

APPENDICES

Appendix One

Written Response by the Consumer Council of Fiji



@ConsumersFj



Consumer Council of Fiji



www.consumersfiji.org

01 February 2021

Honourable Viam Pillay
The Chairperson
Parliament Standing Committee on Social Affairs
Level 1, Parliamentary Complex
Suva.

Dear Hon. Pillay

Re: Request for Clarification on Issues relating to the Consumer Council of Fiji 2017-2018 Annual Report

Greetings from the Consumer Council of Fiji!

Reference is made to your letter dated 25 January 2021 on the above stated subject.

As per the Committee's request to obtain a better understanding of the contents of the 2017-2018 Annual Report, the Council is submitting a written response to clarify pertinent issues which emanated from the Committee's deliberations.

The Council is happy to respond to any other query which the Committee may have.

Kind Regards,

.....
Seema Shandil (Ms)
Chief Executive Officer
Consumer Council of Fiji

Head Office

Level 5 Vanua House
Victoria Parade GPO, Suva
Phone: 3300792/3310183
CEO: 3305864
Fax: 3300115
Email: complaints@consumersfiji.org

Lautoka/West

Suite 4 Popular Building
Vidilo Street
P.O. Box 5396, Lautoka
Phone: 6664987
Email: consumerltk@connect.com.fj

Labasa/North

Level 1, Lot 41 Raza Properties Ltd
Nasekula Road
P.O. Box 64, Labasa
Phone: 8812559
Email: colbs@connect.com.fj

1. How does the Council overcome the challenges associated with being a small organization with limited resources in order to carry out its functions and achieve its strategic goals?

Being a small organisation with limited resources, the Council manages the available resources prudently and efficiently to achieve its strategic goals. This also entailed recognising and overcoming the common pitfalls associated with the daily operations to grow and thrive. Effective leadership has also been critical to manage human and operational resources to achieve the deliverables. The Council also strategically planned its activities and resource utilization through annual work plans, departmental business plans and individual work plans which is not static and continuously evolves to address any unforeseen issues which arises. On the operational side, the Council used planning as a tool to utilize its limited resources to carry out its functions. One such instance of this is while conducting surveillance and attending to consumer complaints, the Council carefully plans its trips to ensure that all visits in a vicinity is done in one lapse – cutting down on fuel costs. Additionally, the Council continuously reviews its internal systems and processes; ensuring efficiency and optimum operational capacity. Once such instance of this is reduction in the amount of paper work and leaning towards technology to save costs. The Council also established and maintained excellent working relationships with local news agencies to ensure that consumer advisories and alerts are published and reached to consumers – effectively ensuring that the Council does not have to fork out coffers to publish advisory articles and other news.

2. We note that 11 traders were charged by the FCCC for unscrupulous practices under the HOMES-CARE initiative. Inform us on who these traders were, the charges meted out, and how the Council has strengthened its systems, processes, and its collaboration with relevant stakeholders to prevent the recurrence of similar cases in future.

The Council collaborated with the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission and conducted an investigation into businesses with relevance to issue of the unscrupulous practices under the HOMES-CARE initiative. The charges however were laid by the FCCC as the Consumer Council of Fiji does not have enforcement powers. To reveal the names would be at the discretion of FCCC.

To ensure such unscrupulous practices does not reoccur in the future, the Council raised continuous awareness among consumers on how to identify such practices and report to the Council. Furthermore, the Council also conducts regular market surveillance and media monitoring to weed out any such issues in the market place and continues to flag it to enforcement agency.

3. In light of the price hike of Meningococcal vaccines by some traders in 2018, what measures has the Council put in place to ensure that consumers are not overcharged for retail goods that are in demand? How does the Council collaborate with consumer protection agencies to monitor retailers and traders on unfair price increases of products?

