

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Written Response received from Ministry
of Local Government

RESPONSE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS
MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT

1. **Vision** - A safe, healthy, connected, sustainable and thriving Fiji served by well-governed, resilient and respected local government.
 2. **Mission** - In collaboration with the Municipal Councils and the National Fire Authority, the Ministry of Local Government will promote transformative and pro-growth strategies for livable cities and towns.
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Highlights for the 2018-2019 Financial Year

a. Unqualified Audit Opinion

Chair, Hon. Members,

- The Ministry achieved an unqualified audit opinion on the Financial Statements for the 2018-2019 financial year. This required significant effort to implement audit recommendations to avoid recurring issues.
- All audit opinions after the 2018-2019 financial year have been unqualified. This is a major achievement for the Ministry as for approximately a decade, audit opinions were qualified.
- Efforts made to ensure that the issues were addressed through a verification process and that the audit opinion was unqualified.
- We want to acknowledge the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG). The audit team was willing to discuss the draft audit report to address the qualification issues and ensure that systems and processes are robust, and issues are not repeated.

b. Key Capital Projects were undertaken:

Chair, Hon. Members, in the 2018-2019 financial year, the Ministry:

- Commenced Work on the Construction of the Nakasi Fire Station – which was completed in June 2020.
- Commenced work on the Redevelopment of the Govind Park Project – Phase I completed in 2020/21.
- Suva Civic Centre Reopened after 18 Months redevelopment - Partnership with the Guangdong Province (September 2018).
- Completed the Mini Markets in Tavakubu, Lautoka, (August 2018) and Cuvu in Sigatoka (Nov. 2018).
- Completed and Commissioned the Rakiraki Fire Station (September 2019).
- Work in Progress - Namaka Market Construction, Rakiraki Market and Laqere Market, which were completed in 2020.

- c. **Appointment of Team of Special Administrators for all Municipal Councils in August 2019**
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Questions From the Standing Committee

Page 8 – Capital Projects

1. Can the Ministry:

a. Brief the committee on the progress of the capital projects for 2018–2019.

The Ministry of Local Government funded a total of 14 projects in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Of these, eight projects were in the preliminary design and documentation phase, while three projects are now fully constructed and in operation and two more projects were under construction at the end of the fiscal year.

Fully Constructed Projects

The Rakiraki market and Namaka Market are now completed and operational. The markets were constructed to provide a modern and safe space for vendors to sell their products. The market has since been fully operational, providing local businesses with a better platform to sell their products.

Another successful project was the Rakiraki NFA station. The station was constructed to provide the National Fire Authority with a base from which to operate in the Rakiraki area. The station is now fully operational, providing fire fighting services to the local community.

b. Highlight, if any, the challenges faced in facilitating these project works?

There are many challenges faced in the project implementation but the two common challenges are:

i. Outdated Regulations and Lack of SOPs in Project implementation.

The lack of Policies and outdated guidelines created rooms for additional scope in the implementation of the Projects.

ii. The Lack of Proper Planning and Strategising by Councils

Municipal Councils forward their projects requests on need basis or when there is a demand from the public, rather than having a forward plan for the town or city.

Due to the absence of planning to put things into perspective, such as repair/maintenance works, upgrade of public facilities and development of new projects, the project has been allocated budget without proper collective discussion with stakeholders to gather input into the financial implication and benefits of the project to the Council or Communities.

Way Forward

The Ministry has addressed the above through the introduction of Financial Policy that is aligned to the National Government Finance regulation. Secondly, the Ministry has started consultation on the development of an SOP to guide Councils in the implementation of the Project.

The Ministry from the coming financial year has assessed all capital projects thoroughly and have asked Councils to provide justification for the project in line with their strategic plans.

The Ministry is focusing on enhancing monitoring of capital projects and municipal councils in general. There is a proposal in the next FY budget to establish a full-fledged customer service and audit team that will undertake financial and procedural audits.

Page 10 – Department of Local Government

2. Can the Ministry:

a. Update the committee on the extended town boundaries for Sigatoka, Lautoka and Nausori.

Pursuant to Section 6 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Committee ('Committee') is working closely with the Municipal Councils in the proposed town boundary extension.

Sigatoka

Sigatoka Town Council has engaged the Director of Nadkham Consultant, Mrs Ubitau to carry out the extension of the town boundary. The proposed town boundary was presented to the Committee in 2019 by the Consultant. The proposed areas shall be from Cuvu Bridge to Agricultural Office, Valley Road to Malevu Bridge. The matter was put on hold due to COVID-19.

The Council is now liaising with the Consultant on the work plan to proceed with the exercise, before making a submission to the Local Government Committee.

Lautoka

The proposed boundary extension was presented to the Local Government Committee and site visitation was carried out in 2020.

The Committee noted that the extension is quite extensive hence, advised that a proper pre-consultation has to be carried out. The Committee further suggested that some areas need an advisory plan for modern development.

Currently, Lautoka City Council is in the process of finalizing its proposal and will be engaging a Town Planning Consultant to carry out a feasibility study on the proposed areas. This is proposed to be undertaken in the next financial year.

The Department of Town and Country Planning is working on an advisory plan for Saru, Lautoka.

Nausori

Nausori Town Council is still in the process of finalising its proposed areas for the town boundary extension for Nausori.

b. An update on the inspected boundary extension programs for Keiyasi, Nabouwalu and Seaqaqa.

Currently, these 3 areas are not declared towns, hence, there are no designated town boundaries. These are considered growth centres, hence, a plan to undertake certain developments towards having some basic facilities in these areas.

The Ministry, through the Department of Town and Country Planning, is working on new town development projects for these three areas. However, for Keiyasi, Nabouwalu and Seaqaqa to be declared a town, there are still a lot more services required.

Keiyasi is under the designated boundary of Sigatoka Town Council, whilst Seaqaqa is under Labasa and Nabouwalu is under the responsibility of Savusavu Town Council. These responsibilities include, building permit management and garbage collection. The residents are not charged a rate, including for garbage collection. The garbage collection is funded through the National Budget.

c. Provide a progress report on its Solid Waste Management Master Plans for each Councils?

- Today, all 13 Municipal Councils have Solid Waste Management Master Plans. The plan intends to promote the 5Rs (reduce, reuse, refuse, recycle and return) concept and enhanced waste collection services.

Page 11 – Governance Reform

3. Can the Ministry provide an update on the review of the Local Government Act, Cap. 125, and what were the challenges?

The Parliament was informed in 2018 that a Local Government Act Review Committee would be appointed.

Work towards the review of the Act has begun, there have been some amendments done to the Act, to reflect changes and modernisation.

A comprehensive process to review a large part of the Act has just been launched after the endorsement by the Cabinet in January 2023. This review is in relation to the Municipal Council elections.

The complete review of the Act is proposed to be undertaken in consultation with the elected Council, following the municipal council elections. The amendments to the Act cannot be done in isolation, as the amendments will have impact on other legislations, such as:

- a. The review of the Public Health Act (1935) is in process and will have an impact on Local Government Act (1972) revision.
- b. The review of the Town Planning Act (1946) and Subdivisions of Lands Act (1937) is in progress and will have an impact on the Local Government Act (1972) revision.
- c. The Town Planning Boundary is under review for all Municipal Councils by the Local Government Committee.
- d. The Operations of the Municipal Council is under review.

Additionally, the LGA will be impacted by Project bizFiji 2.0, which is the overall digitalisation programme for improving doing business.

The Ministry for Local Government has not faced any challenges in undertaking the review or reform exercise.

4. The Ministry, with the help of a specialist consultant, developed its HR and Finance Manuals. What are the progress, challenges, and impact of developing these manuals?

The Ministry has developed the Human Resource and Finance Manuals for the Municipal Councils and were implemented last year, 2022. The Councils and relevant agencies were consulted and comments/amendments were incorporated in the draft prior to the implementation.

The Council has been following the financial and HR manuals. This has led to consistency in the way the Councils work. The Ministry in June this year, will have a refresher workshop with the Councils on the manuals, this will allow us to identify and improve the manuals.

Furthermore, as part of the elections process, the Ministry is working with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum on the development of Code of Conduct for Councils, which will at the same time review the policies and SOPs in place.

Page 12 – Achievements (Capital Projects)

5. Can the Ministry provide a status on the five (5) capital projects that were implemented during the fiscal year (2018–2019)?

- Out of the capital projects listed, the Laqere Market (\$7.2 million) and Namaka Market (\$4.8 million) were partially completed at the time of report.
- Both projects were completed in 2020, with a total funding of \$12 million, and are open to the public.
- In terms of the improvement of ventilation and lighting of Lautoka Market, the Lautoka City Council has taken steps to address and improve the situation.
- For more lighting and ventilation, has installed the following as an interim measure:
 - a. 5 industrial fans in the main market
 - b. 56 tube lights in the main market
 - c. 38 down lights in the new wing
 - d. 7 tarpaulins in the new wing
- The installation of the lights and provision for tarpaulins cost \$22,205.
- With regards to the Redevelopment of Govind Park, Ba an allocation of, \$1,720,000 was provided for in the 2018-2019 national budget (\$1,000,000 in specific allocation and \$720,000 through Challenge and Investment Fund allocation).
- The following has been completed as part of Phase I of the redevelopment project:

- a. Construction of the 9,000-seating capacity pavilion and the associated facilities, 2 restrooms (male and female), 4 change rooms, 1 conference room, 2 dormitories, a corporate box, 2 media rooms and 2 kiosks outlets.
- b. Engagement of Project Managers and Quantity Surveyor for project supervision.
- The Govind Park is expected to be ready by mid-2023, however, there were some delays, as there was change in the Government Tender Board.
- As per the Fijian Government's commitment to ensuring that the project is completed, and the people of Ba have an international standard facility, funding (\$2.8 million) has been allocated this financial year (2022-2023FY) to complete the project (as part of Phase 2).
- The project progress was affected due to the pandemic restrictions and rectification of defects that were identified and negotiated with the contractor.
- With regards to the Lautoka Swimming Pool - there is a peer review on the project management undertaken by the Ministry in the 2021-2022 financial year. The report is being deliberated by relevant parties, which includes the Ministry of Finance.

Page 13 – Achievements (Project Partnerships)

6. Can the Ministry:

a. Highlight to the committee the progress of the sports facility in Valelevu.

- With respect to the MOU with Guangdong Province, the concept design for the Nasinu stadium proposed by Guangdong Province did not accommodate the seating capacity the Nasinu Town Council wanted. The discussion also included the specific features of the conference room, which was not taken into consideration by the donor partner.
- The scope was not appropriate. There was no meeting of the minds between the parties. Then the pandemic happened. Therefore, the project could not proceed.
- But we still bore fruit. We may not have happened with Nasinu, but we did benefit. The Suva City Council has a Sister City arrangement with Guangdong Province.
- The Refurbishment of the Suva Civic Centre was undertaken as part of the MOU. This Refurbishment Project was completed in late 2019, (at a cost of \$9 million covered by Guangdong Council and SCC spent approx. \$300,000). This has been a demonstration of the friendship and positive relationship between Fiji and China, specifically Suva and Guangdong.

b. Clarify if there are any similar partnership projects like the Auditorium for Suva and other towns and cities?

In terms of the projects, it is normally discussed between the cities that have sister-city arrangements. Staying within the MOU, the counterpart city will provide the support that is within their means and resources.

c. Inform the committee on the success of the UN women's support market projects in Fiji; what were the challenges, and will the same be piloted to other parts of Fiji?

UNWomen has undertaken several market-based projects in Fiji to support women's economic empowerment and promote gender equality. One such project was the "Markets for Change" initiative, which aimed to improve the economic situation and safety of market vendors, the majority of whom are women.

The project has successfully achieved its goals and has had a positive impact on the lives of market vendors, particularly women. The market projects have also led to increased income and market opportunities for women vendors, as well as improved hygiene and safety conditions in markets.

However, there have been some challenges in implementing the project, which are as follows:

- The lack of technical capacity for smaller Councilors to coordinate the project's implementation on the ground.
- The requirements by UNWomen on Infrastructure projects in terms of gender equality and women empowerment, the funding is limited and the need to compete with other priorities/resources and support.

d. A list of UN women's market projects that were completed.

