



**STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND
HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Report on the Review of the
Office of the Prime Minister 2016 Annual Report (*January
– July*)**



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

PRMCS	-	Public Relations, Media and Client Services Division
OPM	-	Office of the Prime Minister
SGS	-	Small grants scheme
SDG	-	Sustainable development goals

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD



The Office of the Prime Minister is primarily responsible for providing sound policy advice and support to the Honourable Prime Minister and his cabinet. It also engages with international and regional development partners, Civil Society Organisations and the private sector.

The *Office of the Prime Minister 2016 Annual Report (January-July)*, was referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights for review and to table a report on its findings back to Parliament.

Gathering from the Annual Report of the Office, 2016 had numerous highlights, which include the provision of support services to the Honourable Prime Minister in achieving the 10 Pillars of the Office's strategic priorities that ranges from good governance to improving health services to its staff.

In reviewing the *Office of the Prime Minister Annual Report*, the Committee noted that a few of the key achievements were on the re-prioritisation of the small grants scheme funded projects and the introduction of merit based policies for the organisation that paved the way for an innovative workforce for the Office.

The review also highlighted a few pertinent issues, which the Committee discussed extensively with the Office of the Prime Minister and is covered in this Committee Report. These pertinent issues include:

- the Office's administration of the Prime Minister's small grants scheme in terms of addressing key arrears, which relate to meeting the social and economic needs of the people and in turn contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development goals;
- the funds allocated towards the Rotuma Subvention Fund for Development;
- the findings by the Office regarding the Mahogany Industry Council;
- the programmes listed under the Private Office of the Office the Prime Minister and the activities conducted during the reported period; and
- the overall activities conducted by Office in achieving the 10 Pillars of the Ministry.

The Committee was also mindful of the requirements of the Standing Orders of Parliament with respect to the principles of gender equality. Therefore as part of the deliberation, it was encouraging to note that the Office has made strides in responding to gender related issues, by having community consultations, whereby awareness and information dissemination regarding gender issues were undertaken.

This Committee Report will also provide certain recommendations that the Committee has put forth for consideration by the Office of the Prime Minister.

At this juncture, it would be amiss not to acknowledge the Honourable Members of the Justice, Law and Human Rights Committee, Hon Rohit Sharma (Deputy Chairperson), Hon. Ratu Suliano Matanitobua, Hon. Salik Govind and Hon. Mosese Bulitavu, for their

deliberations and input, the secretariat and the representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister for their cooperation, which assisted the Committee in its work.

I, on behalf of the Committee, commend the Committee's Report on the *Office of the Prime Minister Annual Report 2016 (January – July)* to the Parliament and seek support of all its Members to take note of the recommendations by the Committee.



Hon. Alvick A. Maharaj
Chairperson

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The Committee is made up of both the Government and Opposition Members, pursuant to Standing Order 115. Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, 2018-2022 Parliamentary Term, are as follows:



Hon. Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj (Chairperson)

- Assistant Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industry Relations, Youth and Sports
- Chairperson of Public Accounts Committee
- Government Whip
- Registered Pharmacist



Hon. Rohit Sharma (Deputy Chairperson)

- Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights
- Deputy Government Whip



Hon. Ratu Suliano Matanitobua (Member)

- Shadow Minister for Youth and Sports
- Former State Minister of Fijian Affairs
- Former Military Territorial Officer



Hon. Dr. Salik Govind (Member)

- Public Health Specialist – United Nations (World Health Organisation)
- Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee



Hon. Mosese Bulitavu (Member)

- Shadow Minister for Defense, National Security, Immigration and Correction Services
- Former Opposition Whip
- Business Consultant/Farmer
- Territorial Military Officer – Republic of Fiji Military Forces
- Law Graduate and Researcher

Committee Secretariat Team

Supporting the Committee in its work is a group of dedicated Parliament Officers who make-up the Committee Secretariat, and are appointed and delegated by the Secretary-General to Parliament pursuant to Standing Order 15 (3)(i). The Secretariat team is made of the following Parliament officers:

