

# APPENDICES

# Appendix I

Written Response by the  
Ministry of Rural and  
Maritime & Disaster  
Management



## **MINISTRY OF RURAL AND MARITIME DEVELOPMENT AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE PARLIAMENT STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS QUESTIONS ON THE MINISTRY'S 2016-2018 ANNUAL REPORT**

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**Question 1:** What are the challenges faced by the Ministry in fulfilling its vision of achieving sustainable, inclusive growth and resilient communities? How is the Ministry striving to address these challenges?

**Response:**

Natural disasters and climate change remains the biggest challenge in fulfilling the overall implementation of the Ministry's activities. Since 2014, twenty (20) tropical cyclones have made landfall in Fiji where **four (4)** of these range from categories 3-5.

In 2016, Category 5 TC Winston wiped out one third of Fiji's GDP, with impacts equivalent to FJD 1.96 billion. In addition to this, 44 lives were lost, there were damages to crops and livestock, 40,000 homes were damaged or destroyed and 350 schools were flattened throughout the country. This tested the capacity of the Disaster Management's efforts towards response.

**How to address these challenges?**

The National Disaster Management Office has updated the 2010 **National Emergency Operating Centre (NEOC)** Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). With support from key partners, the NDMO now has the following documents that has improved its operation:

**(i) Policy Intervention**

- a. Detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for those seconded to the NDMO during operation.
- b. Endorsed the Psychological First Aid Manual [PFA]
- c. Logistics Manual and
- d. Evacuation Centre SOP

**(ii) Technology**

- a. Advance technology to improve communication and response with our stakeholders.
- b. Through a \$0.5 Million support by the Japanese government 9 High Frequency Radio equipment's are now installed in the Northern Division.
- c. Digitalization process – Operational readiness check both at National and Divisional level, Evacuation Centre online check form, Initial damage assessment form and detail damage assessment form. Converting the above process online has saved cost and time.

**(iii) Infrastructure**

- a. Restructure of the NEOC operations in line with international Incident Management practices.

In concurrence with disaster related challenges, the Ministry is faced with continuous infrastructural development challenges that deters rural dwellers in accessing basic services and markets.

**How to address these challenges?**

The Ministry strives to address its continuing challenges through:

- i. Provision of basic services through its Self-Help Programme, Community Access Roads Programme and High Risk Water and Sanitation Programme.
- ii. Rural markets/ rural growth centers through conducting of feasibility studies and consultation with line agencies under the integrated Rural Development Framework to ensure that rural communities can access advice and services and are able to sell and value add produce.
- iii. Education and awareness to ensure economic, disaster and climate change resilience in the face of adversity.

**Question 2: What was the reason for the transfer of the administration of the Committee on Better Utilisation of Land (CBUL) to the Ministry of Agriculture?**

**Response**

The Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development acted on the transfer of the CBUL Programme to the Ministry of Agriculture based on the 2016 and 2017 Budget announcement and Cabinet Decision whereby budget was allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA). The handover was signed on 19 December 2017 after consultations with MOA.

**Question 3:** Provide reasons for the underutilisation of the total Budget provision in the 2016-2017 & 2017-2018 financial years. Detail the Programmes and activities of the Ministry which were scheduled in this period and not completed resulting in the significant savings.

**Response**

**Reasons for Underutilisation of Funds**

Firstly, it is due to the Ministry's commitments to the response and rehabilitation works during and post TC Winston.

Secondly, underutilised funds totaling to \$3.6 million were redeployed for TC Winston recovery efforts. This includes the capital expenditure programme such as Project Preparatory Works (PPW) and Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) and Emergency Water Supply (EWS) from SEG 7 of the operating expenditure.

**Detailed Programmes and Activities**

Details are attached at annex 1.

**Question 4:** Community Access Roads, Footpaths and Footbridges (CARFF):

- a. Provide a list of the 96 projects implemented under the CARFF programme in 2016- 2017 & 2017-2018 and a breakdown of the households assisted according to their location and Division.

**Response:**

The list is attached at annex 2

- b. Page 13 of Annual Report (Population Beneficiaries for CARFF) – Provide clarification on the disparity between the huge population size benefitting from this programme compared to the limited number of households assisted. What strategy is employed by the Ministry to ensure that this project is fairly implemented across all Divisions?

**Response:**

The 8,697 population size is determined from the 2,168 households that benefitted from the Programme in the 2016-2017 FY. The same also applies to the 2017-2018 figures. All the Ministry's projects are fairly distributed based on needs. Priority is given to communities that are without access.

Therefore, the Ministry is basing its current development priorities from the National data and community profiles.

**Question 5:** In which communities were the 285 Self-Help Programme projects implemented in the 2016/2017 & 2017/2018 financial years?

**Response:**

Projects implemented in both FYs for the Central Division totals to 80, Eastern Division is 42, Northern Division is 72 and Western Division is 91. Therefore, in the 2016 to 2017 FY 164 projects were implemented whereas in the 2017 – 2018 FY is 121 projects.

The list is attached at **Annex 3**.

**Question 6: Provide a breakdown of the 140 Rural Housing Assistance projects implemented in the 2016/2017 & 2017/2018 financial years, by Division.**

**Response:**

Projects implemented in both FYs for the Central Division totals to 29, Eastern Division is 16, Northern Division is 38 and Western Division is 57. Therefore, in the 2016 to 2017 FY 41 projects were implemented whereas in the 2017 – 2018 FY is 99 projects

The list is attached at **Annex 4**.

**Question 7: Confirm whether the 29 Project Preparatory Work projects were implemented as scheduled in the 2016/2017 & 2017/2018 financial years. Specify what projects these preparatory works were for.**

**Response:**

Not all the 29 PPWs were implemented due to the lengthy process required to lease land, the limited resources with the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources to conduct the Geo Tech survey, Government Tender Board processes and overall mobilization of resources. Additionally, the impact of TC Winston also affected the implementation.

Some of the preliminary activities funded under the PPW allocation include land surveys, assessments, consultations, lease payments, land preparations, traditional protocol services including obtaining land consent, meeting expenses, and project assessment trips.

This funding is no longer allocated in the Ministry's budget since the 2020-21 FY as each line Ministry have taken the ownership to implement their own PPW and PSIP projects.

The list of PPWs is attached as **annex 5**.

**Question 8: How has the Ministry worked in collaboration with other stakeholders such as, Fiji Roads Authority and Ministry of Agriculture in ensuring that communities affected by dry spells or drought-stricken areas and where water sources have dried up, have proper access roads for the ease of provision or delivery of emergency water supplies? Provide a list of the areas commonly affected areas.**

## **Response:**

### **Collaboration with Line Agencies**

The collaboration at the National Level with the formation **of a Permanent Secretary's Forum called the Rural Seven (R7) Leaders** has acquired the essence to actively collaborate and coordinate technical officials with rural development initiation, planning and implementation of projects. This current formation strengthens integrated rural development.

The PS's provide strategic guidance with the Directors from each departments from the seven (7) Ministry's (Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management, Ministry of I-Taukei Affairs, Ministry of Youth and Sports) forming the Technical Working Group.

These partnership platform is currently being implemented in the villages of Wainilotulevu and Nasoqo, Tikina Veinuqa in Namosi. Additionally, it was used to collate data on rural investment from all agencies since 2014.

