where when processes change new skills are required. It is then important to identify the type of human resources necessary and existing staff retraining needs, to implement changes brought about by ICT.

Refer to table 1 for an overview on: **Fiji's ICT Proliferation – Pre 2000**

Table 1

1954 Fiji broadcasting commission established	Telex
1963 Mostly Analogue Radio Link * Step Exchange	Mainframe computers Govt
Single Channel Radio Links (analogue) for commercial users in remote islands	Use of PCs Fiji Govt
1967 First computer Fiji	WAN for many Govt systems
1976 Completion of COMPAC Cable	(Immigration/payroll/etc)
1980 Introduction Satellite Services	
1982 First IBM PC	ANZ-CAN Submarine Cable
1983 Fiji Electricity Authority SCADA radio 300/600 Baud	(Analogue)
1984 First planning Digital Microwave for FEA	Posts & Telecommunications Decree
1985 First Private FM radio	
1989 Digitisation of Telecom Networks.	Computer courses University South Pacific/ part of maths major
1990-96	
1991 TV NZ broadcast services Suva – Lautoka and Nadi	Internet Fiji
1992 Operation Fiji Land Information Systems	Fair Trading Decree
1993 Use microwave for WAN – FLIS	First computer science graduates USP
1994 First Bulletin Board Lautoka	GIS user group created modems
1994 Fiji TV formed	Monopoly licences granted to Telecom and FINTEL
1995 Fiji TV Vitilevu mainland centres/ Labasa/Savusavu	Telecom and FINTEL – ATH Formed
1996 Digital Radio Microwave systems	Mobile phone use Suva
Since 1997	
. Community TV 1998 Nadi	Private TRS rural services
. Southern Cross Cable under-utilised	Internet Suva Central Library
. Digital infrastructure for Telecommunications	Many LANS in Govt (FLIS, Public Service Commission, Ministry Education
. **Completion of Southern Cross Cables (2000**)	**Draft Govt ICT Development policy**
. Fiji Electricity Authority Microwave installed (2002)	***Source***: UNPD (2002) e-Pacifika Workshop.

Fiji ICT/Proliferation/ Infrastructure and Policy Development

4. Although computers have been used for years in Fiji by many institutions, the use of internet/email eventuated in the early 1990's. This was through the University of the South Pacific's (USP), dial-up store-and forward email system. This service was available to the faculty and graduate students on campus. Internet connection was facilitated through the leasing via Australia, a low speed 2.4 kilobit per second dedicated line to connect its internet service provider, the Australian Academic and Research Network. Later in 1994, the South Pacific Commission through a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - funded project, (Pacific Sustainable Development Network, P-SDN) initiated a low cost e-mail package called Pactok and an electronic conference service. The e-mail facility worked through a store-and-forward system (ADB, 2003:11). But in terms of nationwide connectivity this took form in 1995, when the Forum Secretariat (regional organisation of Pacific Island countries –based in Suva, Fiji) installed a free 64-kilobit per second circuit, via New Zealand Telecom. This was used to demonstrate fast internet connection at an IT conference in Suva. It generated consumer interest and resulted in TELECOM Fiji establishing an internet service provider (2003:12-13). This resulted in a proliferation of internet use through most parts of Fiji.

4.1 ICT Infrastructure and Technologies

Fiji had a teledensity of 112 per 1,000 people in 2001. This is more than East Asia & Pacific which had 110. However there are only 15,000 internet users as opposed to 50,901.8 in East Asia and Pacific. The cost of local calls ($ per three minutes) – for Fiji in 2001 stood at 0.05 and 0.02 in Asia & Pacific. International telecommunications outgoing traffic (minutes per subscriber) Fiji at 2001 – 180 and East Asia/Pacific amounted to 49. And cost of USA calls (per 3 mins) Fiji at 2001 – 4.03 and East Asia/Pacific – 4.62. Internet use is concentrated in the urban and sub-urban areas however the rural areas usage rate is increasing due to various government access strategies and foreign aid. These figures suggest that the challenges for ICT development (in terms of internet access) in Fiji are due to low internet usage. Respondents from 'CONNECT' Fiji (sole internet service provider - ISP) suggested that this is due to the high costs of service and low speed of dial-up connections. Moreover, is also responsible for the current customer base of just over 5 per cent. Fiji has spent USD 22 million to connect to the main Southern Cross Cable. According to the Chairman of FINTEL and Telecom's CEO, Winston Thompson, the project will have far reaching influence on investor decisions due to increased capacity, lower costs/reliability. This suggests that the high internet service costs is not due to low bandwidth, (internet bandwidth refers to capacity to connect – it is measured in bits per sec) unfavourable landlocked geographic position, or distance from the main Southern Cross Cable. Therefore a solution to Fiji's expensive internet connectivity costs would then be to open up markets and allow more/efficient internet service providers (ITU, 2002).Difficulties would arise as ISPs are generally not permitted to procure their own international capacity (run own cables/systems) and are obliged to use existing telecommunication providers. In Fiji's case, Telecom/FINTEL) would also charge premium rentals due to their monopolistic status. A recent case between TELPAC (US based business ISP) and TELECOM Fiji highlighted exactly the sort of drawbacks - to lower internet costs discussed. The US based ISP had planned to

operate out of Fiji, offering lower rate telephone/internet services to Fiji's business sector. However, this venture resulted in a highly contested legal battle between TELPAC and TELECOM FIJI, when TELPAC proposed to use an alternative system citing exorbitant costs quoted by TELECOM/FINTEL – for the use of existing infrastructure/services. TELPAC had also in the course of events, accused FINTEL of rerouting cables in order to increase service costs to consumers. These developments highlight transparency issues and major challenges to development of ICT towards decent work. (Refer to the following tables for more detailed general statistics on ICT/Fiji).

Table 2 Fiji Data Profile

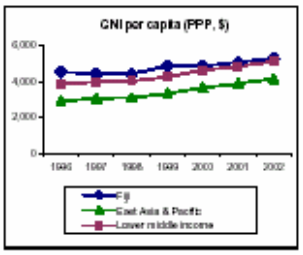
People	**1998**	**2001**	**2002**
Population, total	791.0 thousand	817.0 thousand	823.0 thousand
Pop growth (annual %)	1.0	0.6	0.7
Life expectancy (years) ..			69.5
Infant mortality rate (1,000 births) ..			17.0
Literacy total (% of ages above 15) ..			
Net primary enrolment	99.4	99.8	
Net secondary enrolment		76.0	
Environment			
Surface area (sq. km)	18,270.0	same	same
Economy			
GNI, Atlas method (current US$)	1.8 billion	1.7 billion	1.7 bill
GNI per capita, Atlas method	2,300.0	2,100.0	2,130.0
GDP (current $)	1.7 billion	1.7 billion	1.9 bill
GDP growth (annual %)	1.5	4.7	4.1
Value added/agriculture (% GDP)	15.7	16.6	16.2
Value added/industry	27.0	26.7	27.0
Value added/services	57.4	56.7	56.8
Export/goods/services	56.0	71.3	
Imports of goods/services	58.5	64.8	
Gross capital formation	13.	13.5	
Technology and infrastructure			
Fixed lines/mob/ phone (1,000 per)	106.6	212.9	228.7
Telephone average local call cost (US$ per three minutes)	0.1	0.1	0.1
Personal computers (1,000 persons)	40.2	46.7	48.8
Internet users	5,000	15,000.0	50,000.0
Trade and finance			
Trade in goods share/GDP (%)	74.7	79.1	70.5
High-technology exports (% manufactured exports)		2.5	1.4
Foreign direct investment, net Inflows in reporting country (current US$)	107.0 mil	89.6 million	76.9 mil
Present value of debt			200.6 mil
Total debt service(as % exports/goods/services)	3.5	5.5	5.9
Short-term debt outstanding	20.7 million	15.9 million	36.9 mil
Aid per capita (current US$)	46.5	31.8	41.4

Source: *World Development Indicators database, World Bank, August 2003*

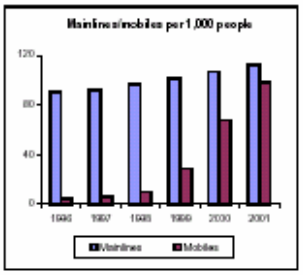
ICT at a glance
Fiji

10/3/2003

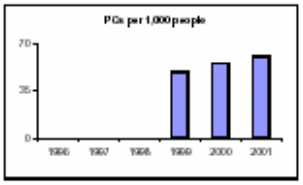
Country background information	Fiji		East Asia & Pacific	Lower middle income
	1995	2002	2002	2002
Population, mid year (millions)	0.77	0.82	1,838.4	2,410.7
Poverty (% of population below $1 a day)	..	..	..	..
Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and over)	91.0	93.5	87.3	86.6
Urban population (% of total population)	45.5	50.9	38.2	49.4
GNI per capita (Atlas method, $)	2,480.0	2,160.0	950.0	1,390.0
GNI per capita (PPP, $)	4,390.0	5,310.0	4,160.0	5,130.0
GDP growth (1990-95 and 1995-2002, %)	3.1	2.6	5.4	3.7
Scientists and engineers in R&D (per mill. people)	..	..	*545.1*	*807.5*
Expenditures for R&D (% of GDP)	..	..	*1.0*	*0.9*



ICT infrastructure & access	1995	2001	2001	2001
Telephone mainlines				
Per 1,000 people	84	112	110	146
In largest city (per 1,000 people)	54	110	502	524
Waiting list (thousands)	9	4	*1,901*	*27,675*
Revenue per line ($)	1,069	956	278	283
Cost of local call ($ per 3 minutes)	0.08	0.05	0.02	0.04
Mobile phones (per 1,000 people)	3	99	97	110
International telecommunications				
Outgoing traffic (minutes per subscriber)	234	180	49	58
Cost of call to U.S. ($ per 3 minutes)	..	*4.03*	4.62	4.50
Daily newspapers (per 1,000 people)	45	*52*	..	..
Radios (per 1,000 people)	623	*581*	287	346
Television sets (per 1,000 people)	91	116	266	292



Computers & the Internet	1995	2001	2001	2001
Personal computers				
Per 1,000 people	..	60.9	19.1	28.1
Installed in education (thousands)	..	..	..	..
Internet				
Users (thousands)	0.1	15.0	50,901.8	68,936.9
Monthly off-peak access charges				
Service provider charge ($)	..	72.3	21.8	16.7
Telephone usage charge ($)	..	0.56	0.24	0.23



ICT expenditures	1995	2001	2001	2001
Total ICT ($, millions)	..	..	..	..
ICT as % of GDP	..	..	..	..
ICT per capita ($)	..	..	..	..

ICT business & government environment *(ratings from 1 to 7; 7 is highest/best)*	1995	2002	2002	2002
Broadband Internet access availability	..	..	3.4	3.6
Local specialized IT services availability	..	..	4.0	4.3
Competition in ISPs	..	..	4.3	4.2
Government online services availability	..	..	2.7	3.1
Laws relating to ICT use	..	..	3.5	3.3
Government prioritization of ICT	..	..	4.9	4.0
Secure servers	..	4 [a]	597 [a]	2,769 [a]

Notes: Figures in italics refer to an earlier year. a. Data refer to 2001.

Sources: **Country background information**, UNESCO and World Bank; **ICT infrastructure and access**, ITU and UNESCO; **Computers and the Internet**, ITU and WITSA; **ICT expenditures**, WITSA; **ICT business & government environment**, World Economic Forum's *Global Competitiveness Report 2002-2003* and *Global Information Technology Report 2002-2003* (ratings) and Netcraft (secure servers). See Definitions and Sources for more complete information.