- Mr. Ira Komaisavai – Senior Committee Clerk
- Mr. Jackson Cakacaka – Deputy Committee Clerk
- Ms. Darolin Vinisha – Committee Assistant

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights (“Committee”) mandated by Standing Orders 109 (2) and 110 of the Standing Orders of Parliament, was referred the *Office of the Prime Minister 2016 (Jan – Jul) Annual Report* and pursuant to Standing Order 38 (2). The Committee was tasked with reviewing the Annual Report and to table a report on its findings in a subsequent Parliament Sitting.

As part of its review the Committee conducted its own deliberation on the Annual Report and identified seven (7) critical points that was sent for clarification to the OPM. As part of its mandate, the Committee also invited the Office of the Prime Minister to clarify issues pertaining to the Annual Report in the form of oral submission.

Office of the Prime Minister

The Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for providing high quality service and support to the Head of Government, the Honourable Prime Minister. The support provided is given with the aim of ensuring that all activities, engagements and policies that the Hon. Prime Minister contributes to or is involved in is in line with the Constitution, the laws of Fiji and for the betterment of all Fijians.

2.0 DELIBERATION AND FINDINGS BY THE COMMITTEE

Initial deliberation by the Committee

This part of the Report covers the Committee’s deliberation process and the findings of the Committee which also include points extracted from the OPM 2016 Annual Report and submission received by the representatives.

The Committee first read through the OPM 2016 Annual Report and identified issues noted from its deliberation. Issues highlighted were based on;

- the OPMs administration of the PM small grants scheme in terms of addressing SDG 1 in relation to reducing poverty;
- the Rotuma Subvention Fund, specifically in regards to the \$150,000 allocated for Development;
- the findings by the OPM on the status of the Mahogany Industry Council;
- the reasons for the PRMCS Division’s decline in consultation and talkback shows in promoting the 2013 constitution;
- the status of the 48 projects that were still in progress at the end of the period which the Annual Report is based on;
- the 101 programmes listed under the Private Office of the OPM and the activities conducted during the reported period; and

- the overall activities conducted by OPM in support to achieve the 10 Pillars of the Ministry.

Evidence via submission received and discussion with the OPM

The OPM representatives appeared before the Committee on 28 February, 2020 to clarify matters related to the Annual Report. The discussion between the Committee and the Office is summarised below.

The OPM implements and approves funding for projects based on small grants schemes and based on the needs that arise during the Prime Minister's visitation to Communities. Additionally, the members of the public are encouraged to write to the Office with their needs and these are assessed by the respective Unit within the OPM. Certain projects are also identified and consulted with or through the line Ministry so as not to allow overlapping during the implementation stage.

There has been a reduction in the budget allocation for small grants projects funds, thus the OPM has now shifted its priorities based on socio-economic developments such as access to clean and safe water and education. Priority is also given to projects which are climate-resilience oriented. It was also noted that in the reporting period under scrutiny there seemed to be a disproportionate number of projects in the different divisions in Fiji and this was due to the new priorities set by the OPM.

In regard to the Rotuma Subvention fund, the Committee was advised that the fund is utilised for projects that focus on the social and economic needs of the Rotuman community. In the facilitation of the use for the fund; there is close collaboration between the Office and the Council of Rotuma and the District Officer Rotuma.

The mahogany industry has seen its share of issues and achievements, whereby the Office has effectively facilitated the Honourable Prime Minister's role in being the chairman of the Mahogany Industry Council. Some of the main achievements and issues being addressed during the reported period, which were noted in the Mahogany Industry status report included:

- the progress in log sales, lease and stumpage payments to landowners;
- landowners actively participating in the Mahogany Industry; and
- monitoring of license holders, with monthly reports to the Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited.