The Ministry has recently signed an agreement with the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) on the implementation of ecological purification systems in areas affected by prolonged dry spells and the absence of safe drinking water. These areas include:

- (i) Dawasamu Primary School, Tailevu;
- (ii) Naqia Village, Tailevu;
- (iii) Naboutini Village, Serua;
- (iv) Wainilotulevu Village, Namosi;
- (v) Tavuki Village, Kadavu;
- (vi) Natewa Village, Cakaudrove;
- (vii) Nagadoa Village, Bua;
- (viii) Namada & Nasovotava Village, Nadroga; and
- (ix) Saioko Village, Ra.

The practice now is that Water Authority of Fiji is responsible for emergency water cartage to rural communities on the mainland of Viti Levu while the Ministry for the maritime islands.

The Ministry through its Emergency Water Supply (EWS) Programme purchased additional water pumps and hoses to address the accessibility issue. In addition to these, 200 litres water tanks were also procured to be mounted on fiberglass boats which were used to access areas inaccessible by barges. For communities affected by periods of dry spells additional and longer hoses were used to address the issue.

Secondly, the Ministry consults with the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) on the type of CARFF to be Implemented and the particular locations in line with the Divisional needs. FRA is currently upgrading the road networks in Kadavu, Gau and Koro and also constructing new roads in Kadavu linking Vunisea and Kavala. These roads will ease the burden of carting water to areas affected by prolonged dry spells. The other islands in the Eastern Division are best assisted by vessels.

### **Areas affected by Drought**

Areas commonly affected by periods of dry spells, drought or have no sources of water in the Central Division include:

- i. Tailevu:- Verata, Namara, Vugalei, Taivugalei, Dawasamu
- ii. Naitasiri :- Navuakece, Matailobau
- iii. Namosi:-Veivatuloa
- iv. Serua: Yanuca Island

In the Eastern Division these areas are:

- i. Batiki Island
- ii. Koro Island
- iii. Gau Island
- iv. Kadavu Island – Tikina Ono
- v. Lau Island – Southern Lau

Areas affected in the Western Division include all villages, settlements, schools, nursing stations and health centres and police post located in Vatulele, Malolo and Yasawa are usually affected during a long dry-spell.

**Question 9: Considering the substantial water cartage expenses to the Ministry, what are the plans to partner with other stakeholders to ensure that areas frequently affected by water shortages are provided with a permanent water supply?**

### **Response**

The Ministry continues to consult with the Ministry of Infrastructure, Water Authority of Fiji and Mineral Resources Department (MRD) for permanent water solutions. The WAF has scoped areas where reliable water sources have been identified.

In addition, the Ministry continues to cart to areas affected by dry spells. In terms of Water Cartage Expenses, the Central Division plans to procure a portable water delivery tank to be used during water carting exercises. The division will work collaboratively with other ministries and agencies for the engagement of their trucks to deliver water carting services to communal water tanks in affected areas.



Plans are in place to consult with development partners, NGOs and relevant stakeholders to assist areas in the Eastern Division that are usually affected by water shortages. Partners have assisted in the development of water projects for areas like Kade Village, Koro and Nacavanadi Village, Gau. WAF and MRD have also confirmed that they have explored the potential water sources that can be tapped in these areas. WAF has also completed a major water project on Moturiki Island and this will ease the water woes that the island is faced with.

In the 2019 to 2020 FY, the Ministry has signed an MOU with the Oceania Water Group for the hiring of its desalination plant to assist in emergency water cartage. The plant can convert approximately 50,000 litres of seawater into drinkable water (ph 7 level) within 24 hours. Government Barge would not be required to return to Lautoka for refilling as water would be drawn from the water tanks being filled by the plant. The plant was deployed immediately after Cyclone Harold to Kadavu, Lau and Yasawa. This has significantly reduced the cost of water cartage by more than 50 percent. From 30 August to 2 October 2020, a total of 2,280,070 litres of water were carted to Malolo, Yanuca and Vatulele.

Further, the Ministry, in partnership with the UNDP, is now assisting in the purchase and installation of desalination plant for maritime communities to assist in prolonged dry-spell. A classic example is the water project in Ekubu Village in Vatulele where a desalination plant will be installed and powered by solar. This plant can convert about 3,000 litres of seawater into drinkable water within 24 hours. The project is now being piloted in Ekubu and will be replicated to other maritime communities. Work for Ekubu water project is progressing well and is expected to complete within the next 3 months.

**Question 10: What plans are there provide water pumps to households and areas with existing bore holes? Provide list of communities having bore holes and alternative water sources.**

**Response**

Water pumps will be provided to the communities through the Divisional Offices once thorough assessments are conducted with recommendations provided by MRD and the Department of Water and Sewerage.

The Ministry assists drought-prone areas with boreholes through its Self-Help programme. This is part of the Ministry's long term plan to ensure rural communities are provided with clean and safe water in adequate quantity at all times.

The list of communities with boreholes is available with MRD.

**Question 11: What are the challenges faced by the Ministry in providing ancillary support services on behalf of other ministries and stakeholder not represented at particular Division or District. Has consideration been made to decentralize these services to allow other Ministries and Departments to carry out their own duties?**

**Confirm whether the Ministry still continues to provide ancillary support services in these areas and provide a list of the Districts that require such services.**

**Response:**

The challenges are:

- a) Not sufficient to undertake the ancillary services;
- b) Lack of staff and resources other ministries and stakeholders not present in their areas of responsibility (E.g. Social Welfare, LTA, and FNPF). This utilizes much of our time to deliver our core functions of the Ministry.

**Decentralizing of Services**

Yes, we have considered the decentralization of services and this is evident with the opening of the new Government stations which will provide more avenues to facilitate Government services.

**Confirmation on the Provision of Support Services**

The Ministry still undertake Justice of Peace (JP) Services, revenue collection for gaming, cemetery, fundraising permits, fishing permits, liquor license and revenue collection.

**Question 12: How is the Ministry monitoring the construction of homes in villages and rural areas to ensure compliance with the National Building Code?**

**Response**

The Ministry does not monitor the compliance, as it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Infrastructure. However, we are a member of the joined taskforce chaired by the Ministry of Infrastructure supporting the lead Consultant (Wavefront Planning and Design) that is revising Fiji's National Building code.

**Question 13: Detail the amount and type of vehicles and heavy machinery procured as part of the MOA with the Japanese International Cooperation System Grant Aid of \$5.8m to the Ministry towards the implementation of the Economic and Social Development Programme immediately after a natural disaster.**

**Response**

The following machines and equipments were procured under the Agent Agreement between the Ministry and the Japan International Cooperation System. The current cost is based on the current year's exchange rate.

Asset Description	Quantity	Cost (FJ\$)
1. 12 Ton Excavators	5	\$848,463.82
2. 10 Ton Dump Trucks	4	\$682,968.30
3. Motor Grader	1	\$478,430.12
4. 9 Ton Cargo Crane Trucks	4	\$989,455.71

5.	Pick-up Trucks Twin Cab (Ford)	5	\$397,200.77
6.	Forklifts	4	\$138,764.46
7.	Tractors	4	\$942,393.80
8.	Boats with engines	6	\$513,984.56
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$4,991,661.54</b>

Items 1-4 and 7 have been distributed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Waterways based on Cabinet decision.