Development Data Group, World Bank

(Table 3)

4.2 Fiji Telecommunications Act (1999)

The purpose of this Act was to establish the Telecommunications Authority of Fiji Islands (a body corporate) that would overseer/regulate the efficient, competitive and responsive operations of the industry. The Act also enables a regulatory framework aimed at: accountability/transparency; participation, promotion long-term interests of consumers and lower costs, development of technical capabilities and skills requirement, promotion of innovative diverse telecommunications services, research and development that promotes growth of the industry.

The functions of Fiji Islands Telecommunications Authority (FITA) are based on the primary aims of the Act and Governments policies on ICT. Functions of FITA of interest to this study are: to ensure that internet services bridge service access issues and promote services that are efficient and cost effective. Enabled by the regulation of fees/charges levied by telecommunications systems/service providers; granting of licenses for telecommunications service providers, overseer enforcement compliance of telecommunication regulations; collaborate with educational institutes for promotion of technical education in telecommunications and provide economic/technical monitoring of the industry in accordance with recognised international standards and practices (*Fiji Telecommunications ACT, 1999; 3-6).*

The provisions of this Act provide a firm foundation for the development of Fiji's Telecommunications sector and should counter drawbacks discussed in this study. However respondents from the business sector articulate that the regulatory provisions of this Act have been hampered, due to current service providers: TELECOM and FINTEL's using their ongoing capital development projects as the rationale for current need for a monopoly status and exorbitant costs to consumers.

4.3 Draft Fiji Government ICT Policy

The Fiji Government Strategic Development Plan 2003-05 reaffirms the immense potential that the ICT industry has for improving efficiency in the public and private sectors, employment creation and access to services for those in the rural areas. However the high costs of ICT services is also highlighted as a major drawback to attaining this vision. Business commentators rate the current costs, as around the highest in the region. A contributing factor to this high service cost can be attributed to the monopolistic status enjoyed by Telecom Fiji Ltd (TFL), Internet Services Limited now operating as 'Connect"(100 per cent subsidiary of TFL) and Fiji International Telecommunications Limited (FINTEL). These three companies have been partially privatised and operate under exclusive licenses. Telecom Fiji provides national telex, data and telephone services (PSTN). FINTEL focuses on international telecommunications services. And 'Connect' provides internet services. They are part of the Amalgamated Telecom Holdings group (ATH - Fiji's principal telecommunications holding company), along with Vodafone Fiji (mobile phone services).

Telecom is a 100 per cent subsidiary of ATH, which also holds management rights to FINTEL (51 per cent government holding and 49 per cent by Cable & Wireless Plc).
The Fiji government has a 34.6 per cent overall shareholding in ATH, 58.2 per cent is owned by Fiji National Provident Fund (Fiji government's retirement benefit statutory body – which all formal sector workers must join by law, it has a membership base of 110,000). The remaining 7.2 per cent is owned by other institutional & individual investors (Parliamentary Paper No. 72: 2002; ATH Annual Report, 2003).

The lack of competition in these key sectors has had a profound effect on the development of ICT in Fiji, according to business commentators. This not only poses major developmental constraints, but also limits the growth potential of highly skilled personnel in the ICT industry – in comparison to their international counterparts. Respondents from 'Connect' reaffirm (secondary data findings) that the firm has a customer base of around 5 per cent. High costs of service were said to be a contributing factor to this low customer uptake. The office currently employs around 30 staff – in the skilled technical and customer service areas with no immediate plan for further staff expansion. Skilled staff retention was articulated as another major constraint. Moreover, the current lack of incentives in Fiji's ICT market also poses challenges in the attraction of highly skilled international practical ICT trainers. This drawback exacerbates the growing problem of developing highly skilled local personnel, in the area of advanced software engineering and programming. This area currently faces acute personnel shortages. Resulting in most ICT enabled enterprises resorting to paying exorbitant costs in hiring consultants from software suppliers (e.g. Datec Computers, COMPAQ Computers Australia); to operate and create software for general business operations. It therefore has implications on the recruitment of additional ICT personnel – due to resultant budgetary constraints.

A recent study carried out by Fiji's National Planning Ministry (2002) indicates that local tertiary institutions (for example USP, Central Queensland University and Fiji Institute of Technology) are producing IT graduates that can be absorbed into middle management level. But it also emphasises the need for course contents that are practical based, which address the current shortage in industry and the highly skilled technical areas. A large number of IT graduates (without practical knowledge) as a result, have to resort to employment in other areas. This has implications for the decent work agenda in terms of employment availability, enhancement capacity, adequate earnings and productive work.

The existing monopoly enjoyed by ATH may, in part, be responsible for the Telecommunications Amendment Bill currently in Fiji's Parliament. Which is perhaps part of Governments efforts to correct anomalies brought about by lack of competition, through regulation. Should this Amendment Bill and ICT policy objectives be fully implemented, it could represent a landmark in the development of Fiji's ICT industry. Refer to Table 4 for a summary of Fiji Government's ICT policy objectives.

Table 4

Policy Objectives	Key Performance Indicators
To reduce telecom rates in the short term by promoting more discussions between potential investors in ICT Services and FINTEL/Telecom Fiji to Negotiate favourable rates under which Investments would be viable	• Reduction in telephone rates by an Average of 15 per cent by 2005. • At least one international call centre established 2003.
Increased coverage of telecommunication services to rural areas	• Telecommunications access to at least 400 More unconnected villages by 2005
In medium term, liberalisation of telecommunications sector through more competition and removal of exclusive licences	• Telecommunications legislation and regulatory body By 2004 – exclusive telecommunications licenses removed by 2005. Increased competition with more internet service providers (ISP) • Quality standards comparable to the global market established by 2004
To ensure the regulatory and legal framework functions to promote ICT development. To align Fiji's ICT training to developments in the employment market.	• All ICT related legislation reviewed/amended by 2003. A fully developed international compliant privacy ICT information system by 2003 • Additional 10 schools with Internet access. Corporate sponsors/additional schools. ICT jobs skills training modules adopted by IT training providers by 2004
Policy Objectives	**Key Performance Indicators**
To introduce "e-government" in order to raise efficiency of service delivery.	• Integrated e-government development plan adopted by 2003. • Suitable government services available through the Internet by 2005.

Source: Fiji Government Strategic Plan 2003-05/ Parliamentary Paper No. 72 of (2002)

4.4 Evaluation

This chapter has examined the background to proliferation of ICT in Fiji, current established ICT related infrastructure and policy environment. It also postulates current challenges to ICT development and decent work in Fiji in terms of: the high costs of services; low levels of investment and employment creation; monopoly status of ICT service providers; lack of ICT market incentives to attract and retain highly skilled ICT personnel.

Government strategies/ICT legislation promotes low cost and accessibility. But this would need to be rigorously enforced, in order to remove the lack of competition within Fiji's telecommunications sector. The ADB strategies relevant to this study emphasises the importance of competition to allow lower costs to end users; employment/HRM development opportunities, and technology and ICT policies that are pragmatic and tailored to Fiji's context. All these issues have implications on some of the ILO decent work indicators, in terms of life long learning, employment opportunities, adequate earnings, productive work and rights in the work place.

The next chapter examines in detail the state of decent work in Fiji prior to proliferation of ICT.

5. Decent Work Issues prior to advent of ICT

> Human rights and development share a common vision and purpose – to secure the freedom, well being and dignity of all people. Decent employment and income is a means to achieve this. Human rights express the bold idea that all people have claims that they are not commodities, that they must be protected from the worst abuses and deprivations; and secure for them the freedom of life with dignity. Decent work is a concept and notion which should be able to provide women and men dignity and sufficient income to pursue his or her goals of life and provide for family welfare in conditions of freedom and equity (ILO, 2002:17)

This chapter examines Fiji's decent work issues prior to the proliferation of ICT's after 1995, by using the ILO's statistical indicators relevant to Fiji in terms of: employment opportunities; adequate earnings/fair treatment, work security, safe work, social protection enhanced employability, and social dialogue, balancing work/family and decent hours. However socio economic context has not been applied in this chapter.

Fiji has a current population of around 825,000 and a land area of 18,270 sq km. At the end of 1995 the population was estimated at 778,000. The number of people formally employed in 1995 is estimated to be 98,112 or 36 per cent of the labour force. In 1986 this figure stood at 42 per cent of the labour force. In terms of the labour market - 40 per cent of the population relied on the public sector for jobs. Another prominent feature of the labour market at this juncture is the rise in salaried employment from 35 per cent of total formal employment in 1975 to 45 per cent in 1989, and a fall in wage employment from 65 per cent in 1975 to 55 per cent by 1989 (G, Chand 1996).

Official Employment/Unemployment Rate 1983-1995 Table 5

Years	Population 000	Pop Growth Rate	Lab/Force 000	Employed 000	Unemployment Rate %
1983	672	2.10%	221.6	206.2	6.9
1984	686	2.08	228.0	211.2	7.4
1985	697	1.60	234.5	215.9	7.9
1986	717	2.87	241.2	222.9	7.5
1987	714	-0.42	247.2	223.7	10.2
1988	719	0.70	249.3	225.9	9.4
1989	724	0.70	247.8	232.7	6.1
1990	732	1.10	252.6	236.4	6.4
1991	742	1.37	258.1	242.9	5.9
1992	753	1.48	263.6	249.4	5.4
1993	765	1.59	268.9	253.1	5.9
1994	778	1.70	274.7	258.2	5.9
1995	790	1.54	281.0	265.0	6.0

(Bureau Statistics, Budget Supplement 1996:27)

Unemployment levels were significantly high after the 1987 military coups. But this tapered down to 6 per cent at the point of ICT proliferation. In terms of employment creation the official data for the period indicate that whilst 1,000 new jobs were created, about 13,000 new entrants join the labour force. However in 1994 only 600 new jobs were created within the formal sector. Unofficial sources view official unemployment numbers for the period 1986-95 as a misrepresentation of the actual high levels of unemployment. Chand, (1996)

who had conducted studies through this period estimated the actual unemployment rate to be 7 per cent for 1986; 10.6 per cent -1987; 12.6 per cent 1988; 1991-12.8 per cent; and 19.3 per cent in 1995. The unemployment figures indicate that employment opportunities (a major focus of the decent work agenda) have been a pervasive drawback to the development of Fiji's labour force even prior to the advent of ICT.

Fiji is one of the most developed of the Pacific island states, although it remains a developing economy. Fiji's two largest exports are sugar and garment, these each account for around 25 per cent of export revenue. The tourism industry also features strongly in terms of foreign exchange revenue earner. And these three sectors are also the main providers of wage and salary employment outside of the public sector.

Trade liberalisation through the 1980's has broadened the base of international trade, resulting in more diversified trading patterns – with Australia accounting for 45 per cent of Fiji's trade – and with New Zealand, Japan, United Kingdom and Europe varying between 5 - 15 per cent. However these developments have had an impact on labour standards. 'First – due to Fiji's preferential advantages into Australia/New Zealand, United States and Europe via SPARTECA, ESP, LOME, and COTONOU agreements. These trade agreements continue to be eroded; exerting downward pressures on competitiveness. This has had a resultant decline in income and employment standards in sectors trading under such regimes' (Prasad and Snell, 2002:29).