The representative's assured the Committee that the Office is fully committed to tirelessly working in engaging with the community through its PRMCS Division and the Private Office. The Office also takes pride in its progress towards one of the main pillars for the Office, which is to improve health service delivery by implementing programmes to combat non-communicable diseases.

Copies of the submission documents are uploaded with this Report as Appendices and can be obtained from the parliament website (www.parliament.gov.fj).

Findings

The OPM plays a significant role in the administration of the Small Grants Scheme to which projects were initiated and prioritized in addressing the social and economic needs of the public.

The Prime Minister being the chairman of the Mahogany Industry Council (MIC), the Committee noted great improvements were achieved in the reported year in terms of maintaining the objective of the MIC; that is the sustainability of the industry; return to the landowners; and benefits for Fiji in terms of total exports and operation of the Fiji Hardwood Cooperation Limited.

The approach by Ministries in engaging directly with Communities has enabled the OPM to direct its focus on other national matters such as Climate change and the rehabilitation stages following the aftermath of TC Winston;

As a guiding pillar of *Improving Health and Services delivery*, the OPM has promoted healthy living to its staff in the quest to fight against Non-communicable disease.

Gender Analysis

Additionally as part of its deliberation, the Committee is bound by Fiji Parliamentary Standing Order 110(2) which provides as follows:

“Where a committee conducts an activity listed in Clause (1), the committee shall ensure that full consideration will be given to the principle of gender equality so as to ensure all matters are considered with regard to the impact and benefit of both men and women equally”.

Therefore, the Committee sought clarification on how the principle of gender equality was implemented in the Office of the Prime Minister. The Committee noted that the OPM had employed 52% male and 48% female for the reported year.

It was also noted that the Office has done so much through its Public Relations Unit, by way of community consultations on gender and youth topics. These consultations were carried out in numerous communities whereby the Office engaged with the people and disseminated information and conducted awareness programmes regarding gender related issues.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the commendable effort done by the Office of the Prime Minister, the Committee feels that more support be focused in strengthening the respective units in terms of delivery by the Office of the Prime Minister. The following are the key highlights and recommendations put forth by the Committee for consideration of the Office of the Prime Minister;

- i. The Committee takes note of and commends the Office of the Prime Minister in being able to maintain efficiency in the services and assistance provided through the small grants scheme, even though there was a reduction in the budget. With regards to the budget of the small grants scheme, the Committee recommends that there be more funding provided to ensure the continuation of such schemes.
- ii. The Committee commends the Office of the Prime Minister in establishing the Wellness Hour initiative, which aims to combat non-communicable diseases. On this end, the Committee recommends that the Office of the Prime Minister continue such initiatives as this promotes the combat against non-communicable diseases and highlights the role of the Office in being a beacon for promoting healthy living.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights has fulfilled its mandate approved by Parliament, which is to examine and review the *Office of the Prime Minister Annual Report 2016 (January – July)* with due diligence.

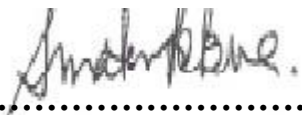
The Committee's review findings highlighted numerous commendable achievements by the Office. The Committee also felt it prudent to make a few suggestions to supplement the great work already being done and this was reflected in its recommendations.

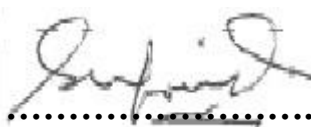
The Committee through this Report commends the *Office of the Prime Minister Annual Report 2016 (January – July)* to Parliament.

MEMBERS SIGNATURES OF ENDORSEMENT:


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HON. ALVICK MAHARAJ
(CHAIRPERSON)


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HON. ROHIT SHARMA
(DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON)


.....
HON. RATU SULIANO
MATANITOBUA
(MEMBER)


.....
HON. DR. SALIK GOVIND
(MEMBER)


.....
HON. MOSESE BULITAVU
(MEMBER)

DATE: 21/05/2020