The remaining \$808,000 were used as agent fees, storage cost and payment of services, banking charges, set up and training for boats and tractor assembly training. The breakdown is attached. Out of this total remaining balance FJ\$53,000 was deposited in the Government's Consolidated Fund Account.

**Question 14: Provide more information on the Housing assistance of the Ministry to rural areas and the eligibility criteria.**

**Response**

The Housing Assistance under the Rural Housing Assistance Programme operates on two schemes.

**Scheme 1:** Involves the deposit of funds by recipients into the Trust Fund Account for the procurement of building materials. The Ministry was responsible for the procurement and transportation of building materials and the provision of carpenters to the recipients.

**Scheme 2:** The assistance was based on a one third government contribution and two third contribution by government for a 24 x 16 house.

Schedule 12 of the Social justice Act 2001 provides the legal basis for this affirmative action programme, which provides for Self Help Housing assistance in rural areas.

The scheme is targeted at rural dwellers meeting the following criteria:

- i. They must live permanently in the village or rural settlement recognized by the Provincial Council or District Advisory Councillor,
- ii. They must not already possess a house, and
- iii. The application must be endorsed by the Turaga ni Koro or District Advisory Councillor.

**This programme has been transferred to the Ministry of Housing and Community Development in the 2018-2019 FY.**

**Question 15: Provide us with the current status of Government quarters around the country and plans for their repair and maintenance.**

**Response:**

Most of the Government pool quarters in the Divisions need repairs and maintenance. Despite these deteriorating conditions, some of the Government officers still reside in them. Complaints on repairs and maintenance of quarters are lodged through the Commissioners Office and further submitted to the Construction Implementation Unit (CIU) for funding request. The Divisional Commissioners do not have funding allocation for repairs & maintenance of quarters (quick fix)

**Plans for Repair**

The Divisional Commissioners administers more than 900 (909 = 170 CED, 262 CCD, 313 CWD, 164 CND) pool Government quarters in totality. This total is exclusive to the Government rented quarters managed by CIU in the greater Suva area.

For the financial year 2020-21, the Ministry completed minor repairs and maintenance on 29 Government quarters and 31 are still in progress for minor works since the financial year 2021 – 2022. A total budget of over \$600,000 has been expended for this repair works. In the

current financial year, 88 Government quarters are anticipated to be repaired with an estimated cost of \$3.4million by the CIU.

However, some of the existing quarters with other Ministries are not in our records. To manage some of the administration details, a Quarters Administration Policy is near completion to solidify our records management and work with CIU in the management of these Government assets.

**The Ministry only manages government pool quarters while institutional quarters are administered by responsible agencies.**

**Question 16: What has been the progress of the review of the Natural Disaster Management Act (NDMA) and National Disaster Management Plan? Broadly discuss what amendments were being sought to these two documents.**

**Response**

The NDMA is in its final stages of drafting. The summary of new amendments are listed below:

1. The change in the name from Natural Disaster to National Disaster, which takes into consideration man-made disasters (apart from Civil Unrest);
2. Integrated multi-hazard early warning system is developed and functional across all levels (national to sub- national);
3. Risk data and information collection, production, sharing and dissemination is effective in support of disaster risk management and development planning in Fiji;
4. 'Whole of Society' and Participatory Approaches, Inclusion and Vulnerable Groups;
5. Fiji Cluster System;
6. The Act makes provision to establish DRR Monitoring Committee and DRR Monitoring Unit; and
7. System of DRM Committees at sub-national levels (Divisional, Provincial, District, Municipal and Communal).

The Literature Review has been comprehensive with a fair understanding not only of the Fiji DRM context, but also regional and international such as Australia, Indonesia and New Zealand.

Given the implication of COVID19 to the Economy, NDMO awaits the After Action Review from the Min. Health where lessons learned from the COVID operation will be included in the revised Act.

**Question 17: Update us on the refurbishment of Emergency Operation Centers.**

**Response**

The refurbishment of the nine (9) EOC's were funded by the ACP-EU/SPC funded Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific (BSRP) project. They are:

1. Nadi EOC

2. Commissioner Western Division EOC
3. District Officer Lautoka EOC
4. District Officer Tavua EOC
5. District Officer Vunidawa EOC
6. Provincial Administrator Bua EOC
7. National Emergency Operation Center
8. District Officer Korovou EOC
9. Commissioner Central Division EOC

**The remaining 26 EOC's to be refurbished are:**

srl	Name of EOC	srl	Name of EOC
1	PA Serua	14	ADO Seaqaqa
2	ADO Dada	15	ADO Kubulau
3	ADO Nayavu	16	DO Saqani
4	DO Suva	17	ADO Tukavesi
5	PA Rewa	18	PA Macuata
6	PA Tailevu	19	PA Cakaudrove
7	CED	20	DO Wainikoro
8	PA Lomaiviti	21	DO Lekutu
9	PA Kadavu	22	DO Nadarivatu
10	ADO Koro	23	DO Navosa
11	DO Gau	24	PA Nadroga/Navosa
12	DO Rotuma	25	ADO Namarai
13	CND	26	ADO Kavala

**Question 18: Provide more information on the CIRDAP programs implemented in Fiji.**

**Response**

The Government of Fiji through CIRDAP has mostly benefitted from a number of capacity building programs over the years. Since the ratification of Fiji's membership in 2011, the Ministry has benefitted from more than 36 Programmes offered by CIRDAP including workshops, trainings and consultations in the area of disaster risk management, integrated rural development, infrastructural development and project management. Thirty eight (38) staff have benefitted from these capacity building programmes.

Fiji has hosted the CIRDAP 20<sup>th</sup> Governing Council (GC) meeting in 2015 and the 33<sup>rd</sup> Technical Committee Meeting with the Regional Policy Dialogue on Rural Development in 2018. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Governing Council meeting, Fiji's nominee to the Director General position was unanimously agreed to by the GC members. Fiji nominee has served a 4 year term with CIRDAP from June 2016 to 2020.

**Question 19: We note that the Ministry provides advisory and support roles to the Provincial Development Boards, the Divisional Development Boards and the District Advisory Councils. Specify the roles carried out by these three forums in the provision of strategic directions for development in their respective Divisions.**

The District Advisory Council, Provincial Development Boards and Divisional Development Boards assists the Ministry in the identification of development priorities and act as the conduit for development between the communities and government.

The roles for these boards are listed below:

**The Role of the District Advisory Council**

Councilors are currently expected to:

- i. Highlight development needs and concerns of the community to the relevant Government stakeholders and through forums such as the District Advisory Council Meetings, the District Development Committees and Divisional Development Committees;
- ii. Promote and facilitate implementation of Government policies at the community level, Including the verification and endorsement of scholarship and community development proposals;
- iii. Articulate Governments policies and foster their active contribution of the community to local and national development programmes.

**Role of the Provincial Development Board**

The function of the Board is to:

- i. assist the Divisional Commissioner in providing strategic directions of development in the Province;
- ii. scrutinize and endorse the Provincial Strategic Development Plan;
- iii. evaluate and prioritize capital projects above \$50,000.00 submitted by Ministries for national budget submission;
- iv. monitor and evaluate the implementation of Capital Projects above \$50,000.00 and all development activities in the Province through the 6 monthly and Annual reports;
- v. ensure that equal opportunity of access to basic amenities and other development needs to all the sections of the community and areas of the Province are provided;
- vi. raise policy related issues to the Divisional Development Board for further consideration; and
- vii. Discuss and endorse the six (6) monthly consolidated Progress reports and Annual reports on development activities in the Province compiled by the Provincial Administrator.