UNWomen has undertaken a number of projects in partnership with the Fijian Government. Some have been completed and some are still in progress.

These projects have focused on a variety of issues related to gender equality, women's empowerment, including economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and promoting women's participation.

The projects co-funded with UNWomen that have been completed are the Namaka Market project, Rakiraki Market, Women's Accommodation in Sigatoka Municipal Market, Women's Accommodation in Nausori Municipal Market, Women's Resource Center and Women's Accommodation in Labasa.

Page 15 – Town and Country Planning

7. Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) was allocated \$5.6 million for Nabouwalu New Town Development and Seaqaqa New Town documentation. Can the Ministry explain on the progress and challenges for the facilitation?

The Ministry had completed the documentation works for Nabouwalu and had proceeded with the civil works in 2018 and 2019.

The challenge faced was that the Construction Implementation Unit issued a concern notice to the Ministry for issues in regard to the overtopping of creek water during rainy seasons, hence the works needed to be suspended.

The Ministry has since liaised with the Department of Lands (DOL) to acquire the part of the creek to be realigned to address the matter. The DOL is seeking Solicitor-General's opinion on compensation for the Qoliqoli owners. FRA has issued changes to road standards. The Ministry is working on changes to be done prior to the commencement of works. Phase 1 of the project was expected to begin in the 22/23 financial year rolling onto the next two financial years.

For Seaqaqa the Scheme plan documentation was completed in October 2022. The Ministry has been working with the Director of Lands to acquire a development lease. This project will also be undertaken in phases, which specific focus on the Seaqaqa market.

Page 16 – Master Planning Project

8. Town and Country Planning (TCP) facilitated the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise's contract for the delivery of the Strategic Master Plan for Viti Levu and the Concept Master Plan for Greater Suva, Nadi and Lautoka. Can the Ministry inform the committee on the progress and challenges of the two (2) plans?

- A substantial amount of work has been completed for the project, but the completion was affected by COVID-19.
- Four stages of the draft Strategic Master Plan Study of Viti Levu Island and the Concept Master Plan for Greater Suva, Nadi and Lautoka are successfully completed.
- The project is currently in Stage 5, which involves the refinement of the draft Master plans. In the earlier stages, thorough consultations with key stakeholders to discuss major infrastructure changes were undertaken. These changes will be reflected in the draft Master Plan and will be presented in another final rounds of stakeholder consultations, later this year before finalization of the Master Plans.
- There was a significant lapse between Stages 4 and 5 due to the travel and work restrictions resulting from COVID-19. During this time, the contract with Singapore Corporation Enterprises ('SCE') had also lapsed and required contract extension. The consultants have presented to the Hon. Minister for Local Government and the Ministry is working on a Cabinet update and extension of the contract to ensure that the masterplan is delivered.
- Having a Masterplan is a critical document for better planning of towns and cities. This Masterplan will provide a plan for Viti Levu for the next 50 years. As part of the project the Town Planners from the Ministry will be trained in Singapore with the experts, which will mean that any changes to the short and medium term Concept plans and the Masterplan will be done internally.
- The main challenges in this project have been obtaining feedback from the various Ministries and agencies despite the rounds of consultations carried out – even at the Permanent Secretary level.
- Furthermore, the delay in approvals for extensions and payments has also impacted the delivery of the project.

Page 18 – Achievements: Rezoning

9. Can the Ministry inform the committee on the high number of applications refused and deferred for the 2018-2019 financial year?

- Applications were refused on the basis of non-compliance with the requirements of the Town Planning Act General Provisions. The policy states that minimum lot size, minimum street frontage (setback), provision of sewer and density, minimum width of access roads for industrial use.
- Applications were deferred as these were incomplete and further information was required, thus decisions deferred until information was provided.
- The applications that are returned to clients for further information are not reflected in the consideration section of the table.
- There is a late reflection of decision, as most Applications are carried forward to the following calendar/ financial month.

Page 19 – Achievements: Building

10. Can the ministry explain the decline in development applications in 2018 compared to 2017?

- In 2017, an increase in development applications was received due to the economy recovering from Category 5 Cyclone Winston, as developers were rebuilding and repairing homes.
- The development and home building, schools and public offices funded by Government and development partners required that all building approvals were in place and that saw an increase in applications in 2017.

11. Can the ministry explain the reasons for deferred and refused for building applications?

- Building applications are deferred if there is insufficient information, requires amendment to a building plan, non-compliance and requires stakeholders prior consent.
- On the other hand, building applications are refused due to non-compliance to standards, incompatibility and lack of infrastructure to support the proposal.

12. Can the ministry brief the committee whether deferred building applications were facilitated?

- Deferred building applications are facilitated through further face to face/phone/ email consultations on the needs to be addressed prior to resubmission.
- In instances whereby building applications require infrastructure stakeholder comments and recommendations, the Department invites stakeholders to discuss the proposal and how best to assist development.

Page 20 – Achievements: Forward Planning

13. Can the ministry brief the committee on the progress of the review of the town planning law and other related laws?

- The Town Planning Act is under review between the Ministry of Local Government and the Office of the Solicitor-General.
- The review is also in line with the need to progress all the Town Planning processes as prescribed in law. In addition, the review will focus on the changing market dynamics and client needs for efficient and timely service. Customer service, transparency and accountability, are three critical indicators guiding the review of the Act. Furthermore, the review of the Act will happen parallel to the digitalisation project for the application and approvals for building permits.
- In 2021 and 2022, there have been amendments done to the Act to streamline and modernise processes, this will be in detail reflected in the relevant annual report. These included:
 - 1) **Home-based business category** - where certain approved commercial business could be undertaken in residential areas without rezoning.
 - 2) **Streamlined and modernised application of rezoning process** - removal of unnecessary and archaic process of notification. The amendments incorporated technology in public notification and submission. The lengthy timeframes for notification, submissions, etc. were reduced, making the process more transparent, accountable and efficient.
- In terms of the initial phases of consultations, all communities and stakeholders were consulted in 2017- 2020. We would like to highlight that consultations are open for all Fijians; it is not based on specific grouping.

Page 21 – Service Goals

14. The committee noted the application processing days for building, rezoning and subdivision. Can the ministry inform the committee on challenges and way forward for processing applications?

- A major challenge faced in rezoning applications is the number of ad hoc applications received by the Department. This is due to the outdated Town Planning Schemes.
- Some of the town schemes have not been reviewed since the 1970s, as a result, do not reflect the current development trends. Therefore, the Department has been inundated with applications for rezoning. This has been a strain on resources especially with the limited capacity.
- To address this challenge, the Town Planning Act 1946 was amended in March 2022 as part of the Revised Budget amendments. New regulations were introduced to streamline the rezoning process.

- The regulations also initiated the block rezoning process, where the Permanent Secretary can decide on block rezoning for areas there had significantly changed from the initial declared zones. This was a strategic move to reduce ad hoc applications and focus resources on planning.
- In addition, the Department lacked expertise, the Ministry is recruiting additional technical staff to support the existing team.

Is the ministry planning to reduce the application processing days for building, rezoning and subdivision?

The application processing days differ for each stage of development:

- Rezoning- 45 working days
- Subdivision- 30 working days
- Building – 20 working days

This was revised from the old processing timelines:

- Rezoning- 2 months
- Subdivision- 3 months
- Building- 45 working days

Currently, the Ministry is working on streamlining processes through digitisation of existing processes to allow transition to online submission and eliminating any bureaucracies.

The Ministry is expected to launch a pilot of the revised manual processes with 3 municipal councils later this year.

Page 23 – Human Resources

15. Can the ministry elaborate on the challenges and way forward for the ministry’s human resources and administration section?

- The Ministry has undertaken recruitment of staff for key posts, so that we have the right people in the right positions. Since 2018, Senior Accounts Officer, Accounts Officer and Assistant Accounts Officers have been recruited.
- In terms of capacity building, staff training and upskilling programmes were undertaken, especially for project management, human resources and financial management.
- The Ministry also works with Municipal Councils for consistent capacity building of Municipal Council staff and also the Ministry officials.

Page 26 – Finance Unit

16. Can the ministry elaborate the low budget utilization for the ministry during the 2018–2019 financial year?

- A considerable portion of the budget is for capital projects, mainly undertaken by the Municipal Councils, comprising 69% of the total budget. The estimates for the projects and timelines were provided by the councils in their budget submissions.

- A number of projects, submitted by the Councils, were overestimated and unrealistic timelines provided.
- In this regard, the Ministry together with the Ministry of Finance (CIU) had put in place additional and stringent project and finance management mechanisms.
- The Ministry has always ensured that there is prudent use of public funds, and this has led to under-utilization of funds for some projects, which did not meet the requirements.
- The Municipal Councils have also been trained on the finance procedures, especially for submissions for capital projects. In addition, the Ministry is maintaining stringent monitoring of projects and the timelines provided.
- This has led to realistic project timelines and projection by Councils. Moving forward project budget allocation and utilization will improve.

Page 28 – Enhance governance for municipal council

17. Can the ministry brief the committee on how successful are the municipal councils in driving their strategic planning, financial sustainability, and engagement with ratepayers?

In terms of strategic planning, the Municipal Councils have made significant progress in recent years. They have developed strategic plans that outline their goals and objectives, and they have taken steps to ensure that these plans are aligned with the broader national development goals of the government of Fiji.

Additionally, the councils have put in place mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of their strategic plans, which has helped them to make necessary adjustments and improvements over time.

However, there is still room for improvement in this area. The councils could benefit from further collaboration with stakeholders, including community groups and businesses, to ensure that their strategic plans are more comprehensive and responsive to local needs. Furthermore, the councils should consider incorporating more long-term planning and scenario planning into their strategic planning processes to better prepare for future challenges and opportunities.

Financial sustainability is another critical area of focus for the Municipal Councils. These councils rely on revenue from rates and fees to fund their operations. In recent years, the councils have made strides in improving their financial management, including implementing new financial management systems and processes, improving revenue collection, and reducing expenditure. These systems and processes need to be regularly reviewed.

Finally, engagement with ratepayers is a critical component of the work of the Fiji Municipal Councils. Effective engagement can help to build trust and support for council activities, and can also provide valuable feedback to inform decision-making.

The Ministry has provided the Councils with Financial Manuals and HR Manuals that forms the foundation for the operational procedures. Furthermore, the Ministry is working with Councils to develop a quarterly engagement schedule with ratepayers and stakeholders with specific action items to be achieved each quarter.

Furthermore, the Ministry is working on establishing a full-fledged audit and customer service team. An audit of financial and procedures and processes will be done in accordance with a plan. This increase the level of compliance by the councils.

Page 29 – Integrating Environment

18. The ministry develops business-friendly policies and supports investor awareness programs to attract new business in Fiji's cities and towns. How successful is this initiative, what were the challenges?

The Ministry is working in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade, Commerce, SMEs and Communications and the project management team for bizFiji 2.0 to deliver enhanced business processes. These include streamlining of current manual processes, provision of information and checklists to businesses and stakeholders to avoid rejection and deferment of application. Mapping processes from the Municipal Council level all the way to the Ministry. Have shared registers to allow for greater transparency and traceability.

This project will be launched in the later of 2023.

19. The ministry encourages businesses and investors to incorporate green initiatives into their business permit applications. How successful is this initiative, and what were the challenges?

The Ministry through Government-funded capital projects have encouraged Councils and their contractors to incorporate green initiatives in their projects. This has led to Nakasi, Levuka and Savusavu market projects incorporating rain harvesting and solar panels.

The Ministry, through DTCP encourages open spaces for large developments, landscaping for all subdivisions, rezoning and building plans.

Furthermore, the Ministry will work with the Ministry of Finance on some key greening initiatives and incentives to encourage more developers to make their projects and buildings greener.

20. Can the ministry provide information on successful partnerships with municipalities and other agencies? Were there any challenges?

