



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

**Review Report of the
Office of the Prime Minister 2016-2017 Annual Report**



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

- OPM** - **Office of the Prime Minister**
- MVT** - **Melanesian/Vasu i-taukei Development Fund**

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.

In reviewing the Office of the Prime Minister 2016-2017 Annual Report, the Committee noted that one of the key achievement was on timely submission of Ministries Annual Reports presented to cabinet and the total number of complaints that were addressed by the Office in the reported year. This sees the coordination and facilitation was sufficiently provided by the Office in the ensuring that the prioritisation of Ministerial Annual Reports are also presented in Parliament through the cabinet for review.

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 timeline of Government Ministries Annual Reports tabled in Cabinet;
- the ability of the OPM in addressing complaints that are being lodged by the public; and
- the mechanism used to monitor and evaluate projects funded through the Small Grants Scheme;

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 discussion with the Office of the Prime Minister, it was encouraging to note how the principle of gender equality was reflected in the Ministry, beginning with one of the vital part of an institution; the human resource. Office play a vital role in the oversight of the Governments development plans, which are aligned to the sustainable development goals.

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

- the dissemination of information on small grants scheme to the public;
- the creation of a user and public friendly tracking and monitoring system for small grants funded projects and related matters; and
- continued support to be provided to public engagement Units within the Office of the Prime Minister, especially those that deal with complaints from the public.

At this juncture I would like to thank the Honourable Members of the Justice, Law and Human Rights Committee, Hon. Rohit Sharma, Hon. Dr Salik Govind, Hon. Ratu Suliano Matanitobua and Hon. Mosese Bulitavu for their deliberations and input, the alternate members who made themselves available when the substantive members could not attend,

the representative of the Office of the Prime Minister 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 2016 - 2017 Annual Report to the Parliament and seek support of all the members of this august house to take note of the recommendations by the Committee.



Hon. Alvick Avhikrit 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 Defence, 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 - 2017 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 OPM Report and identified key 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 OPM Annual Report 2016 - 2017 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 and the laws of Fiji and for the betterment of all Fijians.

2.0 COMMITTEE DELIBERATION AND FINDINGS

Committee’s initial deliberation

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 2016-2017 Annual Report and submission received by the representatives.

The Committee first read through the OPM 2016-2017 Annual Report and identified issues noted from its deliberation. Issues highlighted were based on;

- the Government Ministries Annual Reports are tabled before Cabinet;
- the OPM meeting 90% of its key deliverables and 10 % were not met due to realignment of priorities following Tropical Cyclone Winston;
- the ability of the OPM in addressing complaints that are being lodged by public; and
- the mechanism used to monitor and evaluate projects funded through the Small Grants Scheme;

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 report. A summary of the main issues under discussion is as follows:

- A total of forty (41) Annual Reports were received by the Cabinet as of 27 August 2019;
- The Complaints Unit has received and attended 2993 cases raised against agencies government across. The OPM addressed this complaints by the following methods;
 - i. Assessing Complaints and identification of issues.
 - ii. Referral to relevant line agencies for action and feedback on progress with 14 days.
 - iii. Arranging stakeholders meeting to address complex issues.
 - iv. Conducting site visitation with relevant Ministry for validation and resolution; and
 - v. Identifying issues and aligning with policy guideline for compliance purposes in respect to other agencies regulatory process.
- The Small Grants Scheme are monitored regularly by project Officers to ensure that they are undertaken and completed on accordingly. The OPM also worked closely with Divisional Commissioners, Provincial Administrators, District Officers, community leaders, contractors and relevant government Ministries in achieving its target. These project are monitored in three (3) phases which includes (i) Quarterly Site Visit by OPM Staff, (ii) site inspection by monitoring agencies and (iii) Monitoring by Provincial Administrators and District Officers.

A copy of the written submission by the Office of the Prime Minister and the Verbatim Report on the face-to-face discussion by the Committee and the OPM can be accessed via the parliament website: www.parliament.gov.fj.