The Council during this period conducted rigorous awareness and campaigns highlighting increased susceptibility of consumers to the hiked prices and where and how they can lodge

This app is simple and easy-to-use. Apart from lodging a complaint, the app allows consumers to track its progress, saving them time on any follow-ups. The app also contains vital static information such as the role of the Council, consumer rights and responsibilities as well as latest updates by the Council and consumer advisories.

Along with the mobile app the Council has also developed a Complaints Management System which is being used for the efficient management of all consumer issues and complaints. The CMS has helped improve the efficiency of its process, consistency, and quality of the work. This modern system has proved effective in proper documentation of complaints/issues the Council receives and has enabled our officers to access any complaint with just the click of a button.

6. How does the Council gather feedback on the effectiveness of its activities and programmes designed to provide consumers with practical knowledge and skills to make informed decisions?

For the effectiveness of donor project activities, the Council employs throughout the project various monitoring and evaluation tools to gauge the level of achievement of each activity and the overall project efficiency, effectiveness, and impact in the community. Primary monitoring and evaluation methods include planning models, monitoring charts, activity reports, and participant feedback surveys. These tools along with other internal management methods provide dynamic approaches to identify project inefficiencies and to apply counter measures that ensure successful completion of each activity planned.

Social media is another activity designed to provide knowledge and skills to consumers to make informed decisions. Due to the prevalence of social media use by Fijian consumers, it has become a powerful tool to reach and educate consumers. The effectiveness of this activity is captured in the monthly and quarterly reports by analysing the number of reach each post has as well as the number of followers on social media. The Council is confident on the effectiveness of this medium as in the period under review, the Council saw an increase in the number of followers of its social media pages.

Mobile unit is another platform utilized by the Council to reach, educate, advise and receive complaints from Fijian consumers. The effectiveness of this medium is determined through the number of consumers attending each mobile unit, number of advisories given, number of complaints received and number of resource materials distributed.

For workshops, participating consumers provide feedback at the end of each workshop through which the Council is able to gauge the success of the workshop and implement measures to improve succeeding workshops.

The Council also conducts school visits in its efforts to educate young consumers of their rights and responsibilities. The effectiveness of this activity is gauged by the Council through question-and-answer sessions at the end of each school visits. Through this mechanism, the Council is able to determine how much knowledge was passed on to the students and make necessary changes in the delivery method of contents in next school visits.

Consumers were facing issues with the Sony Channel, which Digicel attributed to a sun outage. A sun outage is an interruption in satellite signals caused by interference from solar radiation. The interference is caused when the sun is in direct line with a communication satellite and the sun's radiation overwhelms the satellite signal. The issue here was that only one channel was affected and the **Council liaised with Digicel to ensure they improve their services.**

Businesses with no point-of-sale (POS) system to stop charging plastic bag levy

Businesses were seeking to profit off the new initiative by the government by charging the plastic bag levy. The Council released the statement to prevent businesses without POS system from charging the levy as there would be no way with which government could verify, they were receiving the income. **The Council liaised and flagged the same to FRCS for their necessary actions.**

Outdated fine payment records disrupt consumer travel

A consumer was stopped on two separate occasions when he was travelling to India and Vanuatu despite having paid his fine. Immigration had failed to update their fine payment details and the consumer was still listed, in the stop departure list for two years even though he made his payments 7 days after he was fined. The Council liaised with Immigration who then removed his name from the list after he had presented his receipt. The Council highlighted in the statement that it was important that organisations update their records on a regular basis to ensure there is no inconvenience to consumers

Council concerned with price gouging under Homes-Care initiative.