Some of these successful partners are the sister-city arrangements that have led to projects such as the Suva Civic Centre Auditorium, Amphitheatre in Sigatoka, to name a few.

A key challenge is to localise plans and projects. Some partners tend to bring in their ideas as implemented in their countries, which is not able to maximise the use of resources.

21. Is the ministry continuing to embark on international twinning partnership initiatives? Any new partnerships formulated?

The Ministry encourages Councils to participate in twinning programmes, the Suva City Council (SCC) and Auckland City Council (ACC) twinning initiative is working considerably well for the Council. They have been able to train officers of SCC in a number of different fields, these include secondment of SCC staff to ACC for trainings.

22. How has the ministry addressed the issues raised on Emphasis of Matter?

- The Finance Unit has been strengthened with additional staff recruited. There is separation of duties to ensure accountability and effective implementation of internal control systems.
- As a result, in the subsequent audit reports of 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 financial years the internal control issues have been addressed by the Ministry. There were no qualification issues, emphasis of matter or other matters issued by Office of the Auditor-General in the Ministry's subsequent audits for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years
- All underline reconciliations are submitted to the Ministry of Finance before the 15th of every month.
- The Ministry conducts training for staff on procedures and processes pertaining to reconciliations and effective management of internal controls.
- Additionally, continuous monitoring is undertaken by the Finance Team to ensure the procedures and processes are strictly adhered at all times.

23. What measures has the ministry taken to improve on the auditor's opinion?

- For the financial year 2018-2019, the finance unit lacked adequate personnel to carry out the respective tasks. The Ministry has recruited 4 personnel namely: Senior Accounts Officer, Accounts Officer and 2 Assistant Accounts Officer. This has increased the staff capacity to effectively and efficiently provide financial support services.
- The Ministry has implemented stringent and effective internal control mechanisms that enables the accounts team to adhere to all financial rules and regulations.
- As mentioned in the response to the previous question, the issue of untimely reconciliations has been addressed and does not appear as an emphasis of matter in the subsequent audits.

Pages 40 to 44

24. Can the ministry:

a. Elaborate further on the commission revenue collected in the year 2018–2019?

The Ministry acts on behalf of the financial institutions to deduct monthly deductions from employees pay and monthly remit payments to the financial institutions thus, in process earns commission revenues from financial institutions. These are classified as direct salary deductions to be paid for loans, insurances.

b. Clarify the decrease in miscellaneous revenue collected for 2018–2019.

There was a reduction due to the decrease in the building applications, which led to reduced building search fees.

c. Outline the challenges faced in filling vacant positions and the restructure of the ministry?

Certain positions, such as Town Planners, required specialised skills which are not readily available in Fiji. Hence, this led to these technical positions not being filled.

Furthermore, the positions felt vacant had funding ceased by the Ministry of Finance, which further increased the challenges for recruitment.

The restructure is currently under consideration, this was affected by the shifting of the Department of Town and Country Planning to the Ministry of Trade and back to the Ministry of Local Government. The restructure is being considered in line with enhanced service delivery, for which submission has been made in the 2023/2024 financial year budget.

Sustainable Development Goals

25. To what extent has the Ministry met its SDG performance targets? What were the challenges for non-implementation?

The Ministry's key Sustainable Development Goal or SDG is 11, that is, Sustainable cities and communities – make cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

It is important to note that Fiji is progressing on this SDG, but we are not completely on track to achieving the 2030 target.

We need to relook at the indicators and develop new indicators and new national targets that are aligned to the SDG.

Our way forward is to develop an SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities Roadmap to guide the work of local government and other key partners that contribute to SDG 11 on the indicators to capture the work that is being done on the ground and contribute to the overall progress of Fiji's SDG.

In order to achieve sustainable cities and making settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, there needs to be long-term planning of how towns and cities will grow. This is generally guided by a Masterplan, which is not for 5 or 10 years but for a longer period of 50 years. That is why the Ministry is focused on completing the work that started in 2019 on the Masterplan for Viti Levu. We need to plan our towns and cities better.

We will create townships and Central Business Districts. Townships mean homes and CBD means jobs. This will enable achievement of inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements.

26. Can the ministry highlight its achievement towards developing green towns and cities while integrating climate change adaptation needs across these areas?

As stated earlier the Ministry is ensuring that government-funded capital projects have a green aspect to the buildings being constructed.

Adaptation measures for buildings are captured from the on-set. If an application is made for scheme plan approval the Department of Town and Country ensures that environment assessment is a condition to the approval. Furthermore, buildings must comply with the National Building Code for protection against natural disasters.

Green towns and cities is definitely the vision that the Ministry of Local Government has. Through the support of relevant agencies, such as the Ministry of Finance, the Climate Change Division, Department of Environment and relevant private sector stakeholders and development partners, the Ministry will develop a strategy to encourage green buildings. This must be done from the beginning, when plans are being developed.

27. Can the ministry highlight its contribution towards SDG 5 – Gender and its implementation in the ministry?

The Ministry's recruitment is based on the Civil Service Open Merit Recruitment System and women are given equal opportunity to be part of the process. Currently, the Ministry has 60% women, as opposed to 40% men. It is also important to note that there are women at the decision-making levels, including Assistant Minister, Permanent Secretary and Directors.

At the Municipal Council-level there are out of the 10 Chief Executive Officers - 40% are women and out of the 17 Special Administrators 30% are women. The Ministry has encouraged women participation in these roles, whilst appointment is purely based on merit.

Appendix 2

Verbatim Report

[VERBATIM REPORT]

MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

ANNUAL REPORT

Ministry of Local Government Annual Report 2018-2019

INSTITUTION: Ministry of Local Government

VENUE: Big Committee Room (East Wing)

DATE: Wednesday, 17th May, 2023

VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD AT THE BIG COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH MAY, 2023, AT 11.00 A.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: Ministry of Local Government

In Attendance:

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|---|--|
| 1. | Ms. Seema Sharma | - | Permanent Secretary |
| 2. | Ms. Masilina Rokowati - | - | Acting Director of Town and Country Planning |
| 3. | Mr. Navin Chandra | - | Manager Finance |
| 4. | Mr. Usaia Korodrau | - | Senior Administration Officer |
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MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, members of the media and the public, the Secretariat, dear viewers, ladies and gentlemen; a very good morning to you all and it is a pleasure to welcome everyone, especially the viewers who are watching this session live.

I am privileged to Chair this first meeting of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs which has been aired live on the Parliament Channel through the Walesi platform and livestreamed through the Parliament *Facebook* Page.

At the outset, for information purposes, pursuant to the Standing Orders of Parliament, specifically Standing Order 111, it mandates that all Committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, this meeting is open to the public and the media, and is also aired live, as I had earlier mentioned.

However, for any sensitive information concerning the submission that cannot be disclosed in public, this can be provided to the Committee either in private or in writing, but do note that this will only be allowed in few specific circumstances which include:

- National security matters;
- Third party confidential information;
- Personal or human resource matters; and
- Meetings whereby the Committee deliberates on all issues before it develops its recommendations and reports.

I also wish to remind honourable Members and our invited submittees that all comments and questions to be asked are to be addressed through the Chair. Also, be mindful that only invited submittees will be allowed to ask questions or give comments to the Committee.

This is a Parliamentary meeting and all information gathered is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act and the Standing Orders of Parliament. But, please, note that the Committee does not condone liable or slender, or any allegations against individuals who are not present today to defend themselves.

In terms of other protocols of this Committee meeting, please, be advised that whilst the meeting is in progress, movement within the meeting room will be restricted. There should be minimal usage of mobile phones whereby answering of phone should be done outside this room and all mobile phones are to be on silent mode.

Without further ado, I would now ask the Honourable Members of the Standing to introduce themselves.

[Introduction of Committee Members]

With us this morning, we have the representatives of the Ministry of Local Government who have been requested to provide a submission on the Ministry of Local Government Annual Report 2018-2019.

The Committee, in its deliberation, formulated questions which was sent to the Ministry which required them to provide a presentation on it. This will assist the Committee in making its recommendations in its Committee Report which will then be tabled in Parliament. Therefore, I now take this time to invite our guests to introduce themselves before we proceed with the submission. Please, note, that if there are questions by Members of the Committee, this will take place after their presentation.

You may have the floor.

MS. S. SHARMA.- *Bula vinaka*, thank you very much, Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, for welcoming us today to this meeting with the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

[Introduction of Ministry of Local Government Officials]

MS. S. SHARMA.- So, this is the team that will be presenting to you today and we look forward to having very good discussions on this matter. Madam Chairperson, should we just start with our presentation?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, please.

MS. S. SHARMA.- Madam Chairperson, thank you very much for giving us an opportunity us to present on the Ministry of Local Government Annual Report 2018-2019.

Before we go to the list of questions that was provided, we want to very quickly outline some of the key highlights for the 2018-2019 financial year. If you look at it from the financial point of view, we have had an unqualified audit opinion. The Ministry had actually achieved an unqualified audit opinion on its financial statements for the financial year. This required significant effort to implement audit recommendations that was, sort of, provided previously to ensure there were no recurring issues in the Ministry's financials.

We would like to emphasise that all audit opinions after the 2018-2019 financial year, have been unqualified and this is actually a major achievement for the Ministry for almost a period of a decade of having qualified opinions.

The effort made was to ensure that issues were addressed through verification processes that allowed for this unqualified opinion. And we would, at this point, like to acknowledge the support of the Office of the Auditor-General where they were willing to discuss draft audit reports with us and to address any qualification issues and make sure that the systems and processes were robust and such issues were not repeated. As I have pointed out, ever since 2018-2019, we have had unqualified audit reports.

Some of the other major achievements in terms of projects were:

- Looking at the commencement of the Nakasi Fire Station in the 2018-2019 financial year which actually completed work in June 2020.
- We commenced work on the redevelopment of the Govind Park Phase I which completed in the 2020-2021 financial year;
- The Suva Civic Centre actually reopened after an 18 months of re-development, and this was under a partnership with the Guangdong Province, which was basically completed around September 2018.
- Looking at some of the mini markets that were completed around August and November 2018 which was Tavakubu in Lautoka and Cuvu in Sigatoka.
- Completion and commissioning of the Rakiraki Fire Station around September 2019.
- There was still work in progress with the Namaka Market construction, the Rakiraki Market and the Laqere Market which were all completed in 2020.

Reappointment of a team of Special Administrators for all Municipal Councils.

Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, we would like to go directly and respond to the questions that were provided to us and you have that on the screen also.

Page 8 – Capital Projects

Question No. 1:

Can the Ministry –

- (a) brief the Committee on the progress of the capital projects for 2018-2019; and**
- (b) highlight, if any, the challenges faced in facilitating these project works?**

- (a) The Ministry of Local Government funded about 14 capital projects. Of these, eight projects were in the preliminary design and documentation phase, while three projects were fully constructed and in operation, and two more projects were under consideration.

The projects that were fully completed, as we had highlighted earlier, were the Rakiraki Market and the Namaka Market which are fully operational now. The Markets were obviously constructed to provide a modern and safe space for vendors to sell their produce. The Markets have since been fully operational and are providing local businesses with a better platform basically to be able to sell their produce.

The projects that were fully completed, as we had highlighted earlier, were the Rakiraki Market and the Namaka Market which are fully operational now. The Markets were obviously constructed to provide a modern and safe space for vendors to sell their produce. The Markets have since been fully operational and are providing local businesses with a better platform basically to be able to sell their produce.

Another such successful project, as we had mentioned, was the Rakiraki Fire Station. It has been able to provide services to the Rakiraki area. This has been fully operational and providing fire services. However, the projects that have been under construction in that financial year were the Govind Park and the Lautoka Swimming Pool.

- (b) There have been challenges, not all man-made, natural challenges also and you could look at climatic issues. But some of the key things that we think we can address is looking at outdated regulations and lack of SOPs when we are looking at project

implementation. These outdated guidelines can be improved, so we saw this as a challenge.

Lack of proper planning and strategising by Councils. What we have noted is sometimes Councils do submit capital projects but there has not been enough groundwork done in order to prepare for those projects.