Structural adjustment policies were implemented in 1984. The then Alliance government imposed a unilateral wage freeze on the entire economy. This was in accordance with IMF findings that salaries were 15 per cent over desirable levels and would cause a governmental budgetary crisis due to the escalating civil service wage bill. This development led to the cessation of the Tripartite Forum - which fostered social dialogue between the social partners on labour/national socio-economic issues. In the 1990's the deregulation of the labour market lead to flexible/productivity based work systems in the private sector and later in the public service. The subsequent corporatisation/privitisation of public sector enterprises raised issues of decent work due to the reduction in employment levels, focus on individual contracts as opposed to collective contracts and general reduction in the established work conditions within the reorganised state entities. Those in the less skilled sectors were especially vulnerable to the 'fallouts' of this process, in a context with no unemployment benefits and prevailing high unemployment levels. In terms of the ILO's decent work statistical indicators, this phenomenon further exacerbated drawbacks in terms of employment opportunities, unacceptable work, adequate earnings, social protection/dialogue and enhancing capacities for employment.

Basic utilities in Fiji, such as power and telecommunications services are provided by para statal organisations or have been partially privatised. A user pay system in health, education and other social services was imposed after 1987. This placed a further burden especially on those who were already marginalised within the vulnerable sectors of employment. On the employment front, a large portion of Fiji's formal/informal sectors are engaged in the manufacturing/sugar sectors. However Fiji's public sector is still the largest employer in the formal sector – with a work force of 33,000 out of the 120,000 formal sector workers. However, a large portion of the over 320,000 labour force remain in the

informal/subsistence sectors. These sectors provide an informal insurance system at least for the basic needs of people in times of economic downturn.

Women workers dominate (80 per cent) the estimated 11,000 employed in the un organised garment (manufacturing) sector which proliferated after 1986. Ongoing breach of Fiji's established labour laws were especially prevalent in the garment sector through the 1980's and continue to be an issue of concern. The garment industry bore the brunt of the post 1987 coup Fiji government's efforts to bolster economic growth through foreign direct investment focussed incentives. Basic minimum wage rates for the industry were pitched at around $FJD1.65 as opposed to the $FJD2.95 applied to the general manufacturing sector. Studies carried out by Bain and Slatter (1995) indicated serious breaches of decent work and human/constitutional rights to organise and collective bargain; decent hours; fair treatment; safe work; social protection/ dialogue; adequate earnings and upskilling opportunities within the garment industry. This sector remains relatively unorganised (2 out of 50 factories unionised) the long hours of work basic work conditions/unpaid overtime, work insecurity and OHS related incidents remain a feature of the garment industry and other export sectors like the tuna fish export industry.

Fiji's comparative advantage in manufacturing, as in agriculture, lies in low cost labour. Another aspect of agriculture and manufacturing that affects comparative advantage is preferential access to Australia and New Zealand. This is through the non-reciprocal South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation (SPARTECA). For agriculture this is through the LOME convention, which enables Fiji's sugar preferential pricing status in the European Union.

Real Wage Hourly Rates Fiji 1986-1993
Table 6

	Mining	Manufacturing	Electricity	Construction	Commerce	Transport	Service		
1986	2.67	2.95	3.79	3.09	2.81	3.29	2.99		
1987	2.68	2.91	3.81	3.13	2.76	3.32	2.98		
1988	2.62	2.65	3.36	2.92	2.53	3.04	2.74		
1989	2.59	2.26	3.10	2.77	2.40	2.89	2.51		
1989	2.72	2.10	3.34	2.82	2.35	2.90	2.57		
1990	5.37	2.24	3.31	2.81	2.13	2.92	2.47		

Source: (Annual Employment Survey, Current Economic Statistics, Bureau of Statistics; no AES 1989 publishes.

In terms of safety at work for the period prior to 1995 the 1994 reported cases were 218, 1,117 in1997 but has decreased to 780 cased in 2003. The rapid increase in reported cases in 1997 after the implementation of the *Occupational/Health and Safety Act* in 1996 may indicate the increase in unsafe work environment due to the emergent competitive/productivity industrial environment. There were no specific data on industry based accidents/deaths for the period. However sources within the garment industry state that many OHS related illness went unreported due to fears of job security.

On union density levels this stands at around 30-35 per cent – comparatively high by international standards. But there has been a decline of around 6-8 per cent since the period 1999-2001. The public sector has a unionisation rate of around 70 per cent whilst in the private sector, the sugar industry (80 per cent) airlines, and financial services sectors are also well organised (Prasad, et al., 2003; 2002:24). Unionisation rate for the 1985- 86 periods stood at a relative high of 45.2 per cent. A point worth noting is that despite the widespread use of ICT later in the mid 1990's – unionisation rates in the transport, finance and electricity/service sectors did not undergo a significant decline. These sectors would generally account for the bulk of ICT employment. This could be due to the nature of ICT employment created through its concentration at the semi- skilled less skilled areas levels. And highly skilled personnel – (due to their marketability) generally prefer individual contracts, may comprise of an insignificant portion in these sectors. Moreover survey results also indicate that a large number of ICT workers are engaged within small enterprises that are not unionised. These phenomenons were an overriding theme from the survey results

Refer to **Table 7: Breakdown of Unionisation Rate % for the Period 1985 – 95**

Table 12- Unionisation Rate by Sector -	1985-86	**1988-91**	1992-95
Agriculture	14.6	12.9	12.5
Mining	12.4	26.7	65.8
Manufacturing	48.8	27.7	24.2
Electricity	32.8	25.5	25.5
Construction	54.2	64.1	45.2
Wholesale/Retail	15.8	18.5	17.6
Transport	**33.2**	**30.5**	**32.4**
Finance	**35.3**	**31.6**	**42.3**
Services	64.8	58.8	54.9
Overall	45.2	38.4	36.8

Source: Chand, G. (1996) The Labour Market and Labour Market Institutions/Fiji in an Era of Globalisation

Overall the continuous cycle of political turmoil and unresolved land issues has had an impact on investment/economic growth and employment creation opportunities for Fiji. Unemployment statistics at national level were estimated to be around 6 per cent in 1995 and now stands at 14.1 per cent (Household/Expenditure Survey, 2002). This has also placed Fiji's socio-economic institutions under strain and further exacerbates labour force problems, posing negative impacts on social protection and raises equity issues therefore.

Socio-economic insecurity brought about by relatively high *unemployment* levels has always been a permeating feature for certain segments of Fiji's labour force. – even prior to the proliferation of ICT and political upheaval of 1987. This is in part, due to Fiji's relatively narrow economic base, lack of foreign direct investment, distance from global markets and the inability of the formal sector to fully absorb the around 17, 000 job seekers annually. Moreover the current unemployment rate as earlier stated, is around 14.1 per cent. A continuation of this trend could be a recipe for social instability (Prasad, 1998). Mainly because Fiji does not have social security safety net provisions – that could mediate the negative fallouts of this phenomenon.

The ongoing decline in foreign direct investment (rated at 107 million in 1998 and currently stands at 76.9 million – Refer to table 2) would mean that the FDI focused Fiji government development policies; would need to adopt alternative measures for employment creation. This may explain the current government's policy focus on the development of local small/medium enterprises (through training/financial assistance programmes) which dominate Fiji's private sector. This industrial sector is also another substantial employer outside the public sector. This policy reorientation is imperative as employment creation envisaged through public enterprise reorganisation, has not materialised (Singh, 2002). This coupled with current efforts towards micro enterprise development in the peri urban/ rural areas, may be a more effective strategy towards employment creation. As without employment the question of decent work does not even arise. However, the nature of employment is also as important as employment itself.

Refer to tables 8 for paid employment trends for wage and salary earners (transport/communications sector) – for the period 1986-1998. ICT proliferated around the early 1990's and became widespread after 1995. Note that the ICT sectors fall under the communication services, airline ticketing, freight transport and courier services. A further notable point is that there has been some increase in new employment for the period – in several of the ICT sectors. Employment numbers increased overtime. There was a slight decrease in 1991 in some sectors, which then gradually increased again. This trend is also prevalent in the finance, insurance, real estate and business services – areas where there has also been proliferation of ICT. The final results of field survey also reaffirm this trend. And it also seems to indicate that increase in employment numbers have been more significant in the less skilled levels (due to computerisation of basic daily tasks) – with slower up-take in the higher skill ICT areas. This is due to internal funding constraints - within surveyed firms, slow rate in computerisation/development of work systems/technology and the shortage of highly skilled ICT personnel in Fiji's labour market to provide advanced ICT training or to fulfil current demands.

Table 8 Estimated Paid Employment in Fiji by Wage and Salary Earners in the Transport Storage and Communication Sector 1985-98

	1986	**1987**	**1988**	**1989**	**1990**	**1993**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**
Bus/coach transport	930	882	634	822	839	1,160	1,431	1,527	1,470
Taxi	103	103	90	99	62	134	164	219	237
Freight Transport, courier services	270	297	192	242	336	257	306	357	378
Tour Operators/rental/hire cars	221	140	171	209	157	314	426	328	309
Sea cruises, sea tour operators	293	196	245	120	137	444	546	527	507
Air transport carriers	580	615	563	655	615	766	983	1007	1,056
Airline Ticketing, customs, travel agencies, shipping and packing agents	**1,915**	**1,731**	**1,743**	**1,992**	**2,140**	**1,912**	**2,212**	**2,297**	**2,285**
Communication services e.g. postal, wire, and wireless services	**2,078**	**1,870**	**2,135**	**2,429**	**2,298**	**2,290**	**2,706**	**2,511**	**2,232**

Source: Bureau of Statistics' Annual Employment Survey -1998

This chapter has examined decent work issues prior to the widespread proliferation of ICT in 1995. The emerging theme is that drawbacks to decent work have been a pervasive feature for Fiji's industrial scene. These were especially evident within reorganised public entities during the early 1990's and the garment sector. Emergent areas of concern based on ILO's

statistical indicators are: inadequate earnings, employment opportunities, safe work, decent hours and social protection/dialogue.

The next section overviews the Fiji government's current strategies to towards human resource development/decent work agenda – and emerging challenges for the ICT sector. This section has been included despite not being a requirement of the study's TOR as it situates the study's survey/analysis within Fiji's current ICT/decent work context. It also allows a better understanding of future trends/challenges in the area.

6. Fiji General Labour Market Issues and Governments Decent Work Agenda and Industrial Relations Bill

This national plan of action, prepared by Fiji's Ministry of Labour Industrial Relations& Productivity (in consultation with stake-holders) is premised on the existence of core labour standards as a yardstick against which the national decent work agenda is monitored. Moreover it is also grounded within the ILO principles towards decent work, in terms of the achievement of economic growth with social equity. Sector One of the plan of action reiterates that Fiji is now obliged (after ratifying the 8 core ILO conventions) to implement these into practise. In particular, the conventions on worst forms of child labour-to avoid the negative manifestations of child labour evident in South East Asia.

Women according to the decent work plan still face narrower range of occupational choices; earn less than men in comparable positions, less access to the formal sector, opportunities to full-time employment relative to men – despite their higher average level of education. The ILO suggests that ICT offers new opportunities for women, but would need deliberate policies that: are family-friendly, ensure ICT training/education and their full participation. Without which old gender biases would further permeate the sector (2001). Current submissions by the national trade union centres and Fiji Women's Rights Movement; aim at correcting this anomaly through Fiji's Industrial Relations Bill – currently before Parliament. Government is also required to ensure that the provisions under the 8 core ILO conventions – are fully complied with through the Bill. The current provisions within the Bill, is decidedly not exhaustive – and stakeholders have agreed that ongoing review of policies/practises it entails, would ensure long-term effectiveness of its provisions.