Additional PRs for the same topic:

Consumers under the Homes-Care should not be discriminated

Council survey uncovers further price gouging by Homes Care Vendors

Joint TaskForce undertakes Investigations into the CARE programs

The Council, through complaints received, noted that businesses were intentionally increasing the prices of goods and services for consumers who were affected by Cyclone Winston whether. This amounted to price gouging and the Council along with the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission created a taskforce responsible for investigating incidences of price gouging by hardware businesses. There were several press releases on the subject disseminated for consumer awareness. **There was a hike in the number of complaints received on the matter. FCCC later charged 11 traders.**

No Words from Telecommunication Authority of Fiji (TAF) after the Withdrawal of Digital Enhancement Cordless Communication (DECT) and Wireless devices

TAF's decision to withdraw DECT and Wireless devices without offering any alternatives forced an inconvenience onto consumers. Concerned consumers raised this issue with the Council and upon investigation, the Council noted that consumers had the option of getting hand held phones as an alternative. If they had existing funds in their phone accounts, they had the option of receiving the same in cash should they require. **TAF created awareness so that consumers were aware of the options available to consumers.**

removal. The Council liaised with the banks involved for clarification and those who were **incorrectly charged were reimbursed while further awareness was created on the types of card that incur a surcharge and the types that do not.**

1.6 million worth of consumer complaints registered

From the period of 2015-2018 the Consumer Council of Fiji has registered 1144 complaints worth \$1.6 million in Labasa alone. This was around \$320,000 worth of complaints every year. This signified a gradual increase in complaints received with more consumers becoming confident in bringing consumer issues to the Council.

Financial Disaster relief assistance for consumers

The Council commended the efforts of financial institutions to provide relief to consumers affected by Tropical Cyclone Josie in 2018.

The Council continuously works very closely with all stakeholders to make sure that the Consumers have a fair go in the marketplace and their interest is protected at all times.

9. **We note the various issues debated on the Council's Facebook page in relation to unethical practices by traders in the marketplace. Has the Council considered conducting face-to-face public debates in each Division on key issues affecting consumers?**

Facebook is a convenient, cost efficient and effective way of reaching consumers and getting their views on relevant consumer issues as well. This platform is only used to raise alerts, awareness and share any other important information such as Press Releases to the consumers. Whilst the Council does not use this platform for conducting debates, many a times consumers debate on the shared issues amongst themselves. In regards to public debates, the Council held an inter-tertiary debate at the University of the South Pacific on the topic "Should cyberspace be regulated to deal with cyber bullying and fake news?". Stakeholders such as telecommunication companies, financial institutions, department of communication, and cyber-crime unit were also present at the debate.

Furthermore, the Council based on the need then delves further into the issues and holds debates if needed. In regards to face-face debates, the Council continuously reaches out to consumers to get their views on key consumer issues. The Committee may note that in the period under review, the Council conducted a total of 38 workshops throughout the Country advocating on emerging consumer issues as well as listening to the views and concerns of Fijian consumers. The Council had a total of 2123 Fijians participating in the Councils workshops in the period under review. Apart from this, the Council conducted a total of 31 mobile units around the Country with a total of 1488 number of consumers participating. In order to reach more consumers, many of whom may not have to means to reach the Council offices, the Council conducted community visits in the Central, Western and Northern divisions in order to penetrate consumer issues at the community level. The Council conducted a total of 20 community visits in the period under review with a total of 396 Fijians participating. Therefore, apart from

consumers. However, similar to international practices, policy changes take place over a period of time as the relevant regulatory and policy making bodies also conducts its own research, consultations with other stakeholders, analysis and independent submissions to cabinet (where required). An instance of this is the Council's submission on the removal of the Credit Data Bureau – which took several years to be implemented. Similarly, the Council also made submission and held workshop on Compulsory Third Party Insurance – which led to the formation of the Accident Compensation Commission.

In regards to the submissions made by the Council in the period under review, many has yielded positive results. For the submission on Real Estate Regulations 2017 and later in 2019, all of the Councils recommendations has been incorporated in the review of Act which is now in the final stages. Similarly, the Council's submission on Safe Food Handling in Catering Services, have been considered and guideline have been developed and is in final stages of completion before implementation. Additionally, the Online Safety Act 2018 which is now in effect also took onboard the recommendations made by the Council through its submission to the Standing Committee Justice, Law and Human Rights.