**Role of the Divisional Development Board**

To assist the Divisional Commissioners:

- i. In the identification and prioritisation of projects costing more than \$100,000.00 emanating from the Provincial Development Board to be tabled at the National Steering Committee for inclusion in the Ministry's budgetary submission to the Ministry of Economy for funding consideration;
- ii. In the planning and consolidation of a Divisional Development Plan incorporating issues fundamental to the improvement of socio-economic development of the division; and
- iii. In the monitoring and evaluation of all capital projects funded by the government and/or other donor agencies.

**Question 20: We note that the Ministry conducted Rural Carpenter Trainings, in partnership with the Fiji National University, in certain rural and maritime communities. Inform us of whether this is an ongoing programme and highlight some success stories.**

**Response**

The Rural Carpenter Trainings was conducted by the Rural Housing Unit through a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Fiji National University. The partnership resulted from the direct results of the disastrous effect of Category 5 Cyclone Winston in February 2016 which destroyed majority of the dwelling houses in rural communities located on the path of the cyclone.

Its primary objective was to up-skill carpenters residing in rural communities that did not have any formal qualification on carpentry work from any tertiary or vocational institutions. The Programme was implemented to assist potential carpenters in the construction of cyclone-resistant houses in their respective communities, particularly the immediate repair of partially damaged and re-building of completely damaged houses instead of waiting for the government to provide carpenters for their housing recovery and rehabilitation.

In the Northern Division, training were undertaken in Namuka i Cake Primary School in the year 2018, however in the same year Rural Housing Unit was transferred from Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development to Ministry of Community Development and Housing. In the Eastern Division, training was held in Tiliva Village Kadavu.

The training programme is not implemented by the Ministry since RHU was transferred to the Ministry of Housing and Community Development in the 2018 to 2019 FY. The programme was also undertaken by the Ministry of I'taukei Affairs after the aftermath of TC Harold.

**Question 21: Update the Committee on the rehabilitation works on Qamea Island following the landslide during TC Winston. Confirm whether the Dreketi Health Centre, Dreketi Primary School and houses destroyed in Togo village have been**



**reconstructed. Are there plans to relocate the 18 houses which were identified to be in the red zone areas?**

**Response**

On the 18th of December, 2016, Dreketi Village on Qamea Island in the Northern Division was affected by Tropical Depression 04F (TD04F) when it passed over the North Eastern parts of Fiji. The school, health center and homes were affected.

In 2017, Cabinet approved a multi-agency team to conduct rapid response to meet basic humanitarian needs following initial assessments was conducted by the Office of the Commissioner Northern Division (CND) addressing immediate needs in food security, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and health.

The main task of the Multi-Agency Team is to provide a guide for further recovery and long-term rehabilitation for the island of Qamea. During this trip, the Mineral Resources Department confirmed that the 18 dwellings situated at the foot of the mountains at Dreketi Village are exposed to high risks of being buried by landslides if the intensity and frequency of heavy rainfall continues to increase.

**Plans for Relocation**

A proposed costing of relocating the school, health center and 18 homes is approximately \$1,868,314. This proposal was submitted to Min. Economy as part of the Ministry budget submission for 2020 – 2021 however was not considered.

**Question 22: What is the current status of the new Database Management system project?**

As we speak, the Ministry has already consolidated the:

- i. Ministry's capital projects in the last 10 years;
- ii. Mapping of the 10 years capital projects;
- iii. FBOS analysis by Sectors;
- iv. Community Profile;
- v. Currently consolidating rural development projects/services by Agencies/CSO's; and
- vi. Funding through UNDP to procure new Server and equipments for the database.

**Question 23: We note that 5 Officers of the Ministry were on full-time study leave during the 2 financial years to upgrade their qualifications. Confirm whether they have been retained by the Ministry and if so, have they been promoted or received salary upgrade?**

**Response**

The following officers were on study leave for the period 2016-17 and 2017-18:

1. Ms. Litiana Bainimarama
2. Mr. Mitieli Ratinaisiwa

3. Mr.Jone Selala
4. Mr.Koroka Balemaiwai
5. Mr. Mesake Mataitoga

Upon Mr. Mataitoga's return from study he continued to work in the Ministry from 2018 to August 2022 prior to his resignation. Officers 1-4 are still employed by the Ministry with 3 being promoted after applying for vacant posts.

Receiving a salary upgrade post-studies is not a part of the process in the Ministry as staff are bonded on the condition that they will return to the same positions and conditions of their post they served in before departing for studies.

Salary upgrade will only be implemented if the Officers have become successful in their Applications for vacant positions that are above their current positions.

**Question 24: What is the Ministry doing to promote the health and wellbeing of its staff to prevent untimely staff demises?**

**Response**

The Ministry has attended both Module 1 and Module 2 of the Health Promoting Workplace Workshops organised by the Ministry of Health. A health screening exercise was undertaken for the Ministry's staff on 15 July, 2022 and result were communicated to the Ministry during module 2 of the Health Promoting Workplace Workshop.

A draft mitigation plan has been submitted for consideration. Amongst the mitigation plan are activities to target the outcome of the health screening exercise including healthy diet, promotion of wellness walk not only on Wellness Wednesdays but 30 minutes daily, monitoring of healthy diet in the office, the sale of more healthy and nutrient food by caterers and the promotion of mental well-being.

The Ministry has also recently been part of the volleyball business house tournaments and continues- to take part in the Wednesday wellness sporting activities.

**Question 25: Provide an update on the relocation of Nabavatu village in Dreketi, Macuata which was affected by inland erosion following TC Yasa.**

**Response**

Nabavatu Village was affected by an alarming geohazard event in 2021 following TC Ana. A serious of land slumps, landslides, tensional cracks and associated ground displacements were experienced. The whole village was relocated to the AOG church site, awaiting relocation to new site.

Assessment of the proposed site was conducted to ascertain the site stability and suitability for the proposed development (Relocation). As per the recommendations of the Geotechnical Report conducted by the Mineral Resource Department, the NDMO submitted a budget proposal for the revised COVID budget year requesting funding for the below work to be carried out:

1. Resistivity Survey – geophysical technique to ascertain groundwater source as well as the depth of the source. Nabavatu has a network of subsurface water that has to be surveyed to determine ground stability.
2. Drainage System – removal of water from the site and channeling excess water.
3. Reforestation Program – evidence of land slumps along slopes and also previous geohazards and is strongly advised to be re vegetated with deep rooted plants for slope stability.
4. Land Clearance and Preparation – removal of previous failed materials and overburden of unconsolidated material. Proper site levelling and compaction to engineered standards will be required.
5. Land Occupancy – identification and allocation of land areas in reference to map for potential sites for land occupancy.
6. Site Layout Design – Finalization of site layout design
7. Mitigation and adaptation works – To reduce existing and potential risks that may arise in future.

This proposal is now with the Ministry of Economy.