Education according to the decent work plan is a basic human right and pre-requisite to socio-economic development. Government has increased the education budget for 2004. . There is to be a *Compulsory Education Act* to be implemented by end of 2004. Upgrade of rural school facilities and student /teacher ratio. A special focus of the revised school curriculum is on: business skills, vocational training and IT by 2005. The ILO recommends a minimum target (in education investment) to be set at 6 per cent of gross national product (GNP). And states that this should be boosted with a focus on a skills – knowledge based society, to counter the challenges of globalisation.

Sector two of the plan is primarily geared towards: creating greater opportunities for women and men in securing decent work/income. The plan shows that paid employment has increased from 81,082 in 1985 to around 120,000 in 2004. Despite signs of recovery in the job market, the Labour Ministry also admits that job creation has not corresponded to growth in labour supply of 17,000 job seekers annually.

The current government, as earlier discussed is vigorously pursuing the development of small/medium enterprises; capable of providing some reduction in unemployment levels. This is to be reinforced through the *Micro-Enterprise Development Act 2002*. Fiji's small/medium enterprises account for around 80 per cent of Fiji's industrial establishments. Moreover a National Centre for Small and Micro Enterprises Development (NCSMED) is earmarked to further develop this policy and target the informal sector. For the current unemployment levels suggests that the formal sector cannot create more than 9,700 new jobs (even in stable conditions) to counter growing unemployment. Moreover, plans for the provision of an up-to- date SME database would ensure continued effective policies/strategies for this project.

There are also on going efforts to create a Computerised Human Resource Information System (CHRIS) and Labour Market Information system (LMIS) which was established in 2003 and to be completion by 2005. This would be supplemented with a national employment placement service and timely labour market surveys that would boost the existing labour market data base. These government strategies discussed coincide with and indicate compliance with recommendations by the ILO's 'life long learning' agenda and its recent sub regional (South East Asia Pacific) tripartite forum on decent work held in New Zealand/October 2003. The ILO's recommendation that reflects this new approach to learning and training is to:

- promote lifelong learning, enhance the employability of workers, and advance the decent work concept;
- improve access and equality of opportunity for all workers to education and training;
- promote national, regional and international qualifications framework which includes provisions for prior learning;
- build the capacity of the social partners for partnerships in education and training (ILO, 2002).

In terms of skill building the Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF) seeks to tailor courses that meet industry skill shortages. This currently relates to the construction industry. The Fiji government has allowed the temporary use of over 1,500 expatriate workers, to counter the cryonic shortage of skilled trades' people in the industry. A phenomenon that highlights cracks in current technical/trade based training institutions/in-house training and planning policies. And this requires concerted attention from stakeholders, especially in a context with relatively low employment creation and high unemployment levels.

The Integrated Human Development Programme (IHRDP is a collaborative project between the ILO/UNDP and Fiji Government) – over a three year period. Its aim is to produce 3,000 jobs (through seven sub-programmes) after implementation in 2000. Target groups are job seekers, individuals seeking higher income, entrepreneurs, and self-employment seekers. A primary focus is also on: job creating enterprises, employable skills and skills in technological development, higher skill and expertise to replace foreign workers and consultants, higher skills and management capacities for enhanced access to income,

import substitution, and agro/community based enterprises. The Sigatoka pilot scheme, which has had positive outcomes, will be replicated in other districts. Refer to table 9 below for an overview of jobs created by each sub-programme as at 30/6/2001. **Source:** Ministry of National Planning (2001)

Table 9

Sub-Programme	**Total No. Trained**	**Total Jobs Created**
HRD for Hotels & Tourism Industry	1,357	1,031
Small and Micro Enterprise Development	58	5
Advanced Vocational Training	1,368	500
Eco-Tourism Development	251	176
Cooperative Development	129	238
Labour Administration & Productivity Improvement	-	-
Total	**3,163**	**1,950**

In the ICT sector a major drawback is the sourcing and retention of skilled IT personnel. This is due to emigration and inadequate industry based training for ICT graduates, provided by Fiji's tertiary institutions. And was an area consistently highlighted by employers/managers – as a major hindrance to the development of ICT in Fiji long-term. Sources from Fiji's Ministry National/Economic Planning state that fresh tertiary level graduates and new entrants – cannot compensate for the seniority/experience and skill of those emigrating.

Refer to the table below for an overview of emigration trends by major occupational groups, 1986-1996.

Table 10: Employment and Emigration by Major Occupational Groups – 1986-1996

MHLM Occupational Group (1995 FISCO Classification)	**1996 Census**	**Net Increase**	Est.. (net) Emigration 1986-1996	
Legislators, Senior Officials & Managers	7,880	1,157	3,610	
Professionals	**17, 984**	**2,977**	8,048	
Technicians & Associate Professionals	**11,578**	**7,081**		
Clerks	16,501	2,362	7,584	
Total	**53,943**	**13,577**	**19,242**	

Note: MHLM – Middle and High Level Manpower. ***Source***: Bureau of Statistics (1996) Fiji Census Of Population and Housing.

Table 11 (b) Fiji Citizens Emigration by Race, Sex/Occupation –Jan 2000/ Jan 2001

Job	**Fijian**		**Indian**		**European**		**Chinese**		**Rotuman**		**P/Euro/Others**				**Total**
	M	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	
Professional, Technical & Related Workers	5	7	67	48	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	75		205
Administrative and Managerial Workers	0	0	33	7	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	35	0	78
Clerical, Supervisors& Related Workers	5	3	10	26	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	15		61

Sales Workers	3 0	5 4	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0 8 0	20
Service Workers	2 2	1 8	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0 3 0	16
Agriculture, Animal Husbandry Forestry Workers& Fishermen	2 0	5 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0 7 0	14
Production Workers, Transport Equipment Operators & Labourers	6 0	36 6	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0 42 0	90
Workers Not Classified	14 25	115 117/F	1 1	2 0	1 1	4 0 131	412
Totals							

Source: Bureau of Statistics, 2001
Note: Emigrants– Fiji Citizens who are residents and have immigrated to other countries.

6.1 Key Issues for Labour Demand

A major factor hindering economic growth and development is the persistent shortage of skilled, middle-and high level human resources (at the going rate of remuneration in the labour market). These shortages have also resulted in employment opportunities foregone that such growth and development may have generated. According to Fiji's Ministry for National/Economic Planning ' It is not only a problem of meeting the demand of employers for additional qualified personnel to fill new posts, but the result of steady and continuing drain of experienced workers from the labour force due to emigration' (2003).

In 1987 over half of the country's stock of high to middle level labour (those employed in technical, clerical, managerial and professional positions) was a loss to Fiji's economy due to emigration. And trends for the period 1996 – 2001 indicate that this drawback continues to intensify. This is due to the continued demand by overseas countries for skilled Fiji emigrants, lack of suitable employment opportunities within Fiji, the unresolved land tenure issues and repercussions of the 1987 and 2000 political upheavals.

This continuing emigration trend indicates that it is really the formal sector that bears the brunt of the associated 'fall outs' in terms of skill deepening and HRD development. For the informal sector (including agriculture) employs relatively few from the discussed category of personnel. However these two sectors do interlink and are interdependent, especially as Fiji does not have social security safety nets. So the informal sector, as earlier discussed provides interim income generating means in times of economic downturn and a pool of flexible labour force required within the formal sector in times of economic boom.

Within the formal sector, it's the public sector (where two-thirds of high-level workers are employed) that currently faces acute senior personnel shortage. And this has resulted in over 10 percent of established posts remaining vacant, due to their inability to retain and attract technical and professionals required.

On the private sector front, employers regularly highlight the shortage in supply of skilled technical, production, managerial and professional staff. And this provides the rationale for hiring of expatriate personnel. However, trade union respondents maintain that: the employers are prepared to pay expatriate workers premium salaries – that are not extended

to local personnel in similar categories. And this inadvertently provides disincentives to job satisfaction/income security and the development of a pool of skilled local personnel.

All these issues therefore have major implications for the growth and development of Fiji's economy. Moreover, ineffective in-house training programmes, shortage of high tech training facilities retard the development of knowledge and skills required in the knowledge economy.

Table 12 Present s an Overview of forecasted Formal Sector Employment/by Category – 2000-2003

Industrial Activity	**1998 (actual)**	**2000**	**2003**	**Increase 2000-2003**
Agriculture, Forest & Fisheries	2202	2,334	2,544	210
Mining & Quarry	1950	2,067	2,253	186
Manufacturing	2,9200	30,952	33,738	2,786
Electricity & Water	1,936	2,052	2,367	315
Construction	4,906	5,200	5,668	468
Trade	13,236	14,030	15,293	1,236
Restaurants, Cafes, Hotels	7,789	8,256	8,999	743
Transport	9,231	9,785	10,666	881
Finance	3,390	3,593	3,916	323
Business Services	3,486	3,695	4,028	333
Government Admin Services	15,232	16,146	17,599	1,453
Education, Health/Social Services	16,943	17,960	19,576	1,616
Domestic Repairs & Other Services	3,018	3,199	3,487	288
Total	**112,519**	**119,270**	**130,134**	**10,865**

Source: Bureau of Statistics, 1999 Employment Survey and estimates based on sector – specific employment/output ratios 1990-1997 as applied to 2000 and 2003 output forecasts.

6.2 Social Dialogue/Workplace Relations

Collective bargaining and tripartite like bodies; that foster consultations between stake-holders have been a historical part of Fiji's industrial environment. It is a declared policy of the Fijian state (which is premised on the concept of political democracy) and is widely practised. Social dialogue was strengthened in 1977 through the Tripartite Forum (TTF), which was later dissolved in the early 1980's. Later through the 1980's the National Economic Summit (NES) partially filled the void left by the demise of the TTF – by fostering dialogue (on government's social/economic objectives) with all stake-holders. While the NES allowed dialogue on broader socio-economic objectives, academic commentators argue that the summit was not able to remedy the deteriorating industrial relations climate. Later the Labour Advisory Board (LAB, a diluted version of the TTF) was established to enable dialogue between the three stakeholders, on key labour/employment and wider socio economic issues (Prasad, 1998). This LAB has a tripartite membership base and Fiji's Industrial Relations Bill that's currently in Parliament, has been an ongoing project for the LAB. There has also been a recent formulation of a Tripartite Peak Body, consisting of 12 government ministers (including co-opted members) and social partners to deal with labour and social issues. This forum has recently produced Fiji's decent work agenda; and is

behind current moves to mainstream the Labour Ministry, as the centre for employment promotion activities (ILO, 2003).

The ILO (2002) postulates the importance of workplace relations that encourages social dialogue at the workplace. It has implications for the ILO's decent work by gaining consensus between parties on areas of mutual interest. The ILO conventions 98 and 87 reaffirm this right. Results from our survey indicate that those in the highly skilled ICT intensive organisations are secure in this regard. While those in less skilled sectors do not enjoy this security due to the industry specific knowledge based (and repetitive) work that they engage in. This raises issues of long-term job satisfaction and skill deepening.

Trade union memberships are drawn mainly from the public sector and medium/large enterprises. The organisation of workers in small and micro enterprises continues to be a challenge for Fiji's trade unions (an international trend). The increased levels in reported trade disputes are attributed to the shift towards legalistic/confrontational in lieu of good faith collective bargaining practices. Moreover the current trend is to declare most strikes illegal and refer disputes to arbitration, which undermines the purpose of labour laws – in regulating bipartite interactions between parties with minimum state intervention. Trade Union respondents however, attribute this to the partial approach to labour regulation that the current Labour Minister has adopted. This coupled with social partners' lack of knowledge/advocacy skills in settling labour disputes has supposedly hampered the speedy resolution of disputes and has negative implications on interactions between the industrial relations parties.

