

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Review of the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management 2016-2017 & 2017-2018 Annual Report



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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP



Chairperson

Hon. Alitia Bainivalu MP
Government Member



Deputy Chairperson

Hon. Ratu Rakuira Vakalalabure MP
Government Member



Member

Hon. Sashi Kiran MP
Government Member



Member

Hon. Viam Pillay MP
Opposition Member



Member

Hon. Parveen Kumar Bala MP
Opposition Member

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the annual review of the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management for 2016-2017 & 2017-2018.

During the 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 reporting periods, Fiji was still recovering from the widespread damage and destruction brought about by *TC Winston* estimated at \$2 billion. The Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management's coordination role in restoring normalcy to lives impacted reflect its critical role in coordinating Government efforts during emergencies and in normal times. Despite the TC Winston recovery programmes and many challenges encountered, the Ministry adjusted positively and continued to implement capital programmes assigned for rural and maritime areas.

The Ministry made a positive improvement in the 2017/2018 performance period with 89% budget utilisation compared to 76% in the 2016/2017 performance period.

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs in the last term of Parliament referred the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management Annual Report 2016-2018 and was tasked by Parliament to review the Annual Report. The same report have been reinstated and was referred to the current Standing Committee on Social Affairs to scrutinise the report and report back on its findings.

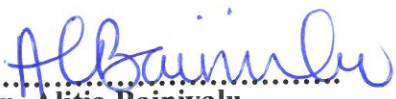
The Committee took note of and deliberated on the previous Committee's succinct work done on the mentioned report. This Report will reiterate the work done by the previous Committee in reviewing and highlighting the contents of the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management and make recommendations on the observation and findings noted in the report. It will further highlight the discussions held by the Committee with the Ministry with regards to the issues noted from its report.

At this juncture I would like to acknowledge the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs in the last term of Parliament for their efforts and input, which has greatly assisted our Committee in the formulation and completion of this report.

I would also like to thank the Honourable Members of the current Standing Committee on Social Affairs, the secretariat staff and all other support staff for their valuable input and support.

I also wish to thank the former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management, Mr. David Kolutagane and his staff for their timely assistance in this review process.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this Report to Parliament and request all members of this august Parliament to take note of the Report.


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Hon. Alitia Bainivalu
Chairperson

RECOMMENDATION:

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs has conducted the annual review of the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management for 2016-2017 & 2017-2018 and recommends that Parliament take note of its report.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The 2016-2017 Annual Report of the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management was tabled in Parliament in the May 2022 meeting and referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for its scrutiny. The same report was reinstated and referred to the current Standing Committee on Social Affairs for its scrutiny and report back on its findings.

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

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

1.1 Committee Procedure

To reiterate as major work of the report scrutiny was undertaken by the members of the Committee in the last term of Parliament. The Committee first met in September to deliberate on and formulate questions pertaining to the 2016-2017 & 2017-2018 Annual Report of the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management. Following this, the Committee held an audience with the Executive Management of the Ministry for their response to the Committee's questions and clarification of issues. Upon receipt of all relevant information on the Committee's queries, we compiled our findings on the Annual Report and subsequently endorsed it in March, 2023.

The previous Committee received written response from the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management for this annual review. It is available on the Parliament website, at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/Committees/standing-Committee-on-social-affairs/>

2.0 About the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management

The Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management is responsible for the effective coordination and implementation of development in Fiji's rural sector in line with the national direction of the Government for Rural and Outer Islands Development.

In doing so, the Ministry is responsible for the establishment of Divisional Development Boards and Provincial Development Boards that are the consultative and planning forums for development in the rural areas.

The Ministry is also responsible for Disaster Risk Management.

The Ministry aligns to the intent of the Government to promote growth, reduce poverty and address rural to urban drift through the provision of basic social amenities and incentives for increasing incomes from farming and marine resources.

The role of the Ministry is to oversee the overall achievement of its vision - "A Better Fiji for All" through building the Integrated Rural Development Framework for productive, progressive, safe and resilient communities in Fiji.