So, these are things that we are identifying and trying to eliminate in future submissions of capital projects if they do submit to the Government for funding. Not only that, we want to make sure these SOPs and proper strategising and planning is embedded into Councils' strategic planning. They do not think just one year ahead but they need to think, at least, five years ahead.

As I have said, we are trying to address these issues, there has been things like financial policies that have been developed as baseline by the Ministry for the Councils and we have also done consultations on SOPs to guide Councils for the implementation of projects.

The Ministry from the coming financial year, has assessed all projects thoroughly so whatever project submissions we have had for the next Budget, we have actually had thorough assessment and Councils have been asked to justify if these projects are actually in line with their strategic plan.

The Ministry is focusing on enhancing this monitoring in the coming financial year. With the possible introduction a full pledged team within the Ministry which is going to look at customer service plus audits. We want to have, sort of, have a clear demarcation of the Unit that works closely with Councils which is the Department of Local Government and the Unit that assesses, whether they have completed the work that they had set out to do in the year. So, we are looking at having a very robust internal audit team. This is currently under discussion, obviously, with the Ministry of Finance.

Page 10 – Department of Local Government

Question No. 2

Can the Ministry -

- (a) update the Committee on the extended town boundaries for Sigatoka, Lautoka and Nausori;**
- (b) update on the inspected boundary extension programmes for Keiyasi, Nabouwalu and Seaqaqa; and**
- (c) provide a progress report on its Solid Waste Management Master Plan for each Council?**

- (a)** Extension of town boundaries are actually done under Section 6 of the Local Government Act and there is a procedure to be followed where there is a submission made by the relevant Council to the Local Government Committee and they work closely - between the Local Government Committee and the Councils to go through the process which also includes engaging planners externally to go through the processes.

Sigatoka

With the Sigatoka Town Council, they had engaged a private sector consultant to carry out the extension of the town boundaries. The proposed boundaries were presented to

the Local Government Committee in 2019.

The proposed area that was supposed to be under the extended boundaries were from Cuvu Bridge to the Agriculture Office at Valley Road to Malevu Road. The matter was put on hold because there was no further consultations or work could be carried out during the period because of COVID-19 because they could not go out and do those consultations. So, the Council is back working with the consultant to proceed with the exercise of public consultations and to make a submission back to the Local Government Committee.

Lautoka

The extended boundaries were presented to the Local Government Committee and site visitations were carried out in 2020.

The Committee noted that the extension of the town boundary for Lautoka was actually quite extensive, so it required proper pre-consultation. The whole idea of extending town boundaries is, you just cannot extend town boundaries and encompass areas which form peri-urban or rural areas because if we are going to get them into the town boundary, they should be ready and able to pay rates. However, in order for anyone to be able to pay rates, you should have, at least, basic services available for them, very basic things such as street lighting, footpath, garbage collection facilities and having your open play area, et cetera. Those are some basic facilities that towns and cities have.

If you want to extend it into peri-urban areas or the rural areas, these facilities or services should be available before you ask someone to pay a rate. That is the reason the Local Government Committee said, "Please, go back and do a pre-consultation."

There are some areas that the Committee had actually suggested needed some advisory plans for modern development. I think one of the advisory plans that the Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) is currently working in the coming financial year is for Saru in Lautoka. I am going to very briefly ask Masilina to explain what advisory plans are before we move on.

MS. M. ROKOWATI.- The advisory plans, when we see that there is growth in certain areas - we see pockets of growth, we formulate an advisory plan to guide the development. So we see the needs on the ground, we reach out to our stakeholders - we want to know if there is infrastructure available, if they have plans for that advisory plan, and we formulate the advisory plan as a guide to development within that area.

Nausori

MS. S. SHARMA.- The Nausori Town Council is actually in the process of finalising its proposed area of extended boundary, so that is currently still under consideration.

- (b) Those three areas – Keiyasi, Nabouwalu and Seqaqa, are not declared towns at the moment, therefore, they have no designated town boundaries. So, they are, obviously, considered growth areas and there is certain work being undertaken towards looking at new town development concepts under the Town Planning. We are looking at those three areas which are obviously Keiyasi, Nabouwalu and Seqaqa.

As Masilina was explaining, these are considered little pockets of areas which can grow into possible towns. At this point in time, they are not separate towns of their own, so they do not have a boundary. Keiyasi is actually designated under the Sigatoka Town Council while Seaqaqa is under the designation of Labasa and Nabouwalu is under the responsibility of the Savusavu Town Council. This was done around in 2018 when the Rural Local Authorities were disbanded, and these towns were given additional responsibilities of these areas which previously came under the Rural Local Authorities.

Some of the responsibilities of these Councils for Keiyasi, Seaqaqa and Nabouwalu is they provide building permit management, so a lot of building permits do not go to Rural Local Authorities, it comes to the Councils, then it comes to Town Planning for plan approvals and subdivisions or scheme plans. They also provide garbage collection services. At this point in time, these three areas do not pay for garbage collection services. The Government subsidises Councils for garbage collection through the National Budget.

- (c) As of now, all 13 Municipal Councils have Solid Waste Management Master Plans developed. The Plans intend to promote the 5Rs which is Reduce, Reuse, Refuse, Recycle and Return Concept and enhanced waste collection services.

A lot of these Solid Management Master Plans, we have been lucky to have development partners like the Japanese Government under the J-PRISM initiative. They help these municipalities not only develop these Master Plans but also look at solid waste management improvements.

Page No. 11 – Governance Reform

Question No. 3

Can the Ministry provide an update on the review of the Local Government Act Cap. 125, and what were the challenges?

Just to advise, I believe around 2018, the Ministry did advise that we were going to start work and appoint a Local Government Review Committee. There has been significant work undertaken, there is a Review Committee Report that provides certain recommendations.

Since then, certain amendments have been done to the Act. It has not been a holistic amendment to the Act but what we plan to do is, obviously, look at a holistic review of the Act, once we have finalised the Local Government Elections. So right now, what we have been doing is as of the endorsement by Cabinet to look into the Elections, a large junk of the Act which deals with elections related matters are being under review in line with what the Fijian Elections Office has in the Electoral Act. So, there would be a lot of amendments done there but our complete review needs to be undertaken in consultation with our Councils and our key stakeholders which is our ratepayers.

It also means that once we are doing a review of this Act, there are other legislation that are currently under review that would have an impact on the Local Government Act, whether it is your Public Health Act 1935 or Town Planning Act 1946 and Subdivision of Lands Act 1937, the review of the town boundaries and also the operational review of the Councils, which is another key component which will have an impact on the overall review.

Furthermore, there is a larger Government project that is looking at digitalisation of doing business processes or formerly known to us as Project bizFiji 2.0 which will also have some impact

in terms of how Municipal Councils will deal with construction permits, et cetera. So, a lot of our review and reforms are dependent on these issues.

In terms of challenges, at this point, we have not faced any major challenges with regards to the reform. It is an ongoing thing that we are looking at, but we want to make sure that this reform or review is not done in isolation, it is done in a holistic manner.

Question No. 4

The Ministry, with the help of a specialist consultant, developed its Human Resource and Financial Manuals. What is the progress, challenges and impact of developing these Manuals?

Yes, the Ministry has worked on the HR and Finance Manuals for Municipal Councils which were implemented last year (2022). The Councils and relevant agencies were consulted. I think there was a full forum held where the Councils actually gave the feedback to the consultant with regards to the areas that need to be looked at and improved on in these Manuals.

What the Ministry want to do is almost one year since its implementation, we want to, sort of, do a refresher on these two Manuals with the Councils in June this year and look at if there are any components that need to be reviewed in these Manuals.

In addition to that, as part of the approvals that we have received with regards to the Elections, we have pointed out a number of times that the last time a Local Government or Municipal Council Election happened was 18 years ago, so a lot of things - a number of systems and processes, have changed since then.

The Ministry is currently working with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum on the development of a Code of Conduct for Councils. At the same time, this will review a number of policies that have been implemented by Councils, as well as review and develop SOPs. So that will, sort of, basically set out a whole guideline as to how Councils need to function.

Page 12 – Achievements (Capital Projects)

Question No. 5

Can the Ministry provide a status on the five capital projects that were implemented during the fiscal year 2018-2019?

Out of the capital projects that were listed, Laqere Market and Namaka Market were partially completed during the report period. Both of them were completed in 2020 and these are open to the public.

In terms of improvement of ventilation and lighting for the Lautoka Market, the Lautoka City Council had taken steps to address and improve the situation. For more lightning and ventilation, they had installed some interim measures, such as they had put in industrial fans for better ventilation, put in more lights like tube lights, more down lights and additional tarpaulins in extended new wings. This installation and provision of tarpaulins had cost them around \$22,000.

With regards to the redevelopment of Govind Park in Ba, an allocation of \$1.72 million was provided in the financial year. So, \$1 million was specifically allocated and \$720,000 was from the Challenge and Investment Fund allocation. As of now for Govind Park, Phase 1 has been completed which means the construction of 9,000 seating capacity pavilion and associated facilities - there is

two restrooms, four changing rooms, one conference room, two dormitories, a corporate box, two media rooms and two kiosk outlets. They had engaged Project Managers and Quantity Surveyors for the supervision of the project.

We had initially thought and expected Govind Park to be completed around mid-2023 but we are looking at around the end of 2023 because we have just received some approvals a week ago from the Tender Board. We look forward to having this project actually completed.

A lot of projects that, sort of, started around 2018-2019 financial year spilt over to 2020, which meant that a lot of them got deferred due to COVID-19 because they had certain restrictions. We are trying to identify any defects or issues and we are working with the contractors.

With regards to the Lautoka Swimming Pool, there has been a peer review done in 2021-2022 financial year. The report is currently being deliberated with key relevant parties as to a way forward. As of our meeting yesterday with the Ministry of Finance, we proposed to have a three-way meeting with the consultants, plus Lautoka City Council to come up with a way forward on this project. It needs to be completed.

Page 13 – Achievements (Project Partnerships)

Question No. 6

Can the Ministry –

- (a) highlight to the Committee the progress of the sports facility in Valelevu;**
- (b) clarify if there are any similar partnership projects like the Auditorium for Suva and other towns and cities;**
- (c) inform the Committee on the success of the UN Women's Support Market Projects in Fiji – what were the challenges, and will the same be piloted to other parts of Fiji;**
- (d) a list of UN Women's market projects that were completed?**

- (a) The sports facility at Valelevu was, obviously, part of a partnership agreement or an MOU with the Guangdong Province of China. The concept design for the stadium was proposed by the Province as part of this MOU to accommodate a certain capacity.

There were lots of discussions with regards to a number of other features, but the Guangdong Province being the partner that was going to put resources into this, there was basically no meeting of minds between the two parties - the Nasinu Town Council and the Province. We do understand that Guangdong is providing us with the resources, but the facility needs to be able to be built to serve our purposes, so at this point in time, the project has not actually proceeded.

We are liaising with the Town Council to find out what could be a way forward, not looking at this, but it could be something else. We do look at having certain facilities for our people. Even though the Nasinu project did not happen but due to the sister city relationship between Guangdong and Suva, we were able to have the Suva Civic Centre completed and refurbished.

- (b) When we look at this partnership, it is normally the terms and conditions of the MOU first needs to be taken into consideration, and how the two sister city arrangements, sort of worked. The receiving party which would be a town here and how the other party which is your sister city would want to development in their arrangements. So, a lot of these things

are left to the discussions and what are the resources available. At this point in time, I do not think we have any specific auditorium projects underway.

- (c) The UN Women has actually undertaken several market-based projects in Fiji to support women's empowerment and promote gender equality. One such project is known as Markets for Change initiative, which is aimed to provide the ability for women to be able to have a safe marketplace to sell from. We have been able to go through these and have a number of projects that have been undertaken with UN Women.

Some of the challenges, obviously, that we have faced is lack of technical capacity, where the smaller Councils are not able to coordinate project implementation on the ground, and the requirement by UN Women on infrastructure in terms of gender equality and the funding is limited and there is a bit of competition between priorities and the resources that are available.

