

WRITTEN QUESTION
MONDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2019

Written Question 200/2019:

Hon. Ratu Suliano Matanitobua to ask the Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development –

Can the Minister update Parliament on the progress made on squatter resettlement initiatives from 1 January 2009 to date, in particular, to list the settlements or communities that has been resettled, how many households have been resettled, the total number of individuals from each settlement, who have been resettled, and the community and locale where they have been resettled?

I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

Fiji is becoming highly urbanised due to the rural-urban drift and non-renewal of land leases. Fiji is the first Melanesian country to cross the symbolic demographic milestone of more than 50% of the population residing in cities and towns.

Non-renewal of land leases is the main reason for rise in informal settlements in urban and semi-urban areas. According to recent data collection by the Ministry of Housing and Community Development (“Ministry”), with assistance from iTaukei Land Trust Board and the Ministry of Lands, there are more than 300 informal settlements in Fiji. The Ministry has the development lease for only 43 out of these 300 plus informal settlements

The Government has continued to invest in the Upgrade and Formalisation of Informal Settlements under two similar programmes – City Wide Upgrade and Upgrade of Town Wide Informal Settlements targeted towards informal settlements within State and iTaukei Land respectively. Both these programmes are in-situ upgrade programmes where development is carried out with minimum disturbance to the lifestyle of the settlers and with the ultimate objective of issuing a long term land tenure in fully serviced sub divisions. This is different from the approach of developing green field sites for resettlement of households.

The settlement upgrading work involves the upgrading of infrastructure amenities such as road, water, sewage, electricity, telephone, fire hydrants and drainage within the settlement and at the completion of the civil construction works, residents were issued with residential leases.

Development cost of Informal Settlements is significantly higher than the cost involved in developing a green field. This is mainly because of the need to minimise disturbance to

the existing structures and lifestyle of settlers in these areas. From past experiences with projects carried out and projects in progress, it is evident that this cost can be around 2 million to 10 million dollars. Considering the large and growing numbers of informal settlements, it is extremely challenging to continue to finance these development projects on an ongoing basis

From 2009 to date, the Ministry has completed upgrading works and formalised 5 informal settlements.

Settlements or communities that has been resettled and the number of Households benefited from the Programme

Details pertaining to five settlements upgraded and long term leases issued to families between the periods 2009 to date are as follows:

- (i) Bangladesh Subdivision in Nakasi resettled 60 households in 2010;
- (ii) Lakena Hill No 2 Subdivision in Nausori resettled 147 households in 2011;
- (iii) Vatoa Subdivision in Nasinu resettled 105 households 2011;
- (iv) Badrau Subdivision in Ba resettled 67 households in 2011; and
- (v) Omkar Subdivision in Nasinu resettled 83 households in 2017.

Accordingly, a total of 462 households have benefited from this Programme through the handing over of 99 year residential leases.

For financial year 2019-2020, two more settlements are ear marked for formalisation benefiting 183 households in total:

- (i) Cuvu in Sigatoka which will resettle 105 households; and
- (ii) Ledrusasa in Nadi which will resettle 78 households.

Civil works for Waidamudamu will be complete formalising land tenure for another 240 households. Civil works for Caubati stage 1 will continue in the new financial year, and engineering plans will be completed for Caubati stage 2 and 3, Wakanisila, Field 4, Sakoca, Tavela, Tore and Qauia. An additional 1,187 households will benefit from these development projects.

Community and Locale of Resettlement

The Informal settlement upgrade programme is an in-situ programme as explained above and does not physically resettle the settlers to green field developments. However, the Ministry of Housing and Community Development is also considering the possibility of green field development as an alternative for future.

Further to the Informal Settlement Upgrade Programme, the Ministry also assists low income earners with social housing facilities through Public Rental Board and Housing Assistance Relief Trust (commonly known as “HART Homes”).

Currently 8,028 occupants live in 1,636 Public Rental Board (“PRB”) Units and since 2009, 6,270 households have benefited from the government subsidized rental houses under Public Rental Board. Total of Public Rental Board Units by region is as below:

Central – 1,036 units

Western – 396 units

Northern – 204 units

The Government initiative towards assisting the most vulnerable groups in the society – such as single mothers and victims of domestic violence – through the HART Homes. Currently, 95% of the 825 tenants are single mothers and together with their children and family members make up about 3 500 people now in the HART communities.

In this Financial Year, another similar model will receive financial assistance for expanding its social housing stock. This is the Model Town Trust (well-known as “Koroipita”) who will receive \$2m in this financial year to commence work for adding another 145 houses to their social housing stock.

Housing Authority has also placed an important role in providing affordable housing to those with an annual household income less than \$50,000. Since 2009, three subdivisions namely Wainibuku, Matavolivoli and Tacirua which has four (4) subdivisions namely 1A, 1B, 2 & 3A have been completed with 1,451 Developed Lots that assisted 1,252 households.

Five capital projects in Nepani, Davuilevu, Tavakubu, Koronisalusalu(Tavua) and Wainibuku Stage 2 are currently on-going and will benefit another 1,303 households. These development sites are currently earmarked for the Housing PPP (Public Private Partnership) opportunities that the Government is exploring currently with assistance from International Financial Corporation (“IFC”).

Thank You.