



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Review of the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs 2016-2017 Annual Report



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP



Chairperson

Hon. Viam Pillay MP
Government Member



Deputy Chairperson

Hon. George Vegnathan MP
Government Member



Member

Hon. Alipate Nagata MP
Government Member



Member

Hon. Salote Radrodro MP
Opposition Member



Member

Hon. Dr Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu MP
Opposition Member

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the annual review of the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs for the 2016 – 2017 financial year.

In accordance with its established Annual Report review process, the Committee examines Annual Reports of agencies, in order to investigate, inquire into, and make recommendations relating to the agencies' administration, legislative or proposed legislative programme, budget, functions, organisational structure and policy formulation. As part of this process, the Committee received written and supplementary responses from the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs to gather additional information. This process has proven to be an effective means of gauging the progress of agencies that fall under the mandate of the committee whilst enabling the committee to maintain a high level of scrutiny of these agencies.

The committee undertook this review in accordance with Standing Order 109(2)(b) which mandates it to look into issues related to health, education, social services, labour, culture and media. The review looked at nine key areas covering the period from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017, conducted into: The Ministry's administration; structure; budgetary allocation; programmes and activities; policies; challenges; highlights; priorities for the coming years; and its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

At this juncture, I also wish to thank the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Mr. Meleti Bainimarama, and his staff for their assistance in this review process. I also extend my gratitude to my Committee colleagues namely: Hon. George Vegenathan (Deputy Chairperson), Hon. Alipate Nagata, Hon. Salote Radrodoro, and Hon. Dr. Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu for their contributions. Finally, I thank the Secretariat, Ms. Sheron Narayan, Mr. Tevita Tuivanuavou, and Ms. Atelaite Leba for the assistance provided during the committee's deliberations.

I, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, commend our Report on the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs 2016-2017 Annual Report to Parliament and request all members of this August House to take note of the Report.



Hon. Viam Pillay
Chairperson

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AOP	-	Annual Operational Plan
CATD	-	Centre for Appropriate Training & Development
CMP	-	Cultural Mapping Programme
FY	-	Financial Year
HR	-	Human Resource
ICH	-	Intangible Cultural Heritage
ICT	-	Information and Communications Technology
MP	-	Member of Parliament
MTA	-	Ministry of iTaukei Affairs
NDP	-	National Development Plan 2017-2021
OMRS	-	Open Merit Recruitment & Selection
RTL	-	Register of iTaukei Lands
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
SRU	-	Special Revival Unit
TLFC	-	iTaukei Lands & Fisheries Commission
TTR	-	Tukutuku Raraba

RECOMMENDATION:

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs has conducted the annual review of the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs for 2016-2017, and recommends that the House take note of its report.

BACKGROUND

The 2016-2017 Annual Report of the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (MTA) was tabled in Parliament during the February 2020 meeting and referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for its scrutiny.

We were unable to conduct a public hearing with MTA due to COVID-19 restrictions put in place around the country when the hearing was scheduled to take place. In order to comply with health directives and social distancing measures in place, we requested for a written response from the Ministry in lieu of an annual review hearing. Following our deliberations on the Ministry's written response, we wrote to MTA requesting for further clarification on other related matters.

Standing Orders 109(2)(b) allows Standing Committee on Social Affairs to examine matters related to health, education, social services, labour, culture and media.

Furthermore, Standing Orders 110(1)(c) authorises the Standing Committee to “*scrutinise the government departments with responsibility within the committee's subject area, including by investigating, inquiring into, and making recommendations relating to any aspect of such a department's administration, legislation or proposed legislative program, budget, rationalisation, restructuring, functioning, organisation, structure and policy formulation.*”

ABOUT THE MINISTRY

The Ministry of iTaukei Affairs is responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring government programmes focused on the Good Governance and Well-being of the iTaukei people. The Ministry aims to align itself to its mandated role, which evolves to environmental changes through the provision of policy advice and the implementation of policies and programmes that will expedite sustainable development.

The Ministry's services are targeted not only for iTaukei communities locally but to iTaukei diaspora abroad and all Fijians who wish to acquire its services.¹

The organisation is mandated and adheres to the following legislation to carry out its responsibilities:

¹ Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (Responses to written questions), question 1.

- iTaukei Affairs Act 1944
- iTaukei Lands Act 1905
- iTaukei Land Trust Act 1940
- iTaukei Development Fund Act 1965
- iTaukei Trust Fund Act 2014
- Centre for Appropriate Training & Development (CATD) By-laws

In 2016-2017, the Ministry's total expenditure was **\$11,444,306**.