Sustainable Development Goals Impact Analysis

Additionally as part of its deliberation the Committee appreciates its role in keeping track of Fiji's efforts towards the sustainable development goals and the national development plans. Thus, the Committee noted from the OPM Annual Report that there were certain activities supported by the OPM, which could be linked to the efforts towards the achieving the national development plans and ultimately the global agenda.

The OPM's Development Cooperation and Facilitation Division is responsible for the small grant scheme, which is also provided to rural and outer islands communities. It is worth noting that this scheme is aimed at addressing the needs of these communities in terms of village/settlement improvements, education and climate resilient projects.

The OPM also facilitated the support and assistance provided to communities, especially rural communities, which includes education development, access to clean water, access to basic infrastructure, housing and health.

Furthermore, 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’s efforts towards gender equality was focused on its human resource, which is one of the vital parts of an institution. It was noted that the OPM utilised the Open Merit Recruitment System for hiring and recruiting staff, which is a system that ignores specific sex and gender as a criteria for recruitment.

It was also noted in the reported year that the OPM has given much effort in empowering its female staff by encouraging attendance in trainings and development programmes. The reported year recorded 31% males and 42 % females were provided and supported in capacity building and development programmes.

Committee’s Findings

At the penultimate stage of the review, the Committee noted the following as its key findings on the *OPM 2016-2017 Annual Report*.

- The Office of the Prime Minister has put in efforts in achieving the nations’ development plan and the global agenda, by supporting gender equality and the development of communities.
- Rotuma was allotted the largest funding of \$240, 000.00 as compared to Rabi, Kioa and MVT with a ceiling of \$155, 000.00. The OPM through the Rotuma Subvention Fund, utilised 88% of its funds for nine (9) development projects, with the result all implemented and completed;
- It was noted that all complaints received were through request made to the Office of the Prime Minister and had achieved above average in addressing requests put forward, this includes both actual complaints and request for assistance. However, given that the status of complaints rests solely with the OPM, rural residents may encounter difficulties in enquiring updates of requests considering the travelling distance.

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 OPM. Therefore, the Committee puts forth the following for the consideration of the OPM:

Recommendation 1:

The Committee commends the OPM in its work with the small grants projects, which ensures communities are focused on climate resilience. The Committee therefore recommends that clear guidelines and criteria on what falls into the category of projects that can be funded through the small grants scheme, be provided and disseminated to the public.

Recommendation 2:

The Committee also recommends that the OPM create and set up a database and register, which is also online and accessible by the public, for:

- tracking of progress of small grants scheme applications;
- number of projects being funded; and
- monitoring the effectiveness of the projects.

Recommendation 3:

The Committee commends the work done by the OPM regarding complaints received and thus recommends that there be more support provided to the relevant Unit within the OPM in order to maintain the efficiency of services provided regarding complaints. Additionally, that the OPM set up a database and register, which is also accessible online for tracking of progress of complaints.

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 - 2017* with due diligence.

The Committee's review highlighted a few issues that were brought to the attention of the Office of the Prime Minister's representatives, which were appropriately addressed and this was reflected in the findings and the recommendations put forth in this report.

The Committee through this Report commends the *Office of the Prime Minister Annual Report 2016 - 2017* to Parliament.

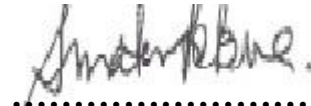
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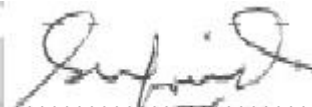
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HON. ALVICK MAHARAJ
(CHAIRPERSON)



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HON. ROHIT SHARMA
(DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON)



.....
HON. RATU SULIANO
MATANITOBUA
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.....
HON. DR. SALIK GOVIND
(MEMBER)



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

DATE: 27/08/2020