This approach encourages the increased contribution of rural economies to the export sector by improving land utilization and infrastructure development, as well as encouraging domestic production for food security and import substitution.

3.0 KEY FINDINGS

- 3.1 Deteriorating conditions of government quarters – The Committee notes that most of the Government pool quarters in the Divisions need repairs and maintenance. We note that despite these deteriorating conditions, some of the Government officers still reside in them. Complaints on repairs and maintenance of quarters are lodged through the Commissioner's 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.

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 expanded for these 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, we note that some of the existing quarters with other Ministries are not in the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management's records. To manage some of the administration details, a Quarters Administration Policy is near completion to improve processing of our records management and work with CIU in the management of these Government assets.

We note that the Ministry only manages government pool quarters while institutional quarters are administered by responsible agencies.

- 3.2 We requested the Ministry for an update on the rehabilitation works on Qamea Island following the landslide during TC Winston, specifically on the reconstruction of the Dreketi Health Centre, Dreketi Primary School and houses which were destroyed in Dreketi village. In addition, we enquired on the plans to relocate the 18 houses which were identified to be in the red zone areas.

The Ministry informed us of the proposed costing of relocating the school, health center and 18 homes which amounted to approximately \$1,868,314. This proposal was submitted to Ministry of Economy as part of the Ministry's budget submission for 2020 – 2021.

- 3.3 The Ministry also provided an update on the relocation of Nabavatu village in Dreketi, Macuata which was affected by inland erosion following TC Yasa. The whole village was relocated to the AOG church site, awaiting relocation to new site.

The Ministry informed us that 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.

We note that this proposal is now with the Ministry of Economy.

4.0 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends:

- 4.1 That the Ministry work in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy to improve the conditions of Government pool quarters in need of repair and maintenance.
- 4.2 That the Ministry fast-track the completion and implementation of its Quarters Administration Policy to improve the processing of its records management and work with CIU in the management of Government assets.
- 4.3 That the Ministry work closely with the Ministry of Economy to facilitate the relocation of the Dreketi Health Centre, Dreketi Primary School and the 18 houses which were identified to be in the red zone areas on Qamea Island.
- 4.4 That the Ministry work in partnership with the Fiji Roads Authority, Ministry of Agriculture and Fiji Sugar Corporation to upgrade rural community roads to assist in water cartage to areas affected by prolonged dry spells.
- 4.5 That the Ministry continue to consult with Ministry of Infrastructure, Water Authority of Fiji and Mineral Resources Department on the provision of permanent water solutions to areas frequently affected by water shortages such as, through:

- Bore hole with water pumps
- Desalination plants
- Self-Help Projects
- Water tanks
- Pipe Water

4.6 That the Ministry expedite the review of the Natural Disaster Management Act, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

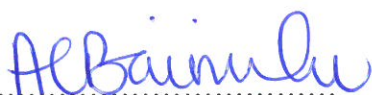
5.0 CONCLUSION

The Committee has fulfilled its mandate to review the 2016-2017 & 2017-2018 Annual Report of the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management. As part of its review process, the Committee heard evidence from the Executive Management of the Ministry and received a written response.

In this review report, the Committee has highlighted various areas that need to be strengthened by the Ministry and relevant recommendations have been made for the resolution of issues.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURE

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



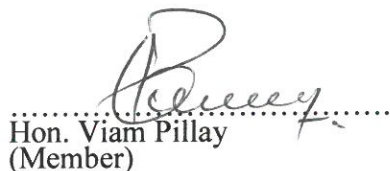
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Hon. Alitia Bainivalu
(Chairperson)



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Hon. Ratu Rakuira Vakalalabure
(Deputy Chairperson)



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Hon. Sashi Kiran
(Member)



.....
Hon. Viam Pillay
(Member)



.....
Hon. Parveen Bala
(Member)

28/03/2023

.....
(Date)

APPENDICES

Published written evidence

Written evidence was received from the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and Disaster Management and can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:
<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/Committees/standing-Committee-on-social-affairs/>