ISSUES RAISED

GREATER AWARENESS NEEDED ON THE MINISTRY'S PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Getting the services and consultations to trickle down to the Ministry's stakeholders proved to be a challenge to MTA in the period under review. Public Consultations and Road Shows continued to attract other agencies and stakeholders in taking MTA's products to the communities. We were informed that the leadership change within the Ministry has brought about positive change in terms of increasing its presence in the media, creating an influx of requests for interviews and participation in talkback shows on the products and services provided by the Ministry.

It is pleasing to see the Ministry's efforts in increasing public consultations and road shows in communities so as to enable them to understand Government's initiatives, progress and functional roles of respective iTaukei institutions.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Ministry strengthen its partnership with the Provincial Office and all other Government and Non-Government agencies to activate the necessary network in the *Tikina's* and villages to ensure that information reaches the targeted groups.

ADDRESSING LAND AND VILLAGE BOUNDARY ISSUES

We were informed by the Ministry of the various technical and physical constraints faced in relation to the works carried out in 2016 in relation to the demarcation and survey of un-surveyed land and the demarcation of village boundaries.

Firstly, on the issue of demarcation and survey of un-surveyed land, the Ministry informed us that iTaukei landowners were faced with the dilemma of uncertainty in their land boundaries and disputes emanated from this. Rugged and inaccessible terrain together with unfavourable weather

conditions also proved to be hindrances in carrying out survey works. In addition, the Ministry had a lack of manpower due to vacant positions and additional issues faced in skills development and training for Project Officers. Challenges were also faced due to the redeployment of Project Officers to undertake redefinition survey and Village relocation during Cyclone Winston.

Regarding the demarcation of Village boundaries, there was skepticism from villages that the village boundary project was politically motivated. Generally, obtaining the approval of Land Owning Units for confirmation of village boundary, engagements of the *Vanua* with other obligations and events, and unfavourable weather conditions all led to further delays in carrying out demarcation works.

To address the aforementioned issues, the Ministry aims to improve its Information and Communications Technology capacity through the adoption of the Global Positioning System to assist the Demarcation & Survey Unit in traversing and documenting land issues.

Also, we note that the Ministry in 2018 had regularized project officers into established positions (Technical Officers) and formed a new Technical Unit within the iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission to carry out redefinition of surveyed lands so as to assist landowners in understanding their boundaries. The regularizing process has proven to be positive in terms of permitting and recognizing the Officers to develop skills and aspirations in the demarcation and survey profession.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Ministry acquire the relevant and necessary resources to expedite the improvement of its ICT capacity to assist the Demarcation & Survey Unit in documenting and addressing land boundary issues.
2. That the Ministry provide trainings and capacity building opportunities to its Project Officers involved in the demarcation and survey of un-surveyed land. In addition, the Ministry should, as a matter of priority, substantively fill all vacant positions in the Demarcation & Survey Unit.
3. That the Ministry undertake effective awareness programs to educate landowners on land boundaries to assist the various stakeholders and address potential land disputes between landowners.

SPECIAL REVITALIZATION PROGRAMS UNDERTAKEN IN THE 14 PROVINCES

It is important that the Ministry conducts thorough research before embarking on any Special Revival Unit (SRU) projects. For any SRU project, the identification and selection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) should be compiled by the Cultural Mapping Programme (CMP) offices upon the recommendation of the *Vanua*. For example, failure of the Ministry to follow the proper identification and selection process during the 2016/17 *Vatanitawake* Project resulted in a waste of funds and resources. The CMP and SRU Officers must conduct thorough research before the Ministry fully commits to any Special Revitalization Programs.

RECOMMENDATION

1. While the committee encourages the Ministry to continue to undertake Special Revitalization programs in the respective Provinces, it should conduct thorough research and feasibility studies before embarking on any future SRU projects.

NON-ACHIEVEMENT OF ANNUAL TARGETS OF THE VANUA UNIT

We note the non-achievement of the following sub outputs of the Vanua Unit for the year 2016-2017:

Sub Output	Target	Annual Achievement
A well-coordinated and effective change programs 1. Representation in Roadshows, Public Consultations and Talk Back shows.	40	7 [All Units]
Research	10	23
Typing of tribal statement (Tukutuku Raraba or TTR) and Evidence Book	60	Awaiting institutional strengthening
Indexing of records	10	Awaiting institutional strengthening
Scanning of records	20	Awaiting institutional strengthening
New RTL issued for Schedule A& B land.	5	None
Validation of extinct Mataqali	5	1
Notification of extinct Mataqali and Agnate descendants	5	
Reversion of extinct Tokatoka and Agnate descendants land	5	3
Accessibility to TLFC records	200	365
Strengthen Traditional Leadership Awareness	30	19

Source: Extracted from pages 10 & 11 of MTA 2016-2017 Annual Report

The Ministry informed us that this was a result of three vacant positions not being filled due to:

- retirement of its Senior Administrative Officer;
- death of a Clerical Officer; and
- another Clerical Officer position being substantively vacant.