13. Has the Council undertaken any studies on the rising cost of living in Fiji? If so, inform us on the findings and how the Council has lobbied the Government to provide relief to consumers in this area.

The Council had conducted a study and made submission on the cost of living in Fiji. This was in relation to the affordability of food items to Fijian consumers. The findings are discussed below.

In 2016 government instituted major changes in policies regarding prices of essential items or basic necessities. Firstly, there was the application of VAT on eight (8) basic items (Rice, Flour, Tinned Fish, cooking oil, Tea, Powdered Milk, Kerosene and prescribed Medicines) that were previously VAT exempted. Secondly, VAT was reduced from 15% to 9%. Government noted that having VAT exemptions for only a few items does not really benefit the poor as they also buy other important items such as furniture, white goods and other basic food items in which they had to pay 15% VAT. The Council conducted a research by using the data collected from 2015 to establish whether VAT reduction to 9% and application of VAT-on-VAT exempted items had resulted in gains for consumers. The Council's findings reveal that cost of food prices went up despite VAT reduction.

For price-controlled items, there was an overall reduction in prices of the items from 2015 to 2016. All prices fell, as expected. In 2018, four items had recorded price increases at 1% to 64% respectively. These items included – potatoes, butter, corned mutton and sugar. For 3 of these items the raw materials were imported. Furthermore, another 2 items (golden margarine and corned beef) recorded price decreases in 2018, 0.2% and 7%. It was noted that during 2016, there had been price decreases for all 6 items studied but in 2018 price fluctuations were observed where price of most item

date. Hence, as per the Council's Human Resource Policy the staffs' contract was terminated 7 days after the expected resumption date. The second staff contract was terminated due to non-performance and regular absenteeism

16. Inform the committee of the key challenges the Council faced whilst trying to achieve its strategic objectives in 2017-2018 and how these challenges were addressed.

One of the major challenges faced by the Council in achieving its strategic objective to improve consumers' ability to make informed decision is changing the mindsets of Fijian consumers and encouraging them to become more assertive in exercising their rights and responsibilities. The Council tries this challenge by arming consumers with practical knowledge and skills through mobile units, community visits, workshops, school visits and creating awareness on the different medium's consumers can use to get in touch with the Council. Through school visits, the Council ensures that our young consumers are also aware of the rights and responsibilities – ensuring that there will be smart consumers now and also in the future. The Council also has a toll-free number which consumers can use to contact the Council free of charge. Another medium the Council has recently launched is the Consumer Council of Fiji mobile app which provides consumers an easy and convenient platform to lodge complaints and access latest consumer advisories and news.

The Council also on some occasions encounter difficulties in providing amicable redress to consumers due to some traders being very unethical who seem to always show disregard to consumer rights. Such matters are escalated to relevant enforcement authorities for relevant actions. Furthermore, the Council makes submissions to the government and relevant stakeholders for policy changes in order to protect the rights and interests of Fijian consumers.

Another challenge which the Council faced was high staff turnover. The Council is an equal opportunity employer and also recruits new graduates and provides a variety of platforms to equip them with skills and knowledge – making them highly desirable by other employers. The staff turnover has minimized to some extent but cannot be stopped completely as staff tend to move out for their own career developments and greener pastures.

17. Provide us with the staffing complement at the Council in 2017-2018 and the percentage of women who were in managerial positions.

In 2017-2018, 71% of women were in managerial position. 5 out of 7 managerial position were held by women.

18. What was the rate of unplanned staff turnover at the Council in 2017-2018?

The rate of unplanned staff turnover in 2017-2018 was 52%. The Council is an equal opportunity employer and also recruits new graduates and provides a variety of platforms to equip them with skills and knowledge – making them highly desirable by other employers. The staff turnover have minimized to some extent but cannot be stopped completely as staff tend to move out for their own career developments and greener pastures.