- (d) Some of the market projects that have been completed are the Rakiraki Market, Namaka Market, women's accommodation for Sigatoka Market, women's accommodation for Nausori Market and Women's Resource Centre and accommodation in Labasa. These are some of the projects that have been undertaken by the UN Women.

Page 15 - Department of Town and Country Planning

Question No. 7

The Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) was allocated \$5.6 million for the Nabouwalu New Town Development and Seaqaqa New Town documentation. Can the Ministry explain on the progress and challenges for the facilitation?

The Ministry had actually completed the documentation work for Nabouwalu and had proceeded with civil works in 2018-2019. However, there were some issues raised by the Construction Implementation Unit and they had issued a Notice of Concern to the Ministry in regards to the overtopping of creek water during rainy season. So, the creek water could have caused flooding if the project was to continue so the works had to be suspended. The Ministry actually liaised with the Department of Lands to acquire part of the creek to be realigned to address the matter. We believe that the Department of Lands is seeking advice from the Office of the Solicitor-General on the compensation to the *qoliqoli* owners.

The Fiji Roads Authority had also issued some changes to the road standards and the Ministry is actually working on these changes to be done before the commencement of the project. We are expecting the phase of this project to be rolled out almost in the coming months, and to continue over, at least, two financial years.

For Seaqaqa, the Scheme Plan documentation was completed in October 2022. The Ministry has been working with the Director of Lands to acquire a development lease. This project will also be undertaken in phases with a specific focus on having the Seaqaqa Market up first.

Page 16 – Master Planning Project

Question No. 8

Town and Country Planning (TCP) facilitated the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise's contract for the delivery of the Strategic Master Plan for Viti Levu and the Concept

Master Plan for Greater Suva, Nadi and Lautoka. Can the Ministry inform the Committee on the progress and challenges of the two Plans?

We would like to say that a lot of work has been undertaken on the Master Planning Project. The completion of the project, obviously, was affected due to COVID-19 because the consultants who are working on this project with us were not able to travel and finish off Stages 5 and 6.

The four stages of the Strategic Plan study for Viti Levu and the Concept Plans for Suva, Nadi and Lautoka have actually been completed. The next phase of this project, which is currently Stage 5, will involve a refinement of the Master Plan in line with consultations with stakeholders. It does look at major infrastructure changes which we need to consult with the relevant stakeholders and incorporate into the Master Plan some of their comments before we finalise it.

They have presented to the honourable Minister for Local Government, and the Ministry is currently working on an update to Cabinet, and a possible extension of the contract to allow for the two Stages to be completed. A Master Plan is a very critical document when it comes to planning for towns and cities. It provides for well-planned towns and cities, it is not *ad hoc* which Masilina can tell you the *ad hoc* applications we get for rezonings, because lot of our town plans are dating back to 1970s or predating the 1970s. They never took into account how the towns would expand, so we cannot continue doing these developments on an *ad hoc* basis. We need to have proper planning. So, the Master Plan is not looking at just five years or 10 years, it is a 50 year plan, and it will cover the entire Viti Levu.

Some of the challenges we have faced is we do have issues when we reach out to agencies to give us feedback. We do face certain issues when it comes to delays in getting the relevant approvals.

Page 18 – Achievements: Rezoning

Question No. 9

Can the Ministry inform the Committee on the high number of applications refused and deferred to the 2018-2019 financial year?

A lot of applications are deferred or refused due to the fact that they are non-complaint with the Town Planning Act General Provisions. This General Provisions is the policy guide that the Department actually follows, and it sets your minimum lot size, minimum street frontage, what is your setback from the street, provisions of sewer based on density and the minimum width access roads for industrial areas. These are just some of the things in summary.

A number of applications had been deferred because of the fact that they were either incomplete or further information was required. These applications are generally returned to the client for further information and are not reflected in the consideration sections of our report.

There is a late reflection of decisions as most applications are carried forward to the next financial year or the next financial month.

Page 19 – Achievements: Building

Question No. 10

Can the Ministry explain the decline in development applications in 2018 compared to 2017?

Some of the things we attribute in 2017 that led to a major increase in development applications was the recovery from *TC Winston*. So, there was a lot of redevelopments, a lot of rebuilding of homes, a lot of schools that were damaged and a lot of developments that was either funded by Government development partners or people were just going back and redeveloped their applications. So, that was one of the major things that led to a hike in 2017 in terms of applications.

Question No. 11

Can the Ministry explain the reason for deferred and refusing building applications?

Again, building applications are deferred due to insufficient information. It requires amendment to certain building plans, non-compliance and sometimes requires stakeholders prior consent. Applications are, again, refused due to non-compliance, incompatibility or lack of infrastructure to support the proposal.

Question No. 12

Can the Ministry brief the Committee whether the deferred building applications were facilitated?

Yes, the role of the Department is, obviously, to look at the plans whether approved or not, but they go a step further and they actually do face to face, over the phone or email consultations to ensure that when the client is resubmitting the application, it contains all the information. Where their applications require infrastructure/stakeholders' comments and recommendations, the Ministry actually invites these stakeholders to discuss on how we could best assist in development.

Page 20 – Achievements: Forward Planning

Question No. 13

Can the Ministry brief the Committee on the progress of the review of the Town Planning Act and other related laws?

Currently, the first draft of the Town Planning Act is with the Office of the Solicitor-General and what we are currently doing is also relooking at the review in terms of the progress in town planning processes, the changing market dynamics and client needs for efficient and timely services. Also looking at customer service, transparency, accountability as the critical indicators to guide our review.

In 2021 and 2022 we did amendments to streamline and modernise certain processes within the Act. There were things like home-based business category, streamlining and modernising application of rezoning processes, trying to reduce the time it takes for these processes and looking at things like block rezoning.

Page 21 – Service Goals

Question No. 14

The Committee noted the application processing days for building, rezoning and subdivision. Can the Ministry inform the Committee on the challenges and way forward for processing applications?

In terms of challenges faced in terms of rezoning applications, as I have mentioned, we do receive a lot of *ad hoc* applications and as also pointed out, a lot of town plans are outdated. So, some schemes have not been reviewed since the 1970s which had not reflected the current

development trends. So, the Department is actually inundated with a lot of applications for rezoning, which does put a strain on the limited capacity we have.

To address these challenges, as we have mentioned earlier, we have done an amendment to the Act in March 2022. We have looked at some of these areas which have significantly changed from what it used to be, for example, looking at Toorak which used to be a highly residential area but today is a highly commercial area. However, you still have some blocks within it that are still residential. So, we have allowed for bulk rezoning of areas.

Those are areas that are highly commercial areas now, so people do not have to keep coming back when they want to demolish a house and put up a commercial activity there. They do not have to come back and ask for a rezoning application.

Question No. 15

Is the Ministry planning to reduce the application processing days for building, rezoning and subdivision?

The Ministry is planning to reduce the application processes. Currently, rezoning takes 45 days, subdivision 30 days and building 20 working days. Previously, the times were over two months for rezoning, subdivision were for three months and building was for 45 working days. So, we have worked on streamlining these processes and reducing the timeline but we believe it can be further streamlined and we are working on this, I had mentioned Project bizFIJI 2.0 - working with the consultants to review our processes and making sure that once the process starts with the Municipal Councils and comes to Town Planning, or when it starts from the surveyor, it is clear cut and very transparent in terms of even the manual processes.

We are looking at the existing processes and how it will transition onto an online submission. So, we want to eliminate any bureaucracy in the process. We are expected to launch a pilot project later this year with three Municipalities to test our new revised processes and then to launch it with all the Municipalities thereafter.

Page 23 – Human Resources

Question No. 16

Can the Ministry elaborate on the challenges and way forward for the Ministry's human resources and administration section?

The Ministry is working on our Administration and Human Resources Section which is combined Administration and Finance Section in terms of recruiting of key staff. We have had a freeze on recruitment since January, but we are actually going back to the Ministry of Civil Service requesting for a waiver to get in critical positions. At the moment, our Admin and Finance is overseen by Mr. Chandra here. In 2018, we had strengthened our Accounts/Finance Section with having the right skilled people, having a Senior Accounts Officer, Accounts Officer and an Assistant Accountant.

In terms of capacity building, training and upskilling, we have been undertaking a number of these projects where it is to do with projects management, human resources and financial management.

Page 26 – Finance Unit

Question No. 17

Can the Ministry elaborate on the low budget utilization by the Ministry during the 2018–2019 financial year?

A considerable amount of our budget, which is about 69 percent to 70 percent of our budget, comprised of capital projects by Municipal Councils or any other soft grants, et cetera, that is provided to these Councils.

As we have, sort of, pointed out earlier, when Councils do submit these projects, when they go through the processes, by the time everything is completed, it is probably too late to fully implement some of these projects. So, that has probably led to the funding for a number of the projects not being fully utilised.

What the Ministry, obviously, ensures is that we are using public funds so we have to be very prudent in the use of these funds. So, if a project does not meet the requirements along the way and whatever documentation they are submitting does not meet the requirements, we do not just release the funds to them for their use.

As we had said, we were looking at ways of training Municipal Council Finance Teams, Project Teams and financial procedures and we are maintaining strict monitoring which we hope to further strengthen with having a separate team set up in the next financial year.

Page 28 – Enhanced governance for Municipal Councils

Question No. 18

Can the Ministry brief the Committee on how successful are the Municipal Councils in driving their strategic planning, financial sustainability and engagement with ratepayers?

In terms of their strategic planning, we have, recently, seen a significant progress in Councils where they have developed, outlined their goals, their objectives, and they have taken steps to make sure that these plans are actually aligned to the broader national plans.

Additionally, the Councils had actually put in place mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of their strategic plans and that also helps us to do our verification and review of what they have achieved. But we still feel there is room for improvement and in our recent CEOs Forum, we have had these discussions with the Councils where we told them, “We want you to look at your future plans for the three to five years and that is what you should be presenting.” We have had training on project management and also looking at how they should consider their towns as being the economic growth areas, so linking them up with relevant agencies like Investment Fiji.

Financial sustainability is obviously another critical area of focus. A lot of these Councils rely on rates, especially the smaller Councils, who rely on rates and fees only for their operations. So, we have seen them improve their financial management, including implementing the new financial systems.

We hope to improve this further by standardising a lot of the financial software - the accounting software that they have. We are actually liaising with a few vendors to find out how we could get a software that is used across all 13 Municipalities. So, it does generate the same kind of reports and it is easier for the Ministry also to extract information.

As mentioned earlier, we have provided Financial Manuals, HR Manuals and a number of other things.

Page 29 – Integrating Environment

Question No. 19

The Ministry develops business-friendly policies and supports investor awareness programmes to attract new business in Fiji's cities and towns. How successful is this initiative and what were the challenges?

We are working in collaboration with the overall project on improvement of business processes to deliver enhanced business processes. We are looking at streamlining manual processes, provision of information, checklist and a number of other things in terms of people having information in advance to avoid any rejections or deferments. Well, we will not be able to avoid it completely, but we try and reduce it.

As we have mentioned, we need to map out processes from Councils, all the way to the Department of Town and Country Planning as to how the processes are and we are able to see this. So, we will be launching the shared document where the Department of Town and Country Planning would be able to see the date an application is logged by a Council.

Question No. 20

The Ministry encourages businesses and investors to incorporate green initiatives into their business permit applications. How successful is this initiative, and what were the challenges?

We would also like to talk about some of the projects that are Government-funded that the Ministry has actually worked on, and these have been with Councils, which have led to their contractors and the Councils incorporating green initiatives in their project. We have the Nakasi, Levuka and Savusavu Markets that are actually incorporating rain harvesting and will be having solar panels as an alternative energy source.

Through the Department of Town and Country Planning, we encourage more open spaces when it comes to large developments, landscaping for all subdivisions and these are mandatory requirements when you are looking at subdivision rezoning or any building plans. Furthermore, we are looking at proposing some greening initiatives and incentives to encourage more developers to have more green buildings.

Question No. 21

Can the Ministry provide information on successful partnerships with Municipalities and other agencies? Were there any challenges?