The ILO, (2003) regards dispute settlement institutions in Fiji as weak. For it fails to promote principles of productivity/competitiveness required in a liberalised context, through mechanisms of collective bargaining, national tripartite consultations, workers' participation and dispute settlement.

In terms of women's issues, the Ministry of Labour maintains that women generally continue to be under represented in trade union leadership and social dialogue/protection mechanisms e. g. Labour Advisory Board and National Occupational/Health and Safety Advisory Board. Female/male wage differentials continue to be a drawback to full citizenship rights for women workers (Refer to Table 13 for an over view of gender salary differentials). A sizeable portion of women therefore remain within the vulnerable groups, which include retrenched workers, the disabled, casual and informal sector workers. Social status/exclusion and poverty hampers efforts towards organisation and collective bargaining to improve terms and conditions of employment. Resulting in the limited coverage for this group by trade unions, employer' organisations and Fiji's existing labour legislation.

To achieve goals of equality, protection and increased participation of women in economic activities, the Labour Ministry has developed EEO based strategies that are to be endorsed by government. Safety net provisions for vulnerable groups (unorganised/informal sector) would be through the establishment of sector-based wages councils or alternatively a national minimum wage ceiling. This would be boosted through new provisions within the Industrial Relations Bill (for the unorganised sector) institutionalised dispute mechanisms and redress, not currently accorded through the existing *Trade Disputes Act Cap 1997*.

Table 13: Gender salary differentials (annual rate - $F) 1997-98

	1998		1997		
Occupation	Salary: Male	Female	Male	Female	
Legislators/Senior Officials &Managers	25,491	20.473	23,868	20,171	
Professionals/Technicians &Associate Professionals	**22,975** 15,646	**19,063** 12,850	**15,759** 14,782	**12,151** 11,965	
Clerks, Service,shop,market sales workers, skilled/fishery Agricultural workers	11,183 10,121 6,768	10,211 8,284 7,792	10,847 9,786 5,790	9,853 8,728 4,679	
Craft and related workers Plant/ machinery Operators & assemblers	12,627	8,855	13,016	7,204	
Elementary occupations	8,383	5,763	8,230	8,663	
Armed forces	12,557	9,200	12,698	8,402	
Overall	16,208	14,917	13,546	11,311	

Source: Bureau of Statistics, Annual Employment survey.

The *Trade Dispute Act* (Cap 97) and institutionalised dispute settlement machinery covers those in the formal sector under negotiated collective agreements. It does not include those in the private contracted (small/micro enterprises), wage council, informal sectors and those unorganised in small to medium enterprises. A significant level of ICT employment falls into this segment. A large portion of ICT workers are employed within the smaller firms. Efforts by the Fiji Trade Union Congress is underway, (through submissions for the Industrial Relations Bill) to seek remedial action in this regard. Refer to Table 14 for an overview on reported trade disputes in Fiji, for the period 2001-2002

Table 14 Trade Disputes in 2001-2002

Year	**2001**	**2002**
Total Reported*	143	**150**
Total Settled**	69	**56**
Referred to Arbitration Tribunal	46	**46**
Outstanding	24	**26**

Source: Parliamentary Paper No. 21, 2003 – Ministry of Labour and Productivity Annual Report, 2002.

The ILO maintains the need for the mainstreaming of Fiji's Ministry of Labour into social-economic policy making processes, in an environment of structural adjustment and reforms. This would enable it to effectively regulate disputes and deal with labour issues that emerge out of reform processes.

Fiji's Labour Ministry has formulated strategies that contribute to social dialogue/protection. It also delivers a range of administrative services that determine: minimum wages (unorganised sectors) humane conditions of work; registration of trade unions; setting of

industrial disputes; registering of collective bargaining agreements and more recently human resource development and employment creation initiatives (Ministry Labour/Industrial Relations and Productivity, 2004:6).

Respondents from Fiji's Labour Ministry further maintain that social dialogue constitutes the basis of development. Foreign direct investment, they further add, is also contingent on a host location with low levels of industrial disputes. This postulates the need for an agreed labour reform policy, which would allow productivity and national economic development. However current efforts to re-establish the Tripartite Forum have been hampered by disagreements between the two national trade union centres, (FTUC and Fiji Islands Council of Trade Unions) on the proposed membership composition.

The ILO has identified 5 areas that confront tripartism and social dialogue in Fiji's context:

- The identification of scope and areas for social dialogue (employment, labour relations, human resource development, working conditions etc).
- Development of institutional capacity of constituents to maintain effective social dialogue at a reasonable standard;
- Development of institutions and opportunities to promote tripartism and social dialogue at provincial, enterprise and sectoral level. Representation of groups for social dialogue namely youth, informal and agricultural sectors are other areas for development;
- Recognition, promotion of common understanding and political support for social dialogue;
- Social dialogue between tripartite, bipartite partners and other groups such as civil society institutions, public opinion through referendums. It is pivotal that bipartite/tripartite institutions identify the important social/labour issues for dialogue and consensus building.

6.3 Social Protection

According to Fiji's Decent Work Agenda (2004) the coverage of social protection in Fiji is uneven. Because workers in the informal sector remain vulnerable as FNPF membership in this sector is on a voluntary basis. In terms of social protection, the only consistent form present in Fiji is the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) scheme. A compulsory superannuation scheme (governed under the *FNPF ACT)* for formal sector employees. This scheme is also on offer to a wide cross section of the labour force – albeit on a voluntary basis. Contribution for the formal sector is on a 50-50 basis, estimated at 8 percent of salary contribution by employers and members.

The ILO constitution recognises the need for social protection. Its focus is on adequacy of protection especially for the vulnerable sectors of society (ILO, 2002; Prasad, 1998). Fiji has a minimum wage legislation that has been enacted, but not implemented. There is also a poverty alleviation pension, which is pitched at around 60 FJD per month. Unemployment benefits are non-existent – thereby the unemployed rely on extended family safety nets and informal sector in times of unemployment. Based on field survey results those in the ICT sectors are generally much better protected in this regard. This also applies to those in the less skilled ICT areas (medium/larger firms) – who in some cases, through union member ship secure credit union and other social benefits. However this security does not extend to

less skilled ICT workers, in smaller non-unionised firms. A notable point is that those in the highly skilled ICT intensive industries enjoy additional benefits through special remuneration packages, due to their marketability, however this additional benefits remain uneven in Fiji's industries, due to financial constraints that most firms are faced with. Refer to Table 15 for an overview of remuneration levels by category. Table 16 outlines the ICT salary scales for specific job types.

Mean Annual Salary for Various Occupation Category in Fiji – 1998 **Table 15**

Occupation Category	Mean Annual Gross Salary (in FJD)
Legislators, Senior Officers and Managers	$27,017
Professionals	$21,018
Technicians and Associate Professionals	$14,464
Clerks	$10,115
Service, Shop & Market Sales workers	$ 9,331
Skilled Agricultural& Fisheries Workers	$6,649
Craft and related workers	$12,015
Plant and Machinery Operators/Assemblers	$7,614
Elementary Occupations	$6,739
Armed Forces	$8,755
All Occupations	$15,703

Source: Bureau of Statistics' Annual Employment Survey -97-98

Normal mean hourly rate of wage earners $FJ 3.24 (gross) Mean annual salaried personnel $13,395.

Table 16. Estimated Gross Salary for Specific Work Levels ICT

Position/Type of work	Lower Scale in (FJD)	Upper Scale in (FJD)
Managers of Operations	$20,000	$40,000
Supervisors	$15,000	$30,000
Network Administrators	$20,000	$30,000
Senior Programmers	$15,000	$30,000
Junior Programmers	$8,000	$15,000
Technicians	$8,000	$15,000
Receptionists/ Keyboard Operators	$5,000	$10,000

Source: Bureau of Statistics Annual Employment Survey (1997-98)

The above are based on 1998 rates. The current wage rates have increased by an average of 5,000 FJD per level of employment. A notable point from field survey responses was the unevenness in wage level distribution in ICT enabled firms. The larger firm (Westpac) actually had lower remuneration rates for skilled ICT positions. This is despite salary levels being based on wage recommendations, from business consulting firm – Coopers and Lybrand. The lower rates paid by Westpac could account for the high turnover and challenges in recruitment of skilled staff. However this phenomenon was also evident within government entities, where wage rates were well below market rates and was reported as one of the major factors in resignation/emigration levels.

The commonality between these segmented entities, were delegated autonomy. Both organisations faced constraints as financing/recruitment decisions were made by an external authority/parent organisation. With government entities, ministerial budgetary shortfalls and decisions has had an impact on further development of the ICT areas. While with Westpac the Australian head-office constantly reaffirms a focus on cost-cutting. This is resulting in staff levels (35 positions) reduction by 2005.The rationale offered through respondents is that the Fiji (Pacific Banking) Branch only accounts for two per cent of overall Westpac business.

Overall most of the smaller/medium firms also face financial constraints which impedes skilled workforce retention (through premium/comparable remuneration) and the further development of ICT capacity.

Rates Specific to Call Centres

Rates for current call centre operations in Telecommunications and Banking and Finance sectors. These rates include the OET (On-Target-Earnings) for full time equivalent staff.

Telecommunications Sector: Manager - $35k to $40k; Supervisors - $25k to $30k
Agents/Operators - $12.5k to $17.5k
Banking and Finance Sector: Manager - $30k onwards; Supervisors - $25k - $29k
Agents/Operators – for simple routine tasks, $9k to $14k
for complex tasks which require product knowledge and some level of decision making, $14k to $19k.

Source: Reserve Bank of Fiji Quarterly Review (2002)

In recent years, public sector wage negotiations have been a problematic area in Fiji. Most negotiations have resulted in an impasse and referred to arbitration processes. The current moves by Fiji's government to base salary increases predominantly on productivity has been a basis of contention between some major public sector unions. This is despite an agreement between social partners (after the 2000 coup) to link wage increments to productivity and merit. Trade union respondents however maintain that the disagreement is over the formulation/implementation of the performance management systems (currently in place for senior public sector management only) for non management staff. The union's concern is for a system that is deemed equitable/ transparent and sustainable long-term. This is an imperative in a context with no social security safety nets and high unemployment levels.

Finally, efforts are being to engage an ILO expert to examine social security legislation, specifically the *FNPF Act* – to identify additional areas of coverage. The ACT may also be modified to cater for mandatory payment for employees, regardless of unemployment benefit scheme, redundancy provisions and length of service. A provision for medical/health coverage and the informal sector may also be incorporated.

6.4 Safe Work

The Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (N0.155) advocates national policies on OHS. An objective of this convention is to prevent health risks and injury in the work environment. Elements of risks indicated by the ILO (2002) are: repetitive tasks, long hours, psychological pressure and exposure to toxic substances. The results of this study indicate

varying degrees of health risks, in the ICT sector. A predominant response for those engaged in repetitive tasks and shift work were: muscle fatigue that affects mobility and eye strain. Fiji has OHS legislation (*Occupational Health and Safety at Work Act, 1996)* in place, which is vigorously enforced through the Labour Ministry's OHS inspectors. Current reports state that annual workplace accidents have decreased from 1,117 in 1997 to 780 cases in 2003. Signifying a 15-25 per cent decrease within a 7 year period. Future targets for labour inspectors according to the report, would be to reduce accidents in high risk industries and small to medium enterprises. OHS training sessions totalled 437 covering more than 1150 workplaces nationwide – from the period 1998-2003. However in-house staff awareness training and management responsibility building programmes, need to be harnessed to allow effectiveness of OHS provisions at enterprise level. Insufficient OHS trained personnel (to cost effectively implement organisational OHS management systems) at the enterprise level was highlighted as a drawback to enforcement of regulations.