### **Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2017**

#### **Question 26:**

**We note that the auditor issued a qualified opinion on the 2017 accounts of the Ministry due to an unreconciled variance of \$197,953 which existed between the total revenue recorded in the general ledger and subsidiary revenue records maintained by the Ministry, due to which the accuracy and completeness of the operating revenue of \$1,417,065 could not be confirmed. Inform us on whether the issue has been rectified and the control measures put in place by the Ministry to prevent the recurrence of such issues.**

#### **Response**

The issue has been rectified and new processes were implemented with the approval of Ministry of Economy to prevent the recurrence of such issue.

Previously the Ministry had only one Bank Lodgment Clearance Account (Revenue Deposit clearing account). All revenue deposits for the whole Ministry was cleared into this account which made it difficult to specify the source of the deposits and efficient clearance.

The Ministry had five (5) Divisions and 34 duty stations in total. All daily deposits from were posted into this account. Therefore, in the 2019-2020 FY, the Ministry opened 4 new additional accounts which enabled the Divisions to make separate deposits and clearance. With this implementation, the Ministry was able to clear and overcome all the deposit transactions and the challenges of non-compliance over the years.

**Question 27: How have internal controls over revenue, expenses and trust fund accounts been strengthened?**

**Response**

For the past three (3) Financial Years the Ministry had **3 consecutive unqualified audit**. Management is now working on reducing high risk audit issues through control mechanisms by incorporating the issues of Internal / External Audit reports recommendations in the current Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Guidelines.

Due to the new improvement process introduced the results are as:

- i. Revenue-The Divisions were able to identify the revenue lodged and clear within the time frame. Divisions were able to zeroise all posting within the month and within the Financial year.
- ii. Trust Fund Account-The Ministry was able to update the Client Listing database from 2014 till date. Monthly reconciliations is done and the transactions are updated and submitted to Ministry of Economy on a monthly basis.
- iii. (iii)Trust Fund Expenses is verified through a checking process before releasing for payment.

**Question 28: How has the Ministry strengthened its tender processes to prevent delays in execution of planned capital projects?**

**Response**

The Ministry has developed the Request for Quotation (RFQ) process with the assistance of the Construction Implementation Unit (CIU) for the repairs and maintenance of staff quarters in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 FYs. The process is transparent and identifies companies that are able to provide quality repairs and maintenance services.

Tender process on water purification buckets under the High Risk Water and Sanitation Programme has been approved and RIE released.

There is also plan to tender CARFF projects starting off with the Western Division. At the moment the Ministry is working on RFQ for the CARFF and SHP projects.

**Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2018**

**Question 29:** We note that the auditor issued a qualified opinion on the accounts of the Ministry for the year ended 31 July 2018 as the Ministry did not maintain the detailed breakdown listing of the funds received for Rural Housing Scheme 1 (\$1,173,893) and one third self-help project (\$553,611), as included in the Provincial Trust Fund Accounts. Inform us on whether the issue has been rectified and the control measures put in place by the Ministry to prevent their recurrence.

**Response:**

The issue has been rectified and cleared and for these past 3 years FY 2018-2019, FY2019-2020, FY2020-2021 the Ministry has been issued with an unqualified opinion on the accounts of the Ministry.

The Ministry was able to maintain the detailed breakdown listing of the funds received for Rural Housing Scheme and one third Self Help project as included in the Provincial Trust Fund Account.

In 2019 a team was tasked to work on substantiating the Trust Fund variances. The Ministry was able to update the data and substantiate amount to the clients.

Currently, the Ministry has updated all the Trust Fund Data and detailed has been verified by the Auditor.

**Question 30: Trust Fund Account Provincial Development – Statement of Receipts and Payments - Provide more details on the “Cities Trust” and how funds held therein are utilized.**

**Response:**

The Cities Trust Account has been closed.

This Trust Account was operating under the under the Rural Housing Assistance Programme (RHA). There are two Schemes that operate under the RHA. The first of the two schemes involves the purchase and transportation of building materials from the supplier to the applicant, while the second scheme operates on a one third (applicant Contribution) and two third (government assistance) basis.


The practice then is once RIE are endorsed from the Ministry of Economy, Departmental Warrants are issued on the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> component by government while 1/3<sup>rd</sup> funds are accessed from the Trust Fund Account.

The Programme has now been renamed the Social Housing Assistance operating under the Ministry of Housing and Community Development.

CARFF SUMMARY – 2016 – 2018 FY


Division by Program by Year	No of Projects
[-] 2016-2017	43
[-] Non Cane Access Road	43
Central	8
Eastern	2
Northern	10
Western	23
[-] 2017-2018	53
[-] Community Access, Footpaths and Footbridges	53
Central	14
Eastern	3
Northern	11
Western	25
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>96</b>

**SHP SUMMARY – 2016 – 2018 FY**

Division by Program by Year 	No of Projects
[-] <b>2016-2017</b>	<b>164</b>
[-] <b>Self Help Project</b>	<b>164</b>
Central	45
Eastern	22
Northern	42
Western	55
[-] <b>2017-2018</b>	<b>121</b>
[-] <b>Self Help Project</b>	<b>121</b>
Central	35
Eastern	20
Northern	30
Western	36
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>285</b>



RHA SUMMARY – 2016 – 2018 FY

Division by Program by Year 	No of Projects
[-] 2016-2017	41
[-] Rural Housing Assistance	41
Central	10
Eastern	4
Northern	13
Western	14
[-] 2017-2018	99
[-] Rural Housing Assistance	99
Central	19
Eastern	12
Northern	25
Western	43
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>140</b>

# Appendix II

Verbatim Report on the  
Ministry of Rural and  
Maritime & Disaster  
Management Public  
Submission

# **[VERBATIM REPORT]**

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

### **1. MINISTRY OF RURAL AND MARITIME & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (2016-2018 Annual Report)**

**VENUE:** Small Committee Room, Parliament

**DATE:** Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2022

The Committee resumed at 11.15 a.m.

**Interviewee/Submittee: Ministry of Rural and Maritime and Disaster Management**

Attendance:

1.	Mr. David Kolitagane	Permanent Secretary
2.	Ms. Vasiti Soko	Director Disaster Management
3.	Ms. Ana Tora	Director Corporate Service
4.	Mr. Sunia Ratulevu	Manager Administration
5.	Ms. Raijeli Bakewa	Manager Quality Assurance
6.	Mr. Saiyad Rahim	Manager Finance

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MR. D. KOLITAGANE.- Mr. Chairman, *yadra vinaka* and a very good morning. As discussed with Mr. Chairman, I would like to cover a summary statement. We understand there were 30 questions sent to the Ministry to cover some high level issues, which hopefully can help the honourable Members of the Committee understand the context. We are discussing about 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 Report. The Ministry has progressed a lot, and we have addressed a lot of issues at hand.

Mr. Chairman, before you I have brought our full corporate team and I am glad that majority are ladies as part of our gender balance and gender sensitive programmes in the Ministry. We have created this post (Manager Quality Assurance) basically to target all our audit issues, especially our systems and processes within the Ministry. This is the core team that worked on the report and I must thank the team for working with us. My apologies, Mr. Chairman, delay in us sending the formal report, I think it was sent this morning, 30 questions as I mentioned, but we wanted to cover all the key progresses that we have done at the Ministry both in the past and recent.