The successful partnerships we have mentioned are your sister-city arrangements which has seen projects like your Suva City Council Auditorium and the amphitheatre that is currently being under consideration in Sigatoka.

The issue we obviously face is when we are having development partners come in is when you want to localise these plans and projects. Sometimes you have development partners who come with a set mindset, forgetting that Fiji is a different country with different requirements and needs. So, we are trying to ensure that when we do develop projects, we are able to maximise the use of the resources that is given to us.

Question No. 22

Is the Ministry continuing to embark on international twinning initiatives? Any new partnerships formulated?

We do encourage our Councils to have twinning programmes, like the Suva City Council (SCC) has with the Auckland City Council (ACC) which is working quite well for the SCC. They have been able to have training in a number of fields, whether it is to look at town planning, finances and a number of other areas.

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Question No. 23

How has the Ministry addressed the issues raised on Emphasis of Matter?

The Ministry's Finance Unit, as we have explained earlier, has been strengthened with additional staff. There were, obviously, issues where there was no separation of duties to ensure that accountability, efficiency and effectiveness were in place, so we have actually done that. That is how we have been able to address a lot of these issues. As we have mentioned, we have not had any issues in terms of qualification issues or matter of emphasis by the OAG.

All underlined reconciliations are submitted on time to the Ministry of Finance. We conduct training of staff on procedures and processes and there is continuous monitoring undertaken by the Finance Unit to ensure that they are following procedures and processes.

Question No. 24

What measures has the Ministry taken to improve on the auditor's opinion?

Apart from the measures we have already mentioned, we have to ensure that our internal processes are in control, and everything is done according to the procedures.

Pages 40-44

Question No. 25

Can the Ministry –

- (a) elaborate further on the commission revenue collected in the year 2018-2019;**
 - (b) clarify the decrease in miscellaneous revenue collected for 2018-2019;**
 - (c) outline the challenges faced in filling vacant positions and the restructure of the Ministry?**
- (a) The Ministry actually acts on behalf of financial institutions to deduct monthly deductions from employees and then these are remitted to financial institutions, so there is a commission earned as revenue from the financial institutions. This could be a direct deduction whether for an employee who is paying his or her loan or the insurance, so it is a direct deduction, so when the financial institute asks for a direct deduction, there is a commission fee that is paid to the Ministry.
- (b) A large portion, obviously, the reduction was due to the reduction in building applications as compared to the year before, which meant a reduced number of building searches were done and the fees were not collected.

- (c) Some of the positions we have are highly technical. Masilina's Unit is a very highly technical Unit which looks at Town Planners with specific set of skills that is not readily available in Fiji. So, we do have issues when one of the Town Planners decide to leave and getting people to fill up these positions. Masilina herself is actually trained in Australia.

We are currently undertaking restructure. The Department was shifting from one Ministry to another in one year so we managed to sort that out and we will be looking at some of these areas of restructure.

Sustainable Development Goals

Question No. 26

To what extent has the Ministry met its SDG performance targets? What were the challenges for non-implementation?

One of the key SDGs that comes under the responsibility of the Ministry is SDG 11 which talks about sustainable cities and communities. So, it is basically to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

We have been progressing in this area, but we are not going to deny it, we are not on target. A lot of these SDG 11 is related to a number of other SDGs which the Ministry of Local Government alone cannot, sort of, achieve. But what we do believe is in order to achieve sustainable cities and making settlements inclusive, safe and resilient, we need to, as we have explained, have long term planning as to how our towns and cities will grow. That is why the Master Plan plays a critical role in making sure we are able to achieve our target.

We will have to look at these indicators but as way forward, the Master Plan will look at making better towns and cities. We will create township and business districts. Township means your homes and your Central Business District means jobs. That is how we look at this whole thing to ensure that we have achieved inclusivity. We are making these towns and cities safe, resilient and sustainable for human settlement.

Question No. 27

Can the Ministry highlight its achievement towards developing green towns and cities while integrating climate change adaptation needs across these areas?

I think we have, sort of, explained that briefly already. We make sure that green aspects are covered in our capital projects.

We are looking at adaptation measures when it comes to climate change. For buildings, that is, sort of, captured from the on-set. So, if there is an application made for a Scheme Plan to the Department of Town and Country Planning, one of the key conditions would be, if it is a large development, it is ensuring that environment assessment is a key component of it. Buildings have to comply with the general provision requirements and also the National Building Code, to be able to be protected against natural disasters.

Obviously, green towns and cities is what our vision is, but we are waiting with relevant agencies on what new strategies could be developed so it is something that all builders and developers, sort of, focus on. It is not something when it comes to the Department and the Department says, "May be, you should think about it", it should be from the on-set.

Question No. 28

Can the Ministry highlight its contribution towards SDG 5 – Gender, and its implementation in the Ministry?

Obviously, the recruitment processes at the Ministry are based on the Open Merit Recruitment System (OMRS) of the Civil Service and women are given equal opportunity to be part of this process. Currently, the Ministry and we are very proud of this, has 60 percent women and most importantly, most women at decision making level. We have got an Assistant Minister, honourable Qereqeretabua; myself as the Permanent Secretary; and Acting Director Masilina Rokowati; and our Director Local Government, Ms. Bindula Devi, who is currently on leave. So, we do have women at the decision-making process.

We need to improve it at Council level though. They have 14 percent of women right now as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and this is actually a very big change. We never used to see women CEOs of Councils and they are doing very well. Out of the 17 Special Administrators, 30 percent are women.

Madam Chairperson and honourable Members of the Standing Committee, that is all from us. The Team and I are here to answer any question.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you very much for your comprehensive answers to the questions that we had sent to you. I know that the Members have questions to ask and I think I will limit your questions probably, to two questions each.

Before I give the floor to the honourable Members, can I please get a clarification on Question No. 10 on Page 19 where we request the Ministry to explain the decline in development applications in 2018. I think the answer that you have provided was that there was an increase in development applications. But we were actually asking for the declined in the development applications.

MS. S. SHARMA.- I think I did not come out correctly, I was just explaining why 2017 was better than 2018. The question was why there was a decline in 2018 compared to 2017, so 2017 was an exceptional year.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, PS. I will now give the floor to the honourable Members.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- I have a few questions. Your response in the second line of Question 19, it says that that has led to Nakasi, Levuka and Savusavu Market Projects incorporating rain harvesting and solar panels, are they completed?

MS. S. SHARMA.- Probably, I will get Mr. Korodrau to explain what stage they are at.

MR. U. KORODRAU.- Honourable Member, in terms of those three projects, Savusavu is currently in progress - it is in the construction phase. Nakasi is still also in the construction phase and the same with the Levuka Market project.

MS. S. SHARMA.- If I may add, Levuka and Savusavu have significantly progressed in their stage and we hope to have then completed, at least, sometimes next year.

MR. U. KORODRAU.- For the Levuka Market Project, we are looking at July this year. For Savusavu Market, we are looking towards the end of this year (2023), and Nakasi is the same, we are

also looking at November 2023.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- The reason I had asked this question is because the Committee is intending to have a tour of your project sites and because it came up from your answers, we will be expecting that. On that note, how long has this project taken?

MR. U. KORODRAU.- The construction of the project for Savusavu started in November 2022. It was towards the end of last year. Levuka also started early this year in February but I do not have the exact dates, and the same with the Nakasi Market Project.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Madam Chairperson, through you, while I still have time to ask questions, I just might as well get on with it before I handover to my colleagues.

Looking at your Annual Report on Page 10, Paragraph 4, there is a statement that the Ministry works well with volunteers from JICA. Is that still going on?

MS. S. SHARMA.- Yes, it is. Currently, I think Nasinu and Nausori still has a JICA volunteer. I think Sigatoka Town Council requested for a volunteer as well. So, we still have that continued.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- My other question is in regards to your response on the Master Planning Project on Page 8 of your presentation. According to your presentation it says, "Four stages of the draft Strategic Master Plan Study of Viti Levu Island and the Concept Master Plan for Greater Suva, Nadi and Lautoka..." Is there a particular reason why Vanua Levu is not included?

MS. S. SHARMA.- No, particular reason, Sir. Madam Chairperson, I think it was to start off with Viti Levu because one of the other things that is part of this is also training for the team at Town and Country Planning to engage in further plans. So, after we have finished off with Viti Levu, the same learnings could be taken on and, please, by all means, Vanua Levu is very dear to us and we have not left it out. It was just to start off the project.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- So, Vanua Levu includes the next 50 years.

MS. S. SHARMA.- Yes, Sir.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Chairperson, through you, in regards to the response provided for Question No. 16 in regards to the low budget utilisation, the number of bulletpoints with information provided by Madam PS and the reasons that were given, I believe the Ministry of Local Government needs to work closely with Municipal Councils to improve on that.

Also, with the information on the pending projects with regards to the second phase of work required for Govind Park, Madam PS, we have also visited Govind Park during my last term with the Committee and I understand the work is still pending. Can you provide some information in regards to the pending work that will be completed as far as Phase 2 is concerned?

MS. S. SHARMA.- Madam Chairperson, through you, thank you honourable Member for the question. I will hand over to Mr. Korodrau to answer all the details, but as far as we had mentioned, the pending work left is for the ground, the fencing and some electrical works. It was budgeted for in this financial year. There is a process that we had to go through. As I had explained earlier, just

last week, we received the Tender Board approval for the project and we will be working with the Ba Town Council to ensure that, at least, the ground and the fencing work starts.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Through you, Madam Chairperson, will you be able to complete the project as you have given the timeframe earlier on, Madam PS?

MS. S. SHARMA.- As I had said, we were initially looking at mid this year, but we are almost in mid this year and the approval just came a week ago. There are other processes to be followed, so probably we are looking at early next year when the work will start because we have just received approval, so we have to ensure that all the boxes are checked before we give the go ahead. There are contracts and things that need to be finalised.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Madam Chairperson, since we are pressed for time, I will try to be short. I had questions for every question that was presented but, fortunately, I am able to find some supplementary questions. For page 13(c) in your responses, how has the Ministry of Local Government specifically empowered youth or young entrepreneurs in Fiji in the past year and what were the outcomes of these initiatives with respect to your local government, towns, cities or markets?

MS. S. SHARMA.- Madam Chairperson, in terms of youth empowerment, a lot of the work, obviously, is with the initiatives that we undertake in terms of the markets, the improvement of facilities, et cetera. We have specific Councils that work with youth groups, and this is about economic empowerment of them but also looking at youth groups and communities in terms of carrying out public awareness in terms of environmental issues, litter and things like that. The Councils have been working closely with youth empowerment. I think Mr. Korodrau wants to add something too.

MR. U. KORODRAU.- Madam Chairperson, through you, with the Ministry of Local Government, we also assist Municipal Councils in terms of sports facilities. You will note that in Lautoka Churchill Park, there is an athletic track that was carried out by the Ministry of Local Government. That is to simply promote Western students, especially youth who are limited in having those facilities whereby they have to come down to Suva because Suva has the only stadium that has athletic tracks. So, in trying to have equal distribution of sports facilities, we have also encouraged and assisted Municipal Councils in terms of developing their sports facilities.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Madam Chairperson, through you, with respect to that, I am specifically asking about young entrepreneurs. I understand that, that also empowers young people, but in terms of entrepreneurship, how has the Local Government or what can you do to provide facilities or opportunities for young people to earn a living in the Local Government vicinity?

MS. S. SHARMA.- Thank you very much, honourable Member. Madam Chairperson, in terms of economic empowerment, obviously, there is a number of other initiatives and programmes that are underway.

First, the Ministry's initiative is, obviously, looking at certain facilities within markets to allow for them to be able to do their entrepreneurial programme. Not everyone can, sort of, have their own little stores, so the kiosks actually give them an opportunity to do a micro business and then elevate from there. There are SMEs spaces available.