The Council has become a strong advocate of sustainable development and has conducted a number of projects to promote it. This includes;

- Combating Non-Communicable Diseases – Anne Fransen Grant 2017
- Reducing Exposure to Pesticides – Consumers International 2016
- Harmful Effects of Plastic Bags on Fiji's Marine Ecosystem – Green Action Fund 2019
- Project Solesolevaki

Through this grant, United National Development Program and the University of the South Pacific aimed to place the Pacific in a better position to address needs of the future and enhance regional and international cooperation. In doing so, it promotes inclusive growth *Leaving No One Behind* including the participation of women, youth, and people living with disabilities.

This grant was a one-off fund allocated to support meaningful conversations that have impacts on the lives of our people in response to the Sustainable Development Goals such as the climate crisis, inequality and other major development challenges. The Council was one of the six winners to secure the fund of \$USD5000 and used the grant to implement the *Project Solesolevaki* to educate urban and rural consumers to be self-sufficient and assist others in the community to beat food insecurity during crisis such as COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclones. The project was successfully implemented in the Serua Province.

- Back to my Roots

The Back to my roots project, funded by the Green Action Fund, was a collaborative project by Consumers International and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC). The project was implemented in the Lomaivuna Sector in the province of Naitasiri. Through this project, the Council created awareness on the responsibility of communities towards the environment, educated them on good practices towards improving and restoring ecosystem by employing sustainable farming techniques that promotes biodiversity and the importance of sharing knowledge in villages. The project not only helped create a sharing community that fostered food security and alleviated financial distress but will also equipped Fijian consumers to better face adversities posed by any crises. The current COVID 19 pandemic has taught us that we need to be resilient in the face of crises and this is the essence of this project.

21. The following questions pertain to the Council's financial statement for the year ended 31 July 2018:

a. Statement of Income and Expenditure (Operating Grant):

Income: Utilization of capital government grant - Provide further details on the FHL and Energy Fiji Ltd security deposits.

- i. *FHL Security Bond* - The Council signed the new tenancy agreement with Fiji Holdings Ltd on the 1st of February 2018 and paid 3 month's rental bond of \$28,305.75 (Refundable). February and March 2018 were the rental free fit out period. It is to be noted that the Council's previous land (Ming's Ltd) refunded the full security bond of \$4,600.00 on the 13th of July 2018.

Appendix Two

Supplementary Responses

Supplementary Questions to the Written Response

1. Question 10 of the written response - Can the Council provide some scenarios on shipping services complaints received as the committee noted that this still a growing concern for the Council?

As stressed by the Council in the written response to the Committee, complaints against shipping service providers are a growing concern provided that this is the most common mode of inter-island travelling being utilized by Fijian consumers. Although the price control regime on passenger fares and cargo freight are in place, there are other issues that is really affecting the commuters. These issues include time efficiency of travelling and delivering cargoes between maritime areas, company's redress policies for travel/shipment delays, cancellation, damaged and lost goods and change of shipping schedules, affordable prices of goods sold in ships, sanitary conditions of shipping vessels in terms of accommodation, wash rooms and eateries on board, and full disclosure of and readily available information to consumers on passenger fares, freight charges, change in schedules, and cancellation or delay in trips.

Some of the most common problems/issues faced by the complainants are;

- Damage done to their goods and luggage whilst loading and off-loading;
- Loss of their belongings with no compensation;
- Exorbitant charges on both regulated and non-regulated food items sold in ships for consumers;
- Change of schedules while traveling;
- Unannounced cancellation of the trips with passengers stranded for days;
- Delay in the departure time;
- Poor and inhumane conditions of the vessels in terms of accommodation, wash rooms and eateries on board;
- Lack of safety provisions;
- Non-disclosure of full information on ticket and exorbitant freight charges;
- Consumers incurring costs due to ship delays or cancellation;
- Non-provision of bus transportation for ferry services in Viti Levu and Vanua Levu;
- No proper waiting facilities at wharves/jetties;
- Personal luggage often placed together with livestock and other cargoes;
- Refund Delays; and
- Extra Charges – handling charges on top of normal freight charges

The Council, through the complaints received, has noted that many consumers are troubled due to lack of quality and efficient services thus are voicing their disappointment, frustration and distrust in the shipping services.