The Ministry with the delegation led by the honourable Minister is just coming out of the Asia Pacific Ministerial Disaster Meeting held in Brisbane on 19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> September. It is the first Ministerial Meeting Level for this region where the Pacific leaders attend as a group. Just one week prior to the Brisbane Meeting, Fiji and the Ministry was hosting our first ever Ministerial and Senior Officials Level Meeting on Disaster Management in Denarau in Nadi. So we have about eight Ministers with all senior officials from the Disaster Management space who were joining us. I want to share a key take away from these meetings and maybe one of the few many items that we learnt and we want to acknowledge. Fiji's strategic role in the region I think was really acknowledged. We want to maintain it, especially in the climate change space. Fiji's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented and exceptional.

The honourable Prime Minister made Fiji and the Pacific very proud at COP, PIFs meeting, leaders meeting that was held recently in the UN and I think the world is watching and listening. As a regional leader and a small island state, we need to resource all layers of Government with new training, innovation and technology in this space of climate change, disaster management and to strengthen risk-informed development. We are already working on this, Mr. Chairman and I am happy to provide that some of the key updates are in the answers that we provide formally. So, as a region, we need to continue to build our network and capacity to fully mitigate disaster risks

and always respond better and faster in any challenges that we face. A good example, Mr. Chairman, is the Tonga volcano eruption. Although it was happening in Tonga, Fiji needed to respond and we responded very fast with the support of our development partners. Honourable Members, we are pleased to appear before the Standing Committee on the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 Annual Report. As I mentioned honourable Members, allow me to just highlight a few key issues before the Chairman can allow us to go in the specific questions.

As I mentioned, a lot of improvements we have implemented in the Ministry over the past five years and especially the recent past post-COVID-19. We have developed capital programmes and disaster management policies, standard operating procedures, manuals and guidelines to assist in standardising implementation and enhance quality and efficient work processes across the Ministry. We now have a dedicated programme and budget to support rural communities that rely on untreated water, water sources and those with no proper sanitation facilities. Partnership with government ministries, non-government organisations and CSOs to provide an extension arm within the implementation of the overall vision of the Ministry has been very positive. Moreover the continuous support from our development partners has provided more capability for the Ministry and our divisional office through the refurbishment of emergency operation centres and these refurbished centres help us respond very well during our disaster operations.

Finally to mention on this point, to stress that we have implemented risk informed development as a core planning and implementation as part of our strategy and this risk-informed development, Mr. Chairman, is about preparing all our key projects whether it is \$1,000 or \$50,000 or \$100,000, is to build stronger projects that can withhold or withstand cyclone and other impacts or natural disasters to that effect.

With reference to the National Disaster Management Act, I think there is a key question that was raised by the Committee, Question No. 16, I can recall. We have concluded the consultations and in summary I am highlighting just three key changes that we are proposing. The change in the name for “natural disaster” to “national disaster” which takes into account man-made disasters apart from civil unrest. We integrate multi-hazard early warning systems to help us manage all our disaster impacts both at the national and even at the sub-national level. This is a key outcome of the meetings that we had in Brisbane and in Nadi where Pacific Disaster Ministers agreed that the region and especially Fiji to implement robust multi-hazard early warning system and we use these early warning systems with better data capture and the technology to be able to respond more effectively to disaster, both in terms of mitigation and risk reduction. So, this amendment also is inclusive of the lessons that we learned from COVID-19 especially at the interagency level when we were responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in Fiji and especially the After Action Review (AAR) by the Ministry of Health to be considered as part of the change in the updated Act. Honourable Members, the Ministry has also aligned its activity to the Government digital transformation strategy which should allow us to embrace the change in improving productivity, providing quicker processing timeframes, ability to drive policies with data based insights and that encourages more collaboration and an improved communication.

This is visible in the launching of the new project application form for the Ministry where all our customers who wish to apply for the assistance from the Ministry can now apply online. I

am happy to report that from last week when we closed the application, we received 1,600 applications for this financial years' funding and it is now under process with our Ministry.

Honourable Members, in terms of the AFS, I think it is a core question in front of us, I am happy to update that the Ministry has recorded an unqualified audit opinion for the past three consecutive financial years: 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is the first time for the Ministry to achieve such an accomplishment comparing our last 15 years audits that we have reviewed so far. To recollect the past 15 years reports, Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Ministry have been having qualified audit opinions from issues related to revenue reporting, trust fund records and our finance team led by Mr. Saiyad and our Director Corporate went through all the documents for the past 20 years, historical financial records in order to satisfy the questions that were raised by the auditors. This is simply to reconcile figures in the Government general ledger under the Financial Management Information System (FMIS) with the physical records, receipts and lodgments and deposits that were held in storage in our office. This, we had to go back to the divisional level, the District Offices (DO) to collect all these receipts. So, it was a well-rewarded exercise, we did spend a lot of time and resources and we are happy to report on that progress.

Moving forward, we have reviewed, as I mentioned Mr. Chairman, Sir, our SOPs, policies all throughout the Ministry from project screening to accounts reconciliation where strategic measures have been implemented for continuous improvement. We have also invested in computer-aided monitoring mechanism namely the Cascade System Software Programme which monitors the achievement of our Units and Departments at the divisional level that brings it up consolidated at the Ministry level. We are working with a local company, Telecom Fiji Limited in this space and we are already in progress testing phase 2 of this technology.

This cascade software programme is a strategic monitoring tool that will help us plan, track and automatically update, monitor the goals from our 10-Year Strategic Plan that we launched in November 2021. Our Strategic Plan also reflects on the post-COVID-19 elections while ensuring that we are more relevant and strategic in our rural and maritime area. So, those statements Mr. Chairman, Sir, especially on audit and tracking, I think it specifically refers to Questions 26, 27 and 29 of the Committee that was raised to us. The specific details are provided in the write-up.

These strategic mechanisms, we have gone through consultations both at the immediate support level with our partners; UNDP. We had a lot of research and readings on World Bank materials and ADB to enable the Ministry to map out the strategy moving forward post-COVID-19.

With those key words, Mr. Chairman, I thank the honourable Members for the opportunity for the team to brief you in summary.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you PS for your statement and the brief, if you can also briefly go through some of the questions which you have not answered in the statement.

MR. D. KOLITAGANE.- Mr. Chairman, I think we have addressed Question 1. Is it okay if we move to Question 2?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, go ahead.

MR. D. KOLITAGANE.- Mr. Chairman, the movement of the Committee on Better Utilisation of Land (CBUL) funding and budget to the Ministry was made during the budget process from Ministry of Rural Development to Ministry of Agriculture, so it is part of the normal budget process.

Question 3 on the under utilisation of the budget in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, this was after the *TC Winston* impact, honourable Members, so most of our capital expenditures were redeployed to cover the Whole of Government response in funding *TC Winston* impact.

Question 4, we provided a detailed list on the 96 projects that we have implemented including household level and the population by division; that is part (a).

Question 4(b), the Ministry's primary decision to support or assist a community is based on needs basis. If there is a need on the ground, we need to support especially if we are talking about access road. Priority is given to those that do not have access at all, so we build on that. Most of the isolated communities are lesser in number or less population but very costly projects. We are happy now that we are working more closely with Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) in terms of FRA and the Ministry of Agriculture including Forestry to link logging roads, farm roads and community roads in a more coordinated manner.