As the Ministry of Local Government, we work with Municipalities to ensure that there is ample facilities or spaces available where these youth can grow and then you have other Ministries

and agencies that can provide the support. Under the Ministry of Trade, MSME Fiji can provide support in terms of financial, advisory, training and even mentoring. The Ministry of Local Government, in isolation, cannot look at youth empowerment, we work with Ministry of Youth and Sports, as Mr. Korodrau had explained about sports facilities. So, sport facilities do not mean just engaging in a recreational activity, but it is encouraging teams to progress their future in a specific sport. There are different ways that we could look at it, it is not Ministry of Local Government isolated kind of thing, it has to work across all Ministries and Government.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Madam through you, I have two final questions. I understand with the boundary extension programme, according to your response, these responsibilities include building permit management and garbage collection. The residents are not charged a rate, including garbage collection. The garbage collection fee or whatever it is, is funded through the National Budget.

This Report is from 2018, but with respect to 2023, are there plans for you or the Ministry to start charging rates to where you have extended the boundaries?

MS. S. SHARMA.- If I just specify again, it is not an extended boundary, because you have to use a specific (as I was explaining earlier) means test to do the extended boundaries. This was a designated boundary in 2018. When Rural Local Authorities were dissolved, they gave towns and cities this responsibility. So, at this point in time, there has to be an assessment done in terms of whether the Councils can start charging a fee but that would require a proper extension of boundaries.

You just cannot, within the current makeup, just start charging them a fee, because if you go to towns like Labasa which has Nabouwalu, Nabouwalu and everything in between needs to have certain facilities in place first before you start charging a rate. So, there has to be a process that has to be undertaken and people should be willing and ready to be paying a fee because you are required to do a valuation in terms of your properties. So, in certain rural settings, you do not even have properties pegged, so you have to start pegging and things like that.

There are a lot of things taken into consideration but as we have been going through this process of consultations with stakeholders and ratepayers, there has been a number of suggestions made which need to be considered, but it is a process, so it cannot just start next year and we start charging.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Through you, Madam, my final question; I understand you raised that there is lack of staff, especially expertise in highly technical departments. I understand urban planning along this area, FNU provides some sort of course. Are you open to allow students to come and attach themselves there?

MS. M. ROKOWATI.- Yes, honourable Member, we have just written a submission to the Permanent Secretary to allow for internship. Hopefully, in the next week or so, we will be reaching out to the Ministry of Labour, they still have NEC, and we welcome them. Previously, we used to have them.

HON. K.K. LAL.- So you did attach the previous students?

MS. M. ROKOWATI.- Yes, Sir.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Thank you, that is all, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I will take one last question from honourable Ratu Vakalalabure before we round off our session this morning.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Madam Chairperson, just one last question. Apology, Madam PS and the Team, please, just bear with me. This is in regards to Page No. 15 of your Annual Report, last paragraph, and Page No. 7 of the Questions and Answers. This is with regards to the allocation of \$5.6 million for Nabouwalu New Town Development and Seaqaqa New Town Documentation.

For clarity reasons, looking at the Annual Report, it says that documentation for environmentally sustainable subdivisions scheme plans - a landfill site was identified, compensation exercise carried out, relocation consent obtained, zone completed, and community capacity building delivered through UNDP, that is in your Annual Report.

In your response to the question, the challenge faced was that the Construction Implementation Unit issued a concern notice to the Ministry for issues in regard to the overtopping of creek water during rainy seasons, hence the works needed to be suspended. But prior to that your first response was, "The Ministry had completed the documentation works for Nabouwalu and had proceeded with the civil works in 2018 and 2019. My question is, since everything had ceased, what happened to the \$5.6 million?

MS. S. SHARMA.- As far as I could remember - I do not have it over the top of head but that funding was not utilised. Whatever work was done, it was only utilised for that work and that explains a number of underutilisations that we had. Because these issues were identified, especially for Nabouwalu, if we had continued, it would have caused a major issue in terms of flooding which we could not allow to happen. So that required a halt.

MS. M. ROKOWATI.- Just to clarify to the Committee, you have growth areas and you have pockets. For new town developments, these are areas where you come in, you set the infrastructure and the population come in - that is the strategy. There is a strategy where you have the population and then you build the infrastructure. That is another strategy. It is not the past strategy where you do the infrastructure and then you have the population come in.

In terms of civil works, we have to understand that when you fill, it has to settle. So, the projects roll over, money as well, so that is where the rollover comes in. *Vinaka.*

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Is the money still available?

The reason why I asked, Madam PS and Team, is from your report and the replies to the questions, the concern of the Construction Implementation Unit was that everything was on hold. So, if it is on hold, then where is the money?

Now, according to Acting Director's information, everything should rollover, so are you saying that we still have the \$5.6 million?

MS. S. SHARMA.- Madam Chairperson, if I may, I am just going to ask Manager Finance to explain what the Government financial processes are because we do not get to roll over funds. So, he is going to explain how they process.

MR. N. CHANDRA.- Thank you, Madam PS, through you, Madam Chairperson, I would like to inform the Committee that in terms of the utilisation of funds is concerned, for this particular

project the funding was not utilised in the 2018-2019 financial year. At the end of the financial year, the budget is forfeited, it is not carried over to the next financial year. In order to request for budget for the next financial year, it needs to go through a budgetary process.

The following year, we had requested for funding and this project was put on hold and later in the 2000-2021 financial year, the directive was to actually continue with the project. The Ministry after that had commenced with the project and we have also been provided budgetary provision in this financial year (2022-2023).

Also, the tenders for the project have been given to the Ministry. It was for the Nabouwalu foreshore. Also, the Ministry is going through the administrative process to have that in place. In terms of the budgetary provision for the next financial year (2023-2024), we have requested for budgetary provision to actually continue, so this will be a span of a three-year programme. Thank you.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Through you, Madam PS, I would also like to thank the Ministry for a number of capital projects that were successfully completed. Just a question, did the Ministry conduct any evaluation or assessments to measure the effectiveness and the impact of those projects?

MS. S. SHARMA.- Madam Chairperson, thank you. In terms of a number of capital projects, you would see most of them are to do with things that would have an impact on livelihoods of people, whether you have markets or facilities. So, what the Ministry does is, obviously, once the projects are completed, there is certain monitoring and assessment done thereafter.

But as we were explaining, we are trying to set up a full-fledged team that will do regular monitoring and assessment, not just the start of a project and the finish of a project but as you had exactly pointed out - making sure that we have proper records of how this project actually impacted the livelihoods of people. We do that randomly right now, but we will make it a regular, sort of, plan in terms of checking all these, whether it is Government-funded projects or whether it is Council-funded projects.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Thank you, Sir, for your presentation. I understand what you have said, I am just speaking on the 2018-2019 Annual Report, that is, when the project ceased what happened to the money, so that was all I wanted to know.

MS. S. SHARMA.- Madam Chairperson, we only pay for what work is done. The Ministry of Finance will not release to us, it does not come to the Ministry of Local Government, the fund stays with Ministry of Finance and the Government funding cycle is for the financial year. Once the financial year finishes off, we do not get that money to us, it is forfeited, as he had explained. It went back to the Government coffers and the Government decides how to reallocate.

The details of the financial procedures would be best explained by the Ministry of Finance but in terms of how we see it, we got this money, we only used whatever work was done and any additional will only be released if and when we show any further acquittals or work been done for that project. So, it was a budgeted amount, it is not money given to us. We have a budget, we work within that budget, and we do not just get money released anyhow, we have to make sure that we use it prudently because it is public funds.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Just a question on that, I understand the capital projects used to be under Ministry of Economy so basically the funds are kept with Ministry of Economy, are they the ones

who are releasing directly to the contractors?

MS. S. SHARMA.- Yes.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- So we will be expecting that in your 2019-2020 Annual Report?

MS. S. SHARMA.- Yes.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Thank you very much, Madam PS and Team.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you for that very robust discussion.

I wish to thank you sincerely, Madam PS and your Team, for availing yourselves to be here this morning for our meeting. We request that if we have any future queries regarding the Annual Report, you will always be ready to assist us as and when the need arises.

With those words, I thank you again. Thank you, honourable Members, for being present this morning. I declare this Meeting closed.

The Committee adjourned at 12.30 p.m.

Appendix 3

Supplementary response received from
Ministry for Local Government

**CLARIFICATION OF ISSUES - MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ANNUAL
REPORT 2018 - 2019**

1. The construction of the Lautoka Botanical Garden Swimming Pool.
a) What is the purpose of this development?

The Lautoka Botanical Garden Swimming Pool was constructed based on discussions between the Lautoka City Council, relevant stakeholders/ratepayers, and the Ministry. The following purposes were identified for the construction of the swimming pool:

1. Recreation, Leisure, Health, and Fitness:

The Western Division of Fiji experiences the least rainfall and the highest temperatures compared to other divisions. Considering the weather pattern and the number of schools in the division, it was evident that a public swimming pool facility was lacking. The government supported the proposal to address this need, providing a recreational facility for the community and an opportunity for swimming competitions. The facility would also offer swimming classes for young students in the area, promoting water safety and healthy physical activities.

2. Equal Distribution of Sports Facilities:

The project aimed to ensure the equal distribution of sports facilities throughout Fiji. Following the government's investment in the construction of the Athletic tracks at Churchill Park in Lautoka, it became apparent that additional sports facilities were necessary. By constructing the swimming pool, Lautoka City would have a comprehensive range of sporting amenities comparable to those available at the HFC National Stadium in Suva.

3. International Swimming Pool Competition:

Despite the Western Division's proximity to an international airport and the availability of numerous accommodations from Nadi to Lautoka, it lacked appropriate facilities to host international swimming competitions or training sessions. Constructing an international-standard swimming pool in Lautoka City was seen as essential to attract such events. This facility would help promote Lautoka as a tourist city, attracting more activities and visitors to the Western Division.

The cost of this project of each phase and the progress?

The projected cost of the Lautoka Botanical Garden Swimming Pool Project at that time was \$12,674,518.62. The project was divided into different phases, and the costs were allocated accordingly.

For the main construction work of the three pools, two contractors were awarded the project. One contractor specialised in pool construction and was responsible for building the pools themselves. The other contractor was awarded the construction of the associated facilities since the specialised pool contractor did not want to undertake that aspect of the project.

In addition to the main construction, various other aspects of the project required the expertise of different service contractors. These included hydraulics, plumbing work, electricity services, surveying work, and fire services. Each of these aspects was awarded to separate contractors based on their respective specialties.

The other aspect of the Project such as the hydraulics, plumbing work, electricity services, Surveying work, Fire Services were awarded to different service contractors.

Below is the breakdown of the Project costing:

		Forecast \$ (VIP)
a.	Design & Documentation – Consultancy Fees	885,013.51
b.	Civil Works	270,415.00
c.	Construction – Swimming Pool (Contract 'A')	4,864,125.00
d.	Construction – Building Works (Contract 'B')	3,965,200.01
e.	Tender in Progress:- i. Competition Equipment ii. Hydraulics, Chlorifiers etc. iii. Flood lights & towers iv. Fire requirements v. Electrical	2,651,000.00
	TOTAL	\$12,635,753.52

2. The Ministry to provide the status of the town boundaries in all municipalities whether this has been finalized and gazetted as this will enable town council elections?

Please refer to the updates as tabulated below:

Municipal Council	Update	Comments
Lautoka City Council	<p>The proposed boundary extension was presented to the Committee and site visitation was carried out in 2020.</p> <p>The Committee noted that the extension is quite extensive hence, advised that a proper pre-consultation has to be carried out. The Committee further suggested that some areas need advisory plan for modern development.</p> <p>Currently, Lautoka City Council is in the process of finalizing its proposal and will be engaging a Town Planning Consultant to carry out feasibility study on the proposed areas. This is proposed to be undertaken in the next financial year.</p>	Work In Progress
Labasa Town Council	A correspondence was received on 30.10.22 for the Town boundary extension proposal. The Committee advised that Council to engage a Town Planning Consultant to carryout town/city boundary legal description. Council was also advised to move forward with their proposal.	LTC is still in the process of finalising its proposal.
Savusavu Town Council	The Council advised that the Blue Town Concept model were in preliminary stages.	Work In Progress
Sigatoka Town Council	Sigatoka Town Council has engaged a consultant to carry out the extension of town boundary. The proposed town boundary was presented to the Committee in 2019 by the Consultant. The proposed areas shall be from Cuvu Bridge to Agricultural Office, Valley Road	Work In Progress

	to Malevu Bridge. The matter was put on hold due to Covid. The Council is now liaising with the Consultant on the work plan to proceed with the exercise.	
Nausori Town Council	Nausori Town Council is still in the process of finalising its proposal on the proposed town boundary extension for Nausori.	Work In Progress
Nadi Town Council	The alteration of the town boundary extension for Nadi was gazetted in 2018.	Work In Progress

3. The Organizational Structure of the ministry outlines the position that exist in the ministry. Can the Ministry verify that these positions are filled with the right person with merits?