Ms. Y (complainant) paid Supreme Fuel Limited for premix 200 litres to be delivered to a shipping service provider (respondent) so it could be transported to Kadavu. Although confirmation was provided to the Council by Supreme Fuel via a bill of lading that the fuel was delivered to the respondent, feedback from the respondent remained futile and only 44 gallons (equivalent to 166.56 litres) were delivered to Kadavu. Subsequently, the case was referred to Small Claims Tribunal (SCT). The Council deems the respondent's standard operating procedures in delivering fuel drums as unsatisfactory – a common fault found among shipping companies, and did not have a proper storage facility to safeguard consignments. Moreover, there is no proper filing nor issuance of documentation that could be kept as evidence when receiving and delivering fuel drums to parties involved.

(Source: Primary Study – Consumer Council of Fiji, 2020)

Mr. X (complainant) had his hardware transported by a shipping service provider to Ono-i-Lau. The following incidents had transpired with the respondent:

- 75 concrete blocks were supposed to be offloaded in Doi village, Ono-i-Lau but the complainant only received 65 thus 10 went missing;
- The complainant paid \$30.00 for the transportation of hardware from Doi village to Nukuni village as these were offloaded at the wrong village by the respondent;
- 16 rods went missing but the complainant managed to locate them after one week at Lovoni village – located half a mile far from Nukuni village; and
- No delivery docket was signed by the complainant.

Given the above, the feedback required from the respondent remained futile despite numerous follow-ups made by the Council whilst requesting the respondent to compensate the complainant's 10 missing concrete blocks, \$30.00 transportation costs, and breakdown of freight charges as documented on the complainant's copy of receipts. Subsequently, the matter was referred to Small Claims Tribunal (SCT). Like Ms Xcomplaint (Case Study Two), the shipping company did not have a proper storage facility to safeguard consignments.

(Source: Primary Study – Consumer Council of Fiji, 2020)

Supplementary Questions

1. Question 20(c) of the written response - Can the Council provide some successful stories on Project Solesolevaki and Back to my Roots?

Back to my roots project

The Consumer Council of Fiji's 'Back to My Roots Project', themed Food Security: Planting organic food using traditional methods was implemented in the Lomaivuna, Naitasiri, aimed to promote **sustainable production and consumption practices – major focus of the global consumer movement group to build sustainable consumption patterns**, amongst rural consumers who are also engaged in subsistence farming. The project supported the Sustainable Development Goal 12 of achieving economic growth through sustainable production and consumption. It was focused specifically on incorporating traditional farming practices in farms, whether subsistence or commercial by creating a platform for individuals to share traditional knowledge for sustainability.

The project not only helped participants to understand sustainable production and consumption methods but also created a sharing community that helps foster food security, alleviate financial distress and equip Fijian consumers to better face adversities posed by any crises. The current COVID-19 pandemic has taught Fijian consumers of the need to be resilient in the face of crises, hence the implementation of this project.

What we achieved?

Community visits and Mobile Units

Community visits and mobile units were conducted from 8 September, 2020 to the 25 September, 2020 in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. The Council visited churches, communities, market vendors, settlements in the Naitasiri Province, leading up to the main workshops for the identified farming sectors in Lomaivuna. There were 2,736 people reached during these events.

Training

A training was done with the women's group in Naivakacau village in Tailevu during the focal week where they shared their views on the importance of sustainable living and sustainable subsistence farming using traditional techniques. A total of 30 women were part of this training.