It is the same for Question 5, we have provided the total by division for our self-help projects as was requested and the list is before the Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- PS, if you can continue briefly on all questions from Question 6 on onwards?

MR. D. KOLITAGANE.- Okay, Sir.

A breakdown of the 142 Rural Housing Assistance Programmes, our total is provided in Annexure 4. Mr. Chairman, 2016 and 2017 for the information of the honourable Members, 41 projects were implemented. This in terms of rural housing plus 99 in 2018 and 2019 so a total of 140.

Question 7, the Project Preparatory Work (PPW) funding is now no more with the Ministry. It was removed in 2020. Because of the involvement of CIU in the Ministry of Economy, we starting from preparations to final projects. So, not all the 29 PPWs were implemented, some were redeployed as part of the cyclone assistance support and also some were moved to other agencies for their implementation.

With the PPW allocation, normally we cover land surveys, consultation, lease payments, all preparatory work that is required before we actually build the project. The list is also provided in Annex 5 of our submission.

Question 8, in terms of the collaboration at the national level with other key agencies, I think FRA was specifically mentioned and the Ministry of Agriculture. Yes, we do have that coordination especially at the Permanent Secretary level and at the Directors level, technical teams level.

We have established an Rural Seven (R7) Committee. Very active, in fact, I presented an update to the last two Permanent Secretaries meetings where we bring up papers to be discussed at the R7 forum which includes Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation and Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and Youth. We want to add more Permanent Secretaries and portfolio into this but since we are just setting up, it is also part of our rural integrated framework or policy that was endorsed by Government in our current National Development Plan.

So, we have explained some of the projects that we are working more collaboratively at the Permanent Secretary/Inter Agency from dealing with water projects including water carting, and as I mentioned working on road access for farmers and communities access.

I think what we are trying to emphasise, Mr. Chairman, is we are basically implementing our cluster systems. We want to introduce how we work well during disaster where we engage all our nine cluster systems into the response or emergency phase.

Question 9 on Water Carting Expenses, we have about \$300,000 budget for water carting annually. It is a small component, only covering the Eastern and Western Divisions especially to the Eastern Division for the outer islands. But Viti Levu and rural inland is mostly covered by Water Authority of Fiji. They have a much bigger budget and capital.

In supporting that, we are dealing with new ways to improve our carting services, for example, we have mentioned the introduction of desalination plants. We did deploy during *TC Harold* a desalination plant 50,000 litres per day capacity that we were using in Yasawa and Kadavu. It is basically converting salt water into fresh water. That avoids the vessel coming back to Lautoka to refill fresh water and go back. If we are deploying to Koro or Kadavu, it needs to come back to a nearby water port area to refill. With this technology, with the local servicing available especially in the West, we have managed to substantially reduce our cost and do more deployments.

We are also introducing permanent structures, that is a portable structure that we have - 50,000 litres per day that can be generated. We have also established small structures like 3,000 litres per day to a thousand plus at community level to support or to convert undrinkable water to fresh drinkable water.

Question 10, Mr. Chairman, yes, we do provide pumps for all our borehole infrastructures. In terms of our Self-Help Projects and Water Projects, if the assessment from the technical team require the installation of pumps, we do install them. Now we are moving to solar pumps so it is also independent from grid. But the full list of pumps with boreholes for the Whole of Government is with the Ministry of Mineral Resources.



Question 11 on auxiliary services, we do have challenges in resources. Again, we have to work within, co-locate with other agencies that we are working within this space and hopefully with some online systems that we are introducing is to roll out once it is approved at the Whole of Government level. Some are already starting like the Ministry of Health is on lease payments. That is way forward for auxiliary services at the division but we are decentralising also. All our new stations, we are co-locating with other key rural agencies.

On Question 12, the construction of more homes in villages. We do not monitor this exercise but we work closely with the Ministry of iTaukei and the Ministry of Housing on creating awareness and supporting individuals to build better houses based on the new design that has been approved by the Ministry of Housing. We do create a lot of awareness especially during our National Disaster Awareness Week (NDAW), we do that annually on 20<sup>th</sup> October. We do create a lot of awareness in terms of building back better especially for individual homes.

Sir, on Question 13 on the list of machineries that were purchased that was given to the Ministry. The equipments were moved to the Ministry of Agriculture but we work closely with Agriculture on some of the projects especially if they are near a community that is requesting community access road while they are doing farm roads, we also request or we also support fully and design for rural community access roads.

Question 14 on Housing Assistance. There are two schemes as mentioned there, which basically targets those who live permanently in the village. So one is just funding the materials or the procurement of materials, and the second one is on transportation, on the two thirds option.

On the Government quarters, the Ministry manages through the Commissioner's Office at the divisional level. I think it is 10 percent of the total quarters. Most of the institutional portfolio like Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education have their own quarters, so they manage their own. We have a list of those quarters that needs to be upgraded or repaired. I think there is a \$5 million budget in Head 50 to cover the Whole of Government quarters upgrade.

I think Question 16, I have covered briefly in my response.

Question 17, the Emergency Operation Centres (EOC) that we upgraded through \$0.5million funding from the European Union. So we still have 26 remaining, I think out of these 26, some we have already upgraded as well. For example, this year Kavala is a new office that we opened recently, so that is a completely new setup. We are building a new station in Nadarivatu, so that upgrade will come with a new EOC.

Question 18, Centre on Integrated Rural development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) is a very important institution, especially peer to peer review and knowledge sharing. As we have mentioned, 36 programmes, 38 staff benefited directly from the Ministry. I am happy to report and to mention, I think one of our former Permanent Secretary was also unanimously appointed as Director General back in 2015 for a four-year term based in Bangladesh. At this forum, Mr. Chairman, we share all the key rural development policies and innovations that are happening in Asia and the Pacific region. One of the plans is to establish a CIRDAP office in Suva based in the

Ministry just to extend the current support that we have, but we pay subscriptions also for this, I think it is US\$12,000 a year.

Mr. Chairman, very briefly on Question 19, role of District Advisory Councillors, Provincial Development Board and the Divisional Development Board. These are basically the government machinery on the ground that is helping the Ministry and rural based agencies as well to coordinate development programmes. At the moment the Ministry as I mentioned, launched our strategic plan and the next phase is to develop divisional plans for the four divisions. So we are planning to develop that in the current financial year and all these development boards or the facilitators for rural development basically work with Commissioners at the Divisional Level to define priorities coming from the ground up and especially government agenda coming from Suva or at the PS level to the divisions.

Mr. Chairman, I think a good example is the recent *Mata ni Tikina* meeting and the District Advisory Councillors (DAC) meeting that are normally chaired by our Assistant Ministers. So all the information coming from these committees are consolidated in a template and we go item by item in trying to resolve this. So at the moment we are looking at about 700 items altogether from the recent meetings that we are doing and now we are discussing at the PS level (R7 level) on how we can maybe fund some from this year or find funding elsewhere to address this, I mean the requests that are coming in.

Question 20, Mr. Chairman, we are no longer running this programme but it is now moved to the Ministry of iTaukei. It is a very important programme, it is contributing well with our rebuilding exercise after cyclones and disasters.

Question 21, Mr. Chairman, on the Qamea landslide. A report is now with the Ministry of Economy. We are working with the Ministry of Economy to try and address the issues that were raised from the inter-agency committee that was assembled for this purpose.