However, the Ministry has confirmed to us that all vacant positions were filled in the 2019-2020 financial year and that institutional strengthening in the following areas has been completed:

- Typing of tribal statement and Evidence Book
- Indexing of records
- Scanning of records

RECOMMENDATION

1. That in future, the Ministry also pursue other Human Resource options to ensure that annual targets are not affected.

LAPSED ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE MINISTRY OF ITAUKEI AFFAIRS

We are concerned at the delay in the submission of the Ministry's Annual Reports in accordance with Section 49 of the Financial Management Act 2004. The Ministry has had a lapse of two years in reporting on its performance and its annual financial statements for the FY 2017-2018 and FY 2018-2019.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Ministry look into improving its processes and be more vigilant in the timely submission of its Annual Reports in accordance with Section 49 of the Financial Management Act 2004.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This section of the Report will focus on how the Ministry has endeavoured to progress the Sustainable Development Goals and how it has mainstreamed SDGs into its programmes and activities.



Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Targets:

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

We note that the backbone of the Ministry's Gender based policies is reliant on the 2011 Equal Employment Opportunity Policy and its compliance to the 2014 Fiji National Gender Policy. The Ministry's representations in forums organised by the Ministry of Women is basis as it targets to ensure that MTA is free from all forms of gender based discrimination and that both men and women participate fully in and enjoy equitably as employees.

By August 2017, the Ministry's workforce was at a 49.2% female representation. On 21 April 2017, four women were Ministry nominees for the Women in Business Annual Awards in the Manager of the year category.

2016 was the transition year from the Old Recruitment & Selection process which was based on Staff Board recommendations to the Open Merit Recruitment & Selection (OMRS) whereby Selection Panels with gender based members provide their recommendations for selection of new appointments.

We note that the application of the OMRS guideline ensured the Ministry's adherence and it was recognised as the top improvers in terms of its compliance.

Furthermore, MTA's 2015 HR Manual was revised in 2016 to inculcate these changes and its adherence to the Civil Service Reforms.²

² Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (Responses to written questions), question 3.

Target 5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

The current staff complement of the Ministry is 136 staff. Out of this, 7% women are in managerial positions as compared to 4% prior to the implementation of OMRS on 31 December 2016. The Ministry hopes to achieve a total of 10% threshold by 2021.³



Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Target 11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage

On the pillars of Protection and Management of culture and heritage, MTA protects, preserves and manages Fiji’s Cultural and Natural Heritage through:

- Reviving documenting and maintaining Traditional Knowledge & Expressions of Culture;
- Facilitating the preservation of iTaukei folklore and traditional skills through the identification of Living Human Treasures; and the
- Cultural Mapping Programme.⁴



Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

The Ministry informed us that it is well aware of the need to empower the iTaukei communities on approaches to Sustainable Development and to create more resilient iTaukei communities to climate change. For these reasons, the Ministry is committed to support the active participation and capacity building of iTaukei resource owners; policy development, planning, management and implementation of activities relating to iTaukei land and its resources.

³ Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (Responses to written questions), question 4.

⁴ Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (Responses to written questions), question 5.

We note that the establishment of the National iTaukei Resource Owners Council is a strong depiction of this which ensures the participation of iTaukei in the decision making process that affects their resources, and supports the efforts to increase the resilience of iTaukei communities against the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

Furthermore, the Ministry ensures that our iTaukei communities are resilient and able to adopt measures that counter Climate Change. This is made possible through partnership with relevant stakeholders such as, the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Forestry, and in particular, the Ministry of Environment and the Climate Change Division within the Ministry of Economy, to provide policies and programmes that strengthen Community Resilience to Climate Change and as well as Resource Management measures.

The Cultural Mapping exercise is one such domain that identifies traditional knowledge as a toolkit for creating resilient indigenous communities. The CMP data is in the process of verification and will be reviewed to identify more relevant intangible cultural heritages that can reduce carbon footprint, are environmentally friendly, and encourage resilience in iTaukei communities.

Lastly, the Ministry is also utilising the iTaukei festival in provinces to create awareness on Climate Change issues.⁵



Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Good Governance is also a key cornerstone for SDGs through its Strong Institutions Goal and in this scope, the Ministry plays a vital role in strengthening governance through the *Vanua* for our iTaukei communities. This is through the:

- Ministry's Leadership programmes
- *Vanua* visits
- Existence of the iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission. The iTaukei communities in the *Vanua* have seen more effective and efficient leadership roles.