"Back to My Roots" Video Competition

A video competition was launched through Facebook where youths were encouraged to submit a 60-seconds video on the question "What do they think about the current farming practices employed in Fiji and how this can be improved to ensure minimum damage to the environment?" The Council selected and rewarded three winners from the entries received.

Guardians of the environment

Members of the Naivakacau Women's Club in the province of Tailevu vowed to reduce the impact of their consumption on the environment. The women took a pledge to conserve natural resources and protect the environment for future generations. They committed to be guardians of the environment, leading the way for their village and neighboring communities.

Testimonials

Elena Radiniceva, 70

"There is a river just beside this village. We must become sustainable because this river is used for bathing and also a source of food for some of us. With the training provided by the Consumer Council of Fiji, we are now aware of our responsibilities towards ourselves, especially our environment. We are grateful for the Council for the changes made in our everyday living."

Wakesa Navakasa, 54

"I just realized this after the training conducted by the team from Consumer Council of Fiji that the vegetables that we buy may contain chemicals. In this case, we should teach ourselves to plant our own food. Why buy noodles when it's not our food. Vegetables are our food because its healthy".

Amit Kumar, 42

"The project was very useful to us here in Lomaivuna especially working together in groups to achieve something. This is the first time we have done this as we always work in isolation. We are grateful to the Council for taking their time out and reminding us of our duty towards the environment and the importance of protecting it. I am happy that this project has brought the farmers together."

Jonati Tikolevu, 45

"I was born and raised here in Lomaivuna. For the first time in 40 years, we have the Lomaivuna Farmers Council. This is a great initiative for the farmers and the people of Lomaivuna because this Council will assist the farmers. We thank the Consumer Council of Fiji for giving us the opportunity to work together and help assist each other during this time when we are struggling. While there was a plan to form a Council nothing concrete came out of discussions. It was not until the CCoF carried out this project which allowed us to form the Council."

Sakiusa Matavesi, 62

"This is a great opportunity for us here at sector 5 to work together in this farm. When we talk about traditional farming method, it is what we are doing here today. This project has taught us to be sustainable and think of our future generations by working together as a team and achieving a

- ✓ Communications Fiji Ltd 925 x 30 secs adverts
- ✓ Fiji Broadcasting Corporation 2 - 65 x 30 secs adverts.

76 TV commercials were run from 20 May to 19 June with a total airtime of 38 minutes.

- ✓ Fiji TV3 advertisement- 76 x 30 seconds- 1 month aired with a sign language interpreter featured for inclusivity.
- ✓ CEO appeared on premier of Dollars and Sense program on 20 May and second episode on 27 May.
- ✓ TV promo on the program was aired for a week from 13 May.

Workshop was held at the Serua Provincial Council and 4 villages were identified for the Phase 2 of this, project. They were;

- ✓ Sauniveiuto, Serua
- ✓ Dranikula village
- ✓ Serua Island
- ✓ Waibogi Village
- ✓ Talenaua Village

These are additional to Logani and Naivakacau villages in the province of Tailevu.

A total of 273 seedlings were distributed to these identified villages to help establish a secure source of food and income.

2. Question 21(b)(i) of the written response – The Committee noted that the “Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism had requested for an increase in the Board allowance as the main objective was to align the Council’s Board allowance with other similar organisation”. Provide example on which organisations the Ministry referring to?

Question 21(b)(i) of the written response stated that “The Council submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism requesting for an increase in the Board allowance for the financial year 2017- 2018 as the board allowance remained unchanged since 2010. It is to be noted that while Board allowance adjustments were done for several organizations over the years in line with market realities, unfortunately the same was not done for the Consumer Council board members.

Hence the proposal was made by the Council to the Ministry and was not requested by the Ministry.

3. To what level senior officers are moving out of the Council after attended to numerous training and capacity building?

4 out of 9 left the Council under the period of review for their own career prosperity.