Question 22, Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned, as part of our rural strategic plan that we launched last November, a key component of planning in rural now is to use statistics and data that are available both with government and with our development partners especially post-COVID. There were a lot of surveys conducted and it is out there with some of our partners. We are consolidating that or trying to get copies of the data to just help better inform our plan that was finalised back in 2021. The next phase of work now is to do our four divisional plans.

Question 23, Mr. Chairman, we have five officers who are on fulltime, all graduated, we can confirm and a majority or nearly three of the four have promoted on a higher posting.

Health and well-being, we are covering that very well, Mr. Chairman, and I think for this year we are already part of the Volleyball Business House Programme in Suva and we have our captain sitting here, Director Corporate.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, on the relocation of Nabavatu in Dreketi, again we have finalized all the technical reports with Cogea also for your information and was done with the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources with other agencies as well. We did make a submission in the budget with

the Ministry of Economy, we will try and work on the next phase but some have already started especially for relocation of houses. I am sure for Cogeia we have started assisting in some of the materials. Nabavatu is waiting for some of the materials that they want to use from their own resources, timbers that are standing. But it is all a priority programme for the number of communities that we need to relocate.

Question 26, I think I have covered it alot as part of my core response to the FS overall qualification issue and improvements in controls as well as Questions 27, 28, 29 and 30, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you PS for the response. I will now allow honourable Members for questions.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, Sir, and Mr. Kolitagane and the members of your team. My supplementary question is to do with your speaking points with reference to the National Disaster Management Act on change in name from Natural Disaster to National Disaster which takes into consideration man-made disasters apart from civil unrest? Can you elaborate more on this point, please?

MR. D. KOLITAGANE.- In trying to benchmark with the United Nations definition is basically a standard international definition to cover all disasters. So, we are trying to also adopt best practices from what we have learnt or researched so far from Asia, including Australia and New Zealand. We are working closely with the Indonesian Government and ASEAN, their regional hub in Asia on how they have rolled out the new scope of intervening in disasters. So, currently, I think one of the key components of the change that we are trying to introduce or trying to implement this, how do we basically coordinate the work when there is a health pandemic, for example COVID-19? That is the main lesson that we learned. For COVID-19, it is still led by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services but the operational team on the ground is run by NDMO and the Ministry especially in dealing with the technical WHO Advisory and the strategies. For COVID-19 response, it is run by the Ministry of Health but in terms of deployment, setting up isolation facilities or closing down and mobilising resources to communities and settlements, that was a big lesson that we learnt during COVID-19 which we were just trying to adopt it here.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you PS and the team for being here this afternoon to answer some of our questions and also make your submission. I know 2016 has been an eye opening year for us with the Category 5 cyclone in *TC Winston* that struck our country and just basically took one-third of Fiji's GDP. That was a big loss to us and at the same time, I think it was a learning lesson and also a time to reflect and upgrade our systems which NDMO has done. We are all very alert and in time you are readily providing responses to the public as a whole and to Fiji.

The question is, now we have evacuation centres throughout the country. In places where there are no schools, do you have plans to build more evacuation centres or anything along that line?

MR. D. KOLITAGANE.- Yes, honourable Member, not only schools are evacuation centres. Some community centres and halls are also recognised as evacuation centres going through checklist with the NDMO team because now we have introduced some new initiatives that are more gender sensitive, to look after special needs of certain groups in societies, so it needs those facilities on board (evacuation centres).

Now, with the lessons learnt from COVID-19, it needs more more open spaces as well. So from the structures to how we organise communities to be housed in any evacuation centre. We do have non-school evacuation centres and there is also plan in place to build more. In fact, there is an interesting programme that we have just launched with the Korean Government with OICN where we will build four evacuation centres as pilot projects to be also used as commercial centres where women and youth can come and sell their products when it is not being utilised.

It is an interesting new programme that we are working with the Ministry of Economy to try and introduce much bigger evacuation centres that are also multi-purpose; not only during disaster but also help income generating projects and growth for our communities.

HON. RATU T.N. NAVURELEVU.- Thank you Mr. Chairman and *vinaka* PS, a supplementary question on Question 14 with regards to the Rural Housing Assistance Programme - Scheme 2. The one-third and two-thirds basis. The one-third contribution by the community, is it by way of cash or in-kind?

MR. D. KOLITAGANE.- For community contribution, normally it is both ways. We were accepting in kind support as well, for example, they provide labour from the community, we accept it and cost it down. But remember, honourable Member, now it is with the Ministry of Housing, they have a new criteria of support. When it was with the Ministry, we had both in-kind and cash contribution.

HON. A. NAGATA.- Question 20, I understand that the programme for Rural Carpenter Training is now with the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs as you have stated. From the training you had undertaken in Namuka-i-Cake Primary School, do you have any positive feedbacks from the trainees?

MR. D. KOLITAGANE.- Mr. Chairman, I do not have specific information on Namuka-i-Cake or any village in particular but overall the programme was well received especially after *TC Harold*. We were establishing a programme jointly with the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Forestry. With this new programme, basically we just converted those fallen trees into timber with the Ministry of Forestry and we moved that to help them rebuild their houses at the community level.

Majority of the carpenters were coming out of this programme, including the one by Fiji National University (FNU) as well their own programmes. So, they were on the ground already. They understand the housing plans, building structures but I can say overall that this programme had been well received.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Just a follow up to my previous question with regards to natural disaster and national disaster.

You mentioned an important point with regards to COVID being designated also as a natural disaster during the COVID period. If my understanding is correct that with natural disaster the Director takes the lead role. We understand with COVID being a public health issue that due to the technicality of the things, Ministry of Health was taking the lead role and because of the ground work and your Ministry was doing a supportive or leading role as well.

You mentioned the UN benchmark and with this is there a proposed change from natural to national disaster, since you mentioned a UN benchmark, are there other jurisdictions or countries that have also proposed the changes to their Act similar to ours? You mentioned Indonesia, are there other countries who similarly to our setting in the Pacific Island and Fiji?

MR. D. KOLITAGANE.- Honourable Member, we have papers and we have done exchanges with our partners from both Asia including Australia and New Zealand that have adopted. It is basically administration on how we administer or coordinate the work during disaster.

For COVID in Fiji that was the first time that a separate agency was managing a disaster *per se* at that time. But they were also using the Disaster Management Act to declare and roll out the operations. Our exchanges, as I mentioned, with Indonesia including Philippines in the Asian region, our recent trip to Brisbane we actually visited the National Disaster Management Office. We had a full briefing from the Head of NDMO on how the Whole of Government, national level work, how the Federal Government works and coordinate. It is basically the technology and the communication channels and authority level to be well defined on how we operate during such an environment. As I mentioned, it has been tested and applied elsewhere.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, that concludes our examination of the official from the Ministry of Rural and Maritime and Disaster Management as witnesses.

On behalf of the Committee, I thank the team for their appearance and appreciate the support provided to the Committee on the scrutiny process. Also as mentioned by the PS in regards to the unqualified audit opinion for the three years, we would like to congratulate the Ministry and also thank all the Directors who are present and the team. Should we need any further queries, Sir, the Secretariat will get in touch with you.

Do you have any final comments to make, PS?

MR. D. KOLITAGANE.- No further comments, Sir, thank you very much.

The Committee adjourned at 12.11 p.m.