On a country wide basis, a large number of workers in the rural and urban informal areas have low access to social protection and continue to face safety hazards. Moreover workplace accidents are relatively high in the manufacturing, construction and agricultural sectors. Agricultural workers face daily exposure to pesticides and in some cases herbicides from mill run offs into waterways. Exposure is further exacerbated due to ineffective training on mixing/application techniques and inadequate information on safety aspects.

The Ministry of Labour further attributes shortfalls in enforcement of OHS standards, due to lack of resources to allow effective enforcement and awareness building on benefits, rights, liabilities and general coverage of the OHS legislation amongst the labour force. Current challenges faced by the Labour Ministry are: the shortage of labour/OHS inspectors to enforce OHS and general labour standards; the need for more effective training programmes for inspectors. This would facilitate more targeted enforcement and public awareness programmes. An observation made during fieldwork is the lack of basic ICT tools, e.g. internet connectivity within the Labour Ministry. These are reserved for the more senior personnel. This setback would surely hamper information upgrade/sharing through international/local links and have negative implications for HRD
(Ministry of Labour & Industrial Relations/Productivity, 2004)

In terms of national strategies, the Fiji government is currently engaged in extensive OHS training, awareness building, with efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of OHS committees. This is to allow compliance with the *OHS Act 1996,* and a safer work environment (2004:8) Preventative OHS measures outlined by the ILO are: protective equipment, safety education, design of work flow, and limiting participation of vulnerable groups (ILO, 2002).

In the ICT sector – fieldwork observation and interviews revealed that a major portion of OHS related health risks are not readily reported to employers and supervisors. Respondents had a tendency to trivialise these ailments. This perhaps explains the moderate level of OHS related compensation claims for the sector – as highlighted in the table below.

Table 17: Compensation Claims by Industry in 2001 and 2002 (Fiji Labour Ministry, 2002)

Industry	**2001**	**2002**
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	60	54
Mining, Quarrying	36	36

Manufacturing	210	232
Electricity, Water, Gas	4	11
Building, Construction	54	63
Wholesale, Retail Trade, Restaurants, Hotels	78	103
Transport, Storage & Communication	**88**	**79**
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Business Services	**22**	**38**
Community, Social, Personal Services	49	57
Activities not defined	12	12
Public Service	185	143
Total	**798**	**828**

Factory inspections for the period 2002: (a) Inspections – 28 (b) Follow-ups 13 (c) OHS Audits – 35 (d) Customer Services – 24 (e) Registration of Chemicals – 29) (f) Assessment of Chemicals – 31 (g) Follow-up on Notices Issued – 0

Finally a sexual harassment national guideline is to be developed in consultation with stakeholders and a legislative base is to be facilitated through the current Industrial Relations Bill 2004. The Ministry of Labour regards sexual harassment as an occupational hazard that infringes on workplace rights, EEO laws and could raise productivity issues. However there have been some reservations raised by some quarters in Fiji, as to the legal definition or distinction between unwanted attention and traditional banter or (tauvu bonding); which is generally acceptable within the indigenous Fijian community. The tauvu bond is a very personalised (could entail an affectionate hug) form of greeting usually between a male and female from rival confederacies This sought of perceived exceptions would therefore pose challenges for the enforcement of the impending sexual harassment legislation.

2.6 Evaluation

The effects of globalisation and the development of a skilled/knowledge based economy has made the focus on decent work imperative, in order to secure economic growth with social equity. Whereby women and men are able to secure employment and income, and skill retooling with dignity, through conditions of equity and freedom.

Fiji currently has a high unemployment rate of 14.1 per cent. This figure would be further exacerbated due to the current trend of an annual 17,000 job seekers and formal sector employment opportunities of around 9,000 positions. Under such circumstances, the Fiji government has had to focus on the development of small to medium enterprise, to stimulate employment creation. A decent work agenda (based on ILO recommendations) has also been formulated to secure development parity/equity, within the formal and informal sectors. This careful mix of labour market and social/economic policies is a response to drawbacks that impede the development of Fiji's labour market these are: women continue to be marginalised in terms of formal sector employment; equitable wage rates and representation in peak decision – making bodies; uneven social/safety protection coverage between the formal/informal sectors; the miss-match between skill requirements of industries/informal sector and general schools/tertiary institutions curriculum/programmes; and the general lack of timely labour market data and employment placement services.

In terms of the ICT sector the general consensus is that there is a shortage in tertiary level facilities and personnel to enable the formulation of quality skill building programmes, and in effective in-house training programmes. The hiring of expatriate personnel to fill current gaps may need to be carefully examined by the authorities, as this is a band-aid solution and impedes the development of local human resources. Comparable remuneration/conditions within industries and international counterparts would also need to be considered; to alleviate the current 'brain drain' phenomenon associated with the skilled ICT and professional sectors. The objectives of the *Telecommunications Act* (which is grounded in the promotion of cost-effective/efficient services and accessibility to users) would also need to be implemented. High levels of trade disputes also has to be re examined by the social partners, as this is an indication of status of industrial stability – a pre-requisite to investment decisions. Remedial actions in these areas would help stimulate investment and enable development in the sector, stimulating employment creation and skill deepening opportunities.

Overall those in the higher skill ICT areas enjoy job satisfaction, employment security and better conditions of employment. But these conditions have generally not transferred to lower skilled personnel. Trade unions continue to face challenges in organising the smaller firms, where there is a concentration of ICT employment. This consequently has decent work implications for less skilled ICT personnel. The initial expansion of ICT employment concentrated in the less skilled sectors (with the computerisation of work systems) however, the slow uptake of skilled personnel is due to variables earlier discussed. The next chapter presents the results of the field survey, which gives a clearer picture of Fiji's ICT and decent work issues.

7. Overview of ICT/Decent Work Survey Results

One of the specific objectives of this study was to survey the impact of ICT on human resource development using the ILO's decent work statistical indicators. Fiji's decent work agenda recently formulated by Fiji's Ministry for Labour & Productivity provided baseline data on the future trends in the area. It provided a comparative base in terms of the effectiveness of emerging labour practices/standards in dealing with the needs and challenges for the new economy.

The survey examined general and firm based industrial relations issues that have implications for decent work using ILO's statistical indicators. This is in terms of salary movements, employment security; health and safety issues at work, patterns of employment growth challenges/ opportunities and related themes.

The ten firms selected represented the telecommunications, financial, business, information technology services, tertiary education provider, public sector, and the media (print). These firms were selected due to levels of ICT usage and size (sampling requirements of equal representation between small and medium firms – these firms dominate Fiji's industries). However the sample also included Westpac Banking Corporation – a larger firm, in order to allow a comparative base with data from the small and medium firms. The survey questionnaires were designed to provide data on past, current and future employment

requirements, emigration/resignation statistics in the industry, skill levels and opportunities for skill enhancement, rate of social protection, job satisfaction and gender composition.

Ten firms responded to the survey questionnaires. Which were boosted with face- to- face interviews, with selected personnel. The sample used is not fully representative of Fiji's industrial sector, as tourism and manufacturing are not represented. However, the primary and secondary data do give clear indications of developments in the sector and implications for decent work across a wide spectrum of Fiji's industries. Out of the ten firms surveyed five (three government services departments) were locally owned companies, three were foreign owned, one regional institution and one other a partially foreign owned but with Fiji government controlling shares.

In terms of unionisation rate, four out of the ten firms sampled were not unionised. Within the six unionised firms – an emerging trend was for highly skilled respondents not having union membership. The rationale expressed in most cases was that their current individual contracts/conditions and bonus arrangements – adequately compensated for non unionised benefits. However staff that use ICT at the lower levels, in medium sized firms (customer service, user assistants, secretaries etc) were generally unionised, and found work to be routine and repetitive. In some instances there is job rotation – but employees are then relegated back to original duties. This does result in high error levels and in some instances job dissatisfaction. However 90 per cent agreed that ICT has improved task/performance, made work easier, no skills have been lost (except the ability to spell and manually write neatly).

On employment structure, half of the firms surveyed had predominantly permanent staff employed. The exceptions were Fiji Sun – casual full-time comprising of five males and 10 females. The current numbers now stand at 12. Post Fiji (MIS) also had 2 casual staff/male and female. And MegaCom Technologies had two male employees on a casual part-time basis. Bureau of Statistics had the largest number of casual staff – with 40 employed on casual full-time conditions. The casual staff members were employed mainly at the low skill levels.

ICT staffing levels (in proportion to entire organisations workforce) appeared low in six of the sampled organisations. This was attributed to non availability of the higher skill staff, low rate of investment in IT sections, and in some cases due to the high costs of maintaining and attracting skilled staff and slow progress in computerisation of tasks/work systems.

In the case of Westpac Banking Corporation delays in ICT staffing uptake was due to the lack of autonomy faced by the banks personnel department. Most staffing decisions are still made by the head-office in Australia. This deference in decision making also impacts basic ICT tools capabilities (e.g. computers). Through the current practise of using reconditioned equipment that has been rendered obsolete, at the Australian establishment. This affects connectivity, customer service and general performance of equipment used by staff, and is a source of frustration according to some respondents. Another constraint to internet connectivity was attributed to Telecom Fiji's poor quality lines and server maintenance issues that affect speed of transmission in remote areas.

On forecasted future and current employee requirements, the only significant increase in forecasted employee levels was for Webmasters. The current in-house shortage of semi skilled and skilled staff accounts for the forecasted 55 vacancies for the 2004/05 period. All 10 firms surveyed agree that the biggest challenge faced in terms of ICT growth within the organisation, was the weak pool of highly skilled IT personnel within Fiji's labour market. Apart from this the high labour mobility rate within the IT sector was also considered a drain on resources. Westpac especially highlighted that most IT graduates use the organisation as a launch pad towards increasing their marketability. Respondents however maintained that this was due to the relatively low starting salary package (18,000 FJD) for graduates and (25,000 FJD) for those with experience. Moreover, the lack of investment in IT capability development within the sampled organisations was also viewed as a constraint to future ICT employability. But this slow automation rate of day- to- day functions also extends to most firms within Fiji's industries. And which may contribute to the retarded development of less skilled ICT employees.
These factors are also linked to increasing emigration levels for the higher skilled segment of the labour market.

The following table provides and overview of Firms surveyed, by Previous/Current and Anticipated Employment levels.

Table 18

Full-Time Employees	**Previous Employees June: 2002**			**Current Employees June 2003**			**Anticipated Employees June 2004/2005**			
	Males	**Females**	**Ttl**	**Males**	**Females**	**Ttl**	**Males**	**Females**	**Ttl**	
Fintel	**59**	**17**	**76**	**59**	**17**	**76**	**66**	**18**	**84**	
Westpac	**181**	**192**	**383**	**181**	**192**	**383**	**Reduction to 350**			
Fiji Sun (media)	**65**	**33**	**98**	**58**	**27**	**85**	**3**	**9**	**97**	
USP (ITS)	**31**	**07**	**38**	**34**	**10**	**44**	**Established positions filled**			
Bureau Stats			**70**			**110**	**Total 111 – 1 IT vacancy**			
Post Fiji (MIS)	**8**	**3**	**11**	**9**	**4**	**13**	**18**			
Megacom Tech	**9**	**2**	**11**	**3**	**2**	**5**	**5 vacancies**			
Judiciary Dept (ICT)	**2**			**2**			**4 more positions available**			
Home Finance	**26**	**28**	**54**	**24**	**32**	**56**	**Total of 62**			
Webmasters	**28**	**15**	**43**	**35**	**15**	**50**	**Total of 105**			

7.1 Survey Results: General Background-Conditions of Employment and Compositions of ICT and Qualified Staff.

Westpac Bank (private entity, 100 per cent foreign ownership) has five IT staff. These are mainly programmer positions. Three of which have IT degrees and two have diplomas. Trouble shooting services are outsourced to the Software/IT services firm COMPAQ AWA. Respondents reaffirmed that there is room for growth in the IT sector – but the constant inter-firm movements, and inability to attract and maintain highly skilled staff is a constraint to future employment expansion.