⁵ Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (Responses to written questions), question 11.

- Ministry's focus on well governed iTaukei Institutions that effectively execute their mandated role of improving the wellbeing & governance of the iTaukei.⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We note that the Annual Report makes limited reference to the SDGs and does not specify which SDG each of MTA's programmes and activities relate to. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs:
 - Change the format/layout of its future Annual Reports to facilitate understanding of SDG information.
 - Explicitly link results with relevant/priority SDG goals and targets.
 - Include a section explaining how MTA is prioritising action on the SDGs.
 - Report on the challenges faced with the implementation of the SDGs.
2. That MTA work in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy for capacity building of staff to enable a better understanding of issues relating to the Sustainable Development Goals and its linkages to MTA's work.
3. That future Annual Reports present a breakdown of gender equality and participation in the positions held within the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs.

⁶ Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (Responses to written questions), question 5.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2017-2021

Provided below are extracts from the NDP outlining the set targets of the Ministry from 2017 to date in respect of its *Cultural Revitalization Programme*.

Section 3.1.10 of NDP Culture and Heritage

Programmes and Projects

PROGRAMME	ANNUAL TARGET			TOTAL OUTPUT EXPECTED	LEAD AGENCY
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020		
Cultural Mapping Programme implemented in 14 provinces	Nadroga/ Navosa	Tailevu Province		2 Provinces mapped	MTA
STATUS	Target Achieved	Target not Achieved*	Mapping of Ucunivanua Village		

*The Ministry was not able to wholly complete its CMP exercise in the **Tailevu Province** in 2018-2019. The Tailevu Province consists of 22 Districts with 141 villages. Of this number, 140 villages have been mapped in 2009 except Ucunivanua Village in the District of Verata. The activity was cancelled in 2018-2019 fiscal year due to *Vanua* issues and is rescheduled for the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

PROGRAMME	ANNUAL TARGET			TOTAL OUTPUT EXPECTED	LEAD AGENCY
	2017 -2018	2018 -2019	2019 -2020		
Restoration and digitalization of national records	500	1,000	500	3,500 records restored and digitized	MTA
STATUS	Target Achieved	Target Achieved	In Progress*		

***2019-2020 Financial Year (Progress made thus far)**

No.	Key Performance Indicators	AOP Target	Targets Achieved (Aug – Feb)
1.	Digitised registration	6000	5445
2.	Digitised amendment of names & other details of members	2000	2300
3.	Digitised deletion of names (Death Certificate)	200	229
4.	Digitised deletion of names through oaths	2000	1532
5.	Digitised transfer of names	250	203
6.	Verification/approval of digitised BDT	13,450	12,393

THE MINISTRY’S OVERALL PERFORMANCE

In 2016/17, the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs continued to inspire positive change amongst the iTaukei communities through its policies and programs which were aimed at protecting the rights, customs and traditions of indigenous Fijians. We acknowledge the Ministry’s efforts in striving to provide its services to both local iTaukei communities as well as to the iTaukei diaspora abroad. We also note the linkages of MTA’s programmes and activities to the NDP and SDGs however, it is crucial that this be properly documented in the Ministry’s future Annual Reports.

It is encouraging to note that the Ministry met most of its targets as set out in the NDP for FY2017/18 & FY2018/19 nevertheless, we strongly recommend that the Ministry strive to achieve all its AOP targets according to given timelines.

Overall, the committee is satisfied with the operations of the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. It is our hope that the Ministry notes the issues we have discussed in our report and implements relevant recommendations for the improvement of its functions.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURE

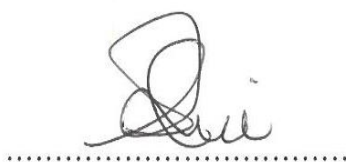
We, the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, hereby agree with the contents of this report:



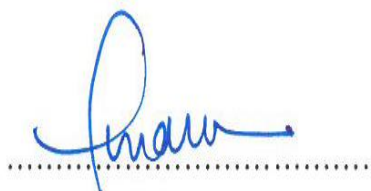
Hon. Viam Pillay
(Chairperson)



Hon. George Vignathan
(Deputy Chairperson)



Hon. Alipate Nagata
(Member)



Hon. Salote Radrodoro
(Member)



Hon. Dr. Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu
(Member)

APPENDIX

Published written evidence

Written evidence and supplementary information was received from the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link: <http://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>