The overall unionisation rate for Westpac staff was around 75 per cent. And who are affiliated to the Association of Banks Employees Union. However those in the upper senior

management and core IT staff were not part of this union. OHS guidelines have been implemented by the organisation (and OHS officer) and some training has been provided for supervisors. But despite this, OHS stipulations (on first aid kit contents and other equipment), are not strictly followed due to constraints posed by decisions of the bank's Australian head-office.

Overall respondents from Westpac maintain that some ICT firm specific training is provided in-house, new skills learnt at all levels and promotions for senior staff fairly regular, whilst junior staff also have opportunities to apply for pending vacancies. So in terms of career development the bank appears to offer re-tooling prospects for staff, especially for those in skilled and management positions. But in terms of the specific impact of ICT on decent work 90 per cent of the respondents indicate that there has been no significant improvement in terms of work security, adequate earnings, safe work and growth in core IT departments. This implies that the low rate of ICT development within Westpac has hindered the benefits of ICT to permeate all segments of Westpac's workforce.

Most of **USP's Information Technology Services (regional institute)** employees have tertiary qualifications (BSc) in IT and ICT is a central focus of job description. This extends right down to the user assistants – with the exception of secretaries/cleaners. And over a third of staff -mainly senior staff, also have higher degrees in their areas of expertise. Respondents here also highlight the drain on human resources through immigration that has an impact on senior staffing levels. However at the junior levels, there is a ready supply of USP graduates who are usually recruited as a 'stop gap measure' which allows the achievement of the departments core activities. This entails: support and provision of computer facilities to university administration and schools; advise/training for staff on use of computer equipment and software; installation of all computer software and networks. So the use of ICT is a basic device for ITS's entire staff towards meeting the discussed sectional functions. In terms of OHS training, respondents affirm that this has not been provided by the department. There were complaints about eye problems and sore arms, but was dismissed as part of the job. And these aliments were therefore not perceived as an OHS issue. Those at secretarial levels responded that their tasks are basically routine and repetitive. And there is no real avenue for skill deepening, unless they pursue further units (allowed to take one unit per semester, exempt of fees, within USP – 10 units for a diploma qualification and 20 for a degree) in their own time. This has implications for enhancing capacities for employment in terms of marketability of those in less skilled areas.

Unionisation rate amongst the more skilled staff were relatively low, despite the existence of a USP Senior Staff Association. The general feeling was that there was no need to be part of the association. However at the user assistant and secretarial levels, respondents were members of the USP Intermediate and Junior Staff Association. And all staff members have undergone OHS training. However those at user assistant/secretarial level have had OHS related ailments e.g. eye fatigue and sore arms. But not reported as an OHS related condition. The general work environment despite having adequate ventilation appeared cramped and not conducive to innovative requirements of ICT related duties.

Salary levels for more junior staff were considered low by industry standards – according to respondents. This has implications on decent work therefore and implies that ICT benefits in this regard accrue to the more senior staff, a large number of whom are expatriates.

There are no short-term plans for recruitment in the area as all established positions are currently staffed. However with the current expansion of the USP campus (to the former Central Queensland University Campus) there would have to be contingent staff expansion within IT services. But there are constraints to future development for ICT employment uptake, mainly due to limited funding – according to senior respondents. Which means that enhanced employment conditions/decent work at ITS/ USP is not driven by its specific focus on ICT but is contingent on the development of the institution and market expansion. Overall the implications of ICT on decent work have generally resulted in an increase in individual contracts. This has an impact on social protection/work security for those in the higher skilled sector. Renewals of contracts are based on yearly appraisals by sectional heads and ongoing staffing requirements of the section.

Webmasters (private entity, 100 per cent locally ownership) - which operates under the Review Group provides publishing, retail, web design, and e-commerce (ICT) business services. The proprietor of this organisation established that tasks like accounting, payroll and internal communications were now computerised. And has improved production/services. However further computerisation would later eventuate with inventory controls, staff training/reporting and retail point of sale.

In terms of IT staff, this comprised of seven males and one female. Two of these have their BA or BSc degrees and the other has a post graduate qualification. The other five have done courses at Fiji National Training Council (FNTC) (government endorsed technical training institute). With staffing level forecasts: the current requirements is for 10 highly skilled, five semi-skilled and 20 with lower skills. By 2005 these would increase to 20 skilled, five semi-skilled and 30 lower skilled staff. But recruitment challenges are in the attracting of highly skilled university graduates.

Those with ICT skills but without qualification are easier to recruit. However a worker respondent articulated that the organisation does not offer a competitive salary package for university graduates, which hinders recruitment at that level. In terms of skill deepening, the worker respondents (webmasters) admitted that on going training (and use of ICT within the organisation) have enabled the acquiring of new skills, made work easier and have not rendered previous skills obsolete. But respondents who deal with customer services rated their duties repetitive, with little room for advancement. In terms of OHS training this has not eventuated, but there were no complaints of OHS related conditions. And none of the staff are unionised as most didn't feel the need to be organised. Overall the responses here were that there is a huge potential for ICT growth within the organisation. But the challenges are due to the higher skill personnel shortage and access to capital.

Fiji Sun (print media, 100 per cent locally owned) – All employees at this firm deal with ICT on a daily basis. However just two male and one female employee have IT qualifications. This is not the usual compliment of skilled IT staff, as five were recently lost through emigration and inter firm movements, according to our source. This firm is not unionised, no OHS training and responses maintain there are no OHS related injury/ailments to date. Generally respondents articulated that ICT has made tasks easier, reduced operational costs,

new skills learnt and has enabled systems efficiency. However, evidence of work intensification has resulted in the reduction of staffing numbers at the lower levels, and viewed by employees as a drawback of ICT proliferation. Some ICT training is provided within Fiji Sun, mainly in web design and development of in-house software. This would require additional IT skilled staff uptake in the short- term.

Drawbacks to ICT growth within this organisation was said to be the shortage of qualified highly skilled end users. This has been a pervasive theme throughout this study.

Fiji International Telecommunications Limited (controlling local shares) (FINTEL) Operates Fiji's international telecommunications services and is 51 per cent state owned. Most staff at FINTEL deal with ICT, however just two male employees are highly skilled but have no formal qualifications. All staff members are on a permanent full time basis and the firm has a collective agreement with the Fiji Public Service Association and Telecommunications Employees Association. There has been no recruitment of IT staff for the last 5 years – but there are plans to expand the sector within the next two years. Immediate additional requirements are for three highly skilled ICT personnel. Challenges for recruitment of ICT staff within the organisation are: the lack of highly skilled/university graduates labour pool within the industry, at the national level, the constant 'brain drain' associated with this category of employees. The lack of skills has had an impact on the quality of ICT support provided by FINTEL. Moreover, infrastructural deficiencies and high costs were seen as major obstacles in the proliferation of ICT in Fiji. The prioritising of continued infrastructure development and sufficient funding for the firm could alleviate current high costs and service drawbacks, according to senior respondents.

There have been no in-house training within this firm – in the past but there are current plans for local and overseas attachments for earmarked IT staff. The advantages of ICT were attributed to efficient processes. But the lack of general employee skills hampers the understanding of processes and impacts customer service delivery. No OHS training has been provided within the organisation, and there have been no cases of IT related health problems e.g. sore arms and hands and eye problems.

Respondents with higher skill levels (engineers – deal with IT/data transmission/internet technology) found tasks to be challenging/ stimulating and have union membership. And added that some IT training is in the pipeline and that skills gained were too numerous to mention. However old skills of using manual processes and basic writing abilities were being lost in the process. Growth in IT and promotion/training opportunities would eventuate in the short-term due to the current update in firm's technological requirements.

But job satisfaction enjoyed by skilled personnel has not transferred to the secretarial/clerical staffs (that have some IT qualification from PACSOFT Fiji – but no IT or OHS training in house). Despite the efficiencies gained, work was deemed repetitive and intensified. Basic computer skills were acquired but at the expense of self-confidence gained through personal abilities in operation/evaluation of manual systems.

Bureau of Statistics (public sector entity – conducts census/surveys compilation maintenance of national statistical records) – senior/skilled staff within this entity are free to be organised under public sector unions. But most respondents reaffirmed their non-

union status out of choice. However those in more junior positions are affiliated to Fiji Public Service Association. Just under a third of the workforce here are under casual full-time conditions. The senior staff respondent (government statistician) maintained that ICT has helped save manpower, reduce errors on repetitive tasks, and allowed quality/timely outputs. There has been no OHS training provided within the organisation, and some respondents complained of eye and muscle fatigue (sore arms) conditions. The employees are now provided with protective screen covers for their computers.

In terms of progression/retraining opportunities, the further computerisation of the accounts section would need a further uptake of IT staff. Currently there are eight ICT staff members that have tertiary qualifications. These comprise of two male staff, one with post graduate qualification and the other with a diploma in ICT and two female staff the first has a diploma in ICT and the second short courses in ICT from Fiji National Training Council. This organisation has lost six skilled ICT staff recently four through emigration and two through inter firm movements locally. The challenges faced in terms of recruitment are the limited availability of highly skilled ICT employees (without formal qualifications) and university graduates. Progression within the organisation for ICT employees without skills was rated as relatively low, by the senior respondent. A notable point here is that most staff members are without access to internet facilities; this hinders data collection, and negative implications for less skilled staff in terms of progression and re-skilling.

Post Fiji (MIS – 100 per cent local ownership) – The MIS department maintains Fiji's postal services systems. There is a collective agreement with the sectional trade union. However all respondents highlighted their non-collective status taken, out of choice. The rationale was they were confident in their performance, and ability to negotiate suitable contracts. Work systems were considered interesting and challenging (analyse software/simplify and train staff accordingly). In-house training programmes are conducted on a regular basis, and promotional opportunities rated high by worker respondents. Skill building opportunities were mainly in areas of business analysis, staff training and programming. In the area of health and safety respondents have undergone some OHS training and no occupational hazards/ related ailments were reported.

The current composition by gender/skill category (detailed in table 14) shows staff concentration at the higher/semi skill levels. This may explain their confidence in securing personalised contracts and adequate social benefits. There are five male and a lone female staff within the higher skill category. The semi-skill level comprises of four male and three female staff. Future staffing requirements would be in both the skilled and semi-skilled areas. This would eventuate with current plans to upgrade current systems in par with introduced technology; and with impending computerisation of the parcels delivery and philatelic sections. The in-house training programmes focus on data systems and software maintenance training. ICT generally, has benefited the organisation through efficient/systemised customer services and added security to postal procedures.

Employer respondents stated drawbacks to ICT development within the organisation as ineffective management decisions and financial constraints. The worker respondents placed growth constraints as the lack of qualified tutors for staff training. National technical/infrastructure support was deemed to be adequate in meeting user requirements.

Home Finance (100 per cent foreign ownership -Personal home financing, business and small loans schemes) – This firm is not unionised. All respondents maintain that ICT has improved task efficiency, enabled new skills (typing speed, excel, power point programmes, customised templates). Promotion within the lower skill divisions – from cashier to loans consultant, respondents have BA degree/USP. There are some ICT career advancement prospects within the firm. This is due to technological updates and plans for the computerisation of remaining work processes. On OHS training, employees have undergone in-house training

Employee respondents regarded their current work as monotonous/repetitive, and have had OHS related ailments, in terms of sore arms and eye strain. These were not taken up with management, and respondent felt employment security would be at stake. The need to have individualised e-mail and internet access was also aired (only senior managers have direct access). The current practise is for personnel email being directed to the IT department (has 12 staff members, three female and nine male), which then vets mail and redirects to personnel internal mail network. A practise that impacts rights in the work place, skill deepening that could be gained from internet access.

In terms of organisational constraints to ICT development, drawbacks were articulated as lack of software support and ineffective software. At national level the constraints were due to lack of expertise/skilled IT graduates.

Ministry of Justice (Judiciary Government Services) – There are two male staff members within the judicial IT department. Two IT staff (with university qualifications) recently resigned to emigrate overseas. There are positions vacant for four skilled IT staff – but recruitment would depend on availability of funds. The IT manager has USP IT qualifications and deals with basic software/systems support. There has been no OHS training and respondents were not unionised out of choice. One of the respondents (senior level) was still on a temporary contract. And the challenges to growth in this firm (apart from funding constrains – major drawback within Fiji's civil service) was stated as the shortage of skilled ICT personnel in Fiji's current labour pool supply.

All respondents agree that ICT has simplified tasks and led to efficient record keeping of court proceedings. New skills have been learnt, but work at the less skilled levels were deemed repetitive and 'dead end' positions. Word processing related tasks predominated in these less skilled areas – with no opportunities towards skill deepening/re-tooling. This could be due to the slow rate of computerisation of core tasks within this firm. But there are plans to fully computerise all tasks, which would require additional ICT personnel. ICT training programmes were done (on an individual basis – self funded) through tertiary institutions in the past. There are plans for departmental/donor agencies funding of short/ ICT courses – offered through various institutions. Staff within the higher and semi skill (university qualifications) levels, are rated as having the best advancement prospects within this government department. This reaffirms the sense of frustration expressed by those at the lower skill levels. And is one of the overriding themes in this report.

MegaCom Technologies (100 per cent local family ownership -Computer sales service, repair, network support) This private sector organisation is not unionised. On the OHS front, employees have received training and some respondents have had ailments such

as eyestrain. All respondents however stated that ICT has made task easier (invoicing, job tracking), reduced error rate and enabled efficiency. Tasks were rated as interesting/challenging and respondents affirm that new skills have been learnt, without the loss of old skills. Employees placed constraints to organisational growth, as financial reasons and inadequate external advanced IT training facilities.

The IT section comprises of five staff, two female and 3 male employees. Qualifications range from short courses in IT to one with a certificate in ICT and a further two with diploma qualifications. Career advancement opportunities were rated as good – for both male and female skilled employees. Currently there are vacancies for five highly skilled IT positions. There have been recent resignations, five (diploma/BA degree) have emigrated, and a further 5 have left due to inter firm movements. Challenges to recruitment at MegaCom are the sourcing of highly skilled/experienced personnel and university graduates. Moreover challenges to in-house ICT development were stated as, the exorbitant costs of external ICT tertiary training for staff. Some in-house training has been provided in areas of networking, hardware (general servicing) and programming. The general feeling that emanated from this particular survey was employment insecurity. This may be due to the overall non-unionised status and the level of staff ICT qualifications, which consequently has implications for staff marketability.

8. Conclusions And The Way Forward For ICT And Decent Work In Fiji.

As outlined in this report decent work drawbacks were a feature of Fiji's industrial environment prior to the widespread use of ICT after 1995. However based on this study's survey results, currently, within most ICT enabled organisations there are no substantial evidence of job losses. Instead the challenges faced by these enterprises are the recruitment and retention of core highly skilled personnel. And is due to the ICT associated skill drain through emigration/ inter firm movements and the shortage of highly skilled ICT employees in the labour market. A phenomenon that is prevalent in this sector. This is also a contributor to the lower up-take of personnel in the higher skill areas. Two other key areas have emerged as impediments to ICT development in Fiji, these are: inadequate skill acquisition within industries and a mismatch between formal tertiary qualifications and specific ICT industry requirements.

Financial constraints have also emerged as another major constraint to the continued development of this sector. This has impeded technological development, training and the uptake of highly skilled ICT personnel within firms. Business sector respondents also attribute this constraint as a factor that impedes on competitive/comparable salaries for ICT skilled personnel. And also inadvertently contributes to the high emigration and inter firm movement levels. The lack of incentives in Fiji's ICT market also needs to be addressed, as it impacts the retention and attraction of highly skilled ICT trainers, to develop programmes in advanced soft-ware engineering and programming. This is crucial for skill deepening and effective development of the sector.

Those within core (skilled) ICT sectors in such (irrespective of firm size) enterprises appear to have generally experienced significant improvement in working conditions, training/skill re-tooling and employment standards. Their marketability has enabled choices and the

confidence/security to negotiate individualised conditions. This was evident though the survey, whereby skilled respondents were generally not unionised – out of choice. These benefits do not appear to have spread more widely within such enterprises. A notable point from survey results is the male domination of the skilled/value-added ICT sector. This implies that there is a gender based digital divide within this segment of the ICT sector. But this appears to be market driven under the conditions of lack of supply of IT trained staff. However, this raises equity issues and the distributive requirements of the decent work agenda. And is an anomaly that would have to be monitored through Fiji's impending EEO legislation/policy environment. As the ICT sector could offer the potential in favouring gender equality in industry, due to the knowledge content of work.

A significant amount of employment in the ICT sectors is in the semi/lower skilled areas, based on field data reports. Those at the lower skill levels, generally engage in repetitive tasks with slim chances of skill deepening. In cases where there has been some in-house training, these were predominantly job specific based training which impedes skill re-tooling and general marketability prospects. The nature of tasks have also rendered the less skilled susceptible to OHS related ailments. Remedial action in this regard is slow due to lack of in-house skilled OHS trained personnel. Moreover the smaller enterprises are generally not organised, (and face job security issues) which further raises social protection/dialogue issues for these employees. It is in this segment, or end of the market that social protection, safe and decent work principles are severely challenged.

Work intensification was also evident in most enterprises (small, medium, large) sampled, especially in the less skilled sectors. And the larger enterprise Westpac is going to engage in staff reduction at the lower levels, in the short-term. This is to comply with instructions from the parent organisation in Australia. Both private and public sector unions would therefore need to engage in tripartite negotiations/ with employers/state in order to foster new partnerships – due to these emerging issues that have negative implications for decent work. The casualisation of work was less prevalent based on survey outcomes. Four firms had casual contracts which were concentrated at the lower skill levels. This has implications for employment security, adequate earnings and social protection. The government department which had a significant portion of full-time casual employees attributed this to funding constraints. This is an area that would also have to be closely monitored to avoid the continued deterioration in conditions for those in the lower skill levels. Public sector unions could actively negotiate with Fiji's Public Service Commission on up-skilling/multiskilling opportunities (through the current reform process) for those under casual contracts. This would not only enhance productivity but enable both marketable skills and a greater degree of job security and social protection for those under this category. Moreover State induced incentives for both the private/public sectors (national ICT training programmes) in the form of tax breaks and budgetary subsidies – could bolster training (work experience/mentoring programmes) and development opportunities for new graduates/less/skilled workforce in the ICT sector. Fiji's government presently offers lucrative tax incentives to corporate organisations for sporting sponsorships and to foreign investors. A similar endeavour could ensure the full participation of social partners in Fiji's human resource development programme.

Just four of the firms were not unionised, yet the benefits of ICT development have not been equitably distributed throughout all levels - in all ten ICT enabled firms surveyed. This

implies that the trade union movement would need to redraw strategies that would better protect those at lower skill levels, irrespective of challenges based on the size of the enterprise. Especially as ICT development has been earmarked by Fiji's conservative government as an advocated development policy. This presents an opportunity for Fiji's unions to gain credibility in this sector through novel effective organisation/social protection and HR development strategies. The Trade Unions are currently still too focussed on traditional social protection and collective bargaining issues. And not adequately sensitised to the specific needs of the ICT sector. An emerging issue within the ICT industry is the need for skills formation. Trade unions could proactively initiate industry based training programmes through Fiji's Institute of Technology and Training & Productivity Institute. Specific ICT based OHS training for union shop stewards and labour officers could also enhance enterprise based control in this regard. This would broaden the current range of member services that Fiji's trade unions provide and heighten the relevance of trade unions within knowledge based industries. Employers in turn would need to focus on industry/national HRD training needs. As opposed to short-term firm specific training currently in practise. This would allow both trade unions and employers to be fully conversant with the training and social protection needs of the sector – which should be rigorously articulated/endorsed through the Labour Advisory Board and incorporated into Fiji's current decent work agenda/state's human resource development policies. This would strengthen labour market systems and institutions through social dialogue and a sense of joint ownership. And would thus enable a development programme that is needs specific with social equity, an overriding aim of the decent work agenda.

Finally, the results of this survey indicate that ICT development despite some discussed benefits has generally had a negative impact on decent work for those in the lower skilled ICT sectors. But this is a phenomenon that is not just peculiar to the ICT sector in Fiji. As most vulnerable employees within other sectors, have, and continue to face decent work issues, even prior to the proliferation of ICT in Fiji. Fiji's garment/agricultural sectors were formed on the backs of a cheap labour force, amongst other incentives/preferential conditions. But current efforts (policies and programmes on HRD, decent work and employment creation) by Fiji's government and social partners as discussed earlier in this report could help restore the major imbalances in this area. With the skilled ICT sector, the labour market in this small island state appears to be quite complicated. There are internal labour market questions within ICT enabled enterprises with respect to incomes comparability that impacts labour retention and general financial constraints that impede skill deepening/training and relativities. There were also no codes of conduct or good practise for ICT employees in the sample. This is discouraging given that the sample is quite representative of the employment environment.

On the external side, the high costs of ICT services and monopoly status of current service providers have also emerged as a major constraint to investment and development of Fiji's ICT sector. The legislative provisions under the *Telecommunications Act* must be enforced to correct this major constraint to ICT development. Fiji's government is currently endeavouring to gain legal avenues through which Telecoms exclusive license can be amicably revoked. The field-work data/responses do show some broader relevance to understanding national developmental constraints and opportunities. Can national ICT training and communications infrastructure create and sustain new opportunities (for example the recent influx of off-shore call centres, accounting processing units etc)? Will

ICT deepening be further constrained by the present rate of ICT emigration? These factors would have to be addressed through the relevant bodies, if Fiji is to meet the challenges and gain the benefits of ICT generated development.

The combined efforts of all stake-holders evident through the current decent work agenda, peak tripartite body (continued monitoring through the ILO) is the way forward to ensuring that ICT growth benefits are distributive, and contributes to both human and economic development. Unions/Employers and worker interest groups do need to be even more closely involved in recognising the special needs of this sector of employees. Additionally, ICT also needs to be more properly acknowledged as a key area for dialogue in tripartite consultations. Unless debates about specific and growing concerns begin to be aired more publicly, a slow slide of working conditions in the ICT sector may continue. This will harm Fiji's overall development prospects.

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