The Ministry follows the guidelines set by the Ministry of Civil Service. The Open Merit Recruitment and Selection (OMRS) guideline to recruit the right person for the position based on the knowledge, experience, skills, and abilities required for the position. Under OMRS, recruitment process is open and transparent designed to attract people from diverse experiences and professional abilities.

The Ministry has recruited staff based on OMRS guideline. The Ministry's current establishment is 56 from which 41 positions has been filled and 15 positions are vacant which is currently under recruitment process.

Hence, all positions in the Ministry are appointed on merit only.

The Ministry of Civil Service also performs annual audit on Ministry's recruitment process of the recruited positions to verify whether the Ministry has strictly adhered to the OMRS guideline in the selection process. Both internal and external audit is performed annually, which covers the human resource management aspect.

The Ministry also established the MY Annual Performance Assessment for staff to monitor and evaluate their performance in their assigned roles. This can include performance appraisals, feedback mechanisms, and regular assessments to ensure ongoing verification of their suitability for the position.

4. Can the Ministry clarify the reasons why capital projects were not executed on the planned financial year?

2018 – 2019 FY Capital Projects	Update on the Capital Projects
National Fire Authority - Capital Grant (\$1,500,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The projects namely; Construction of a Fire Station barrack, Purchase of Fire trucks; Fire Appliances and Personal Protective Equipment were still under project documentation phase, tender process and approval process respectively in the FY. • Commenced Work on the Construction of the Nakasi Fire Station. • The Fire Station was completed in June 2020. • Completed and Commissioned the Rakiraki Fire Station in September 2019.
On-going Construction - Lautoka Botanical Garden Swimming Pool (\$2,500,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lautoka Swimming Pool Project was placed on hold due to project issues relating to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Project Supervision by the Project Lead Consultant b. Slow Progress of Contract B – construction of the associated buildings surrounding the pools c. Delay/hold up on the Swimming Pool Project Grant by Construction Implementation Unit. The Ministry had round of Consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Lautoka City Council on the progress and continuation of the project.
Laqere Municipal Market (\$7.2 million) and Namaka Municipal Market (\$4.8 milion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Laqere and Namaka Markets were partially completed at the time of report. • Both projects were completed in 2020, with a total funding of \$12 million, and are open to the public.
Preparatory Works - Valelevu Sports Stadium (\$850,000);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project was to be co-funded by the Chinese Government. With respect to the MOU with Guangdong Province, the concept design for the Nasinu stadium proposed by Guangdong Province

	<p>did not accommodate the seating capacity that Nasinu Town Council. The discussion also included the specific features of the conference room, which was not taken into consideration by the donor partner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scope was not appropriate. There was no meeting of the minds between. Then the pandemic happened. Therefore, the project could not proceed. • But we still bore fruit. We may not have happened with Nasinu, but we did benefit. The Suva City Council has a Sister City arrangement with Guangdong Province. • The Refurbishment of the Suva Civic Centre was undertaken as part of the MOU.
Suva Civic Centre (\$9.3million)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reopened after 18 Months redevelopment - Partnership with the Guangdong Province (September 2018). • This Refurbishment Project was completed in late 2019, (at a cost of \$9 million covered by Guangdong Council and SCC spent approx. \$300,000). This has been a demonstration of the friendship and positive relationship between Fiji and China, specifically Suva and Guangdong.
Improvement of Ventilation and Lighting - Lautoka Market (\$1,000,000);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project did not proceed due to a disagreement between the stakeholders on the proposed concept design. The consultant was requested to revise the concept after the Financial Year had ended. • In terms of the improvement of ventilation and lighting of Lautoka Market, the Lautoka City Council has taken steps to address and improve the situation. • For more lighting and ventilation, has installed the following as an interim measure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 5 industrial fans in the main market b. 56 tube lights in the main market

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. 38 down lights in the new wing d. 7 tarpaulins in the new wing • The installation of the lights and provision for tarpaulins costed \$22,205.
Construction of Roadside Mini Markets - Municipal Councils (\$800,000);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cuvu and Suknaivalu Mini Markets were completed and opened. • Nakasi Mini Market could not proceed due to issues with the acquisition of the subject land.
Redevelopment of Govind Park - Ba (\$1,000,000);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 on the Pavilion construction continued and is complete. • An allocation of, \$1,720,000 was provided for in the 2018-2019 national budget (\$1,000,000 in specific allocation and \$720,000 through Challenge and Investment Fund allocation). • The following has been completed as part of Phase I of the redevelopment project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Construction of the 9,000 seating capacity pavilion and the associated facilities, 2 restrooms (male and female), 4 change rooms, 1 conference room, 2 dormitories, a corporate box, 2 media rooms and 2 kiosks outlets. b. Engagement of Project Managers and Quantity Surveyor for project supervision. • The project progress was affected due to the pandemic restrictions and rectification of defects that were identified and negotiated with the contractor. • Phase 2 is work in progress taking into consideration the magnitude of the project.
Preparatory Works for New Swimming Pool - Nasinu Town Council (\$500,000);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project concept and detailed design were completed. • The construction phase did not happen due to no budgetary support.
Preparatory Works for New Indoor Sporting Facility - Lautoka City Council (\$500,000);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project concept and detailed design were completed. • The construction phase did not happen due to no

	budgetary allocation.
Preparatory Works - New Rakiraki Bus Station (\$150,000);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project concept and detailed design were completed. • The construction phase did not happen due to no budgetary allocation in the said financial year.
Rakiraki Municipal Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed in 2020.
Churchill Park Flood Lights (\$500,000);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project detailed design were completed. • Due to high costs associated with flood lights and tower, the project was put on hold.
Preparatory Works - Lami Market (\$250,000);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The market site was in dispute due to the future growth and expansion in Lami Town. • Lami Town Council has tasked to look for alternative sites before any request for funds is made.

Since the 2018-2019 financial year, a number of market projects have been completed. Approximately 12 Municipal and Mini Markets have been funded by the Fijian Government with an investment of \$23.6 million. Since 2018, the following municipal markets have been completed and opened:

Namaka, Laqere and Rakiraki. The Flagstaff, Cuvu (Sigatoka) and Tavakubu (Lautoka) mini-markets have been opened.

5. The same question (How many stalls are in this mini market, what were the stall fees and were there accommodation units provided to the vendors for these mini market) is also directed to the markets that were completed in 2020. These markets are Namaka, Rakiraki and Laqere.

The mini markets were constructed to promote decentralisation and to ensure that roadside vendors are provided with proper facility to sell their market produce. These roadside vendors usually sell from selected areas that are heavily used by the public and which are close to their residences.

The vendors usually leave behind a lot of rubbish on the roadside and also the areas were not hygienic due to the lack of proper sanitation. Government assisted the vendors with

building proper market structure with restrooms and the regular collection of the rubbish from the market sites.

The Municipal Councils charge stall fees to cater for the Council operation cost in terms of the water bills, electricity cost and waste collection cost.

In terms of Accommodation Namaka and Rakiraki markets have accommodation facilities because these markets cater for the rural vendors who come from the remote highlands of Rakiraki and Nadi.

As for the Laqere market, there was no need for an Accommodation Centre, as it was constructed to cater for the roadside vendors who usually sell close to the Laqere Bridge. During the assessment, it was noted that these vendors reside around the Nasinu area and that there were no vendors who travelled afar to be at the market.

It is worth noting that the construction of the accommodation centers is meant for rural vendors who travel long distances to reach the market.

Below is the data on the market stalls and stall fees in Tavakubu Mini Market, Cuvu Mini Market, Namaka Municipal Market, Rakiraki Municipal Market and Laqere Municipal Market:

Market	Council	No. of Stalls	Stall Fees	Accommodation Units
Tavakubu Mini Market	Lautoka City	68	\$2.10/stall	None
Cuvu Mini Market	Sigatoka Town	27	\$1.10/stall	None
Namaka Municipal Market	Nadi Town	318	\$0.90, \$1.00, \$2.18, \$2.42, \$2.25 subject to the crops/produce	20
Market	Council	No. of Stalls	Stall Fees	Accommodation Units

Rakiraki Municipal Market	Rakiraki Town	344	\$0.85, \$1.10, \$3.25, \$0.85, \$2.25, \$1 & \$3 subject to the crops/produce	30
Laqere Municipal Market	Nasinu Town	511	\$7.50/Table/Week - Vegetable, Fruits & Root Crops \$9/week – Eggs, Spices \$13.20/week/stand – Handicraft \$15/week – Juice Sellers 0.22cents/kg – Fish \$2.80/50kg Bag – Kai \$1.10/Day – Seafood \$3.80/meter cage – Live Chicken/Duck \$1.25/Table/Day - Veg and Root Part-time Sellers (Farmers and Middleman)	None

5. Is the Ministry following the processing days for building, rezoning and subdivision applications, can the ministry provide percentage rate of achievement?

Yes. The Ministry strives to process Development Applications within the respective timelines, however, in certain circumstances meeting timelines will depend on a number of factors, including:

- Required additional information in order to complete an assessment.
- Objections to development proposal.
- Complexity of the development proposal.
- Request to deviate from the planning policies and regulations.
- Requirement for the application to be presented at the Department's subcommittee meeting.

The processing officer assigned to assess a Development Application will be able to provide an indication on the likely timeframe for determining application.

Appendix 4

Additional information obtained from the
site visitation

ceo@nadi¹towncouncil.com.fj
To: Tevita Tuivanuavou
Cc: Atelaite Leba

Wed 11/1/2023 12:16 PM

Cola Vina Sir

My apologies for the late revert as I was out of Country and just resumed work.

The total males permanent vendors - 29
No casual male vendors.

The casual vendors usually come to the market on Thursday – Saturday.

Should you require any further clarification or information please feel free to let me know.

Regards,



Muni Reddy | Acting Chief Executive Officer

Nadi Town Council, Main Street, P.O Box 241, **Nadi**

Phone: (679) 6700133 Fax: (679) 6700131 Mobile: (679) 9993344

Web: www.nadi¹towncouncil.com.fj

TT
Tevita Tuivanuavou
To: ceo@nadi¹towncouncil.com.fj
Cc: Atelaite Leba

Thu 10/26/2023 6:13 PM

Sir,

following up on the question below, please. hope this could be facilitated for the members of the committee for social affairs.

awaiting your kind confirmation.

Tevita
(8018895)



TT
Tevita Tuivanuavou
To: ceo@nadi¹towncouncil.com.fj
Cc: Atelaite Leba

Mon 10/23/2023 7:16 PM

bula vinaka sir,

im emailing to confirm the number of total vendors in Namaka Market? the total number of permanent vendors, you have mentioned below; 60 permanent women vendors, how many are male permanent vendors?

furthermore, you have mention 20 casual women vendors how many men casual vendors and when do these casual vendors come into the market to sell their produce.

hope to get your response at your earliest.

tevita
(8018895)

TT
Tevita Tuivanuavou
To:ceo@naitowncouncil.com.fj
Cc:Atelaite Leba

Mon 10/23/2023 7:15 PM

bula vinaka sir,

im emailing to confirm the number of total vendors in Namaka Market? the total number of permanent vendors, you have mentioned below; 60 permanent women vendors, how many are male permanent vendors?

furthermore, you have mention 20 casual women vendors how many men casual vendors and when do these casual vendors come into the market to sell their produce.

hope to get your response at your earliest.

tevita
(8018895)

From: ceo@nadi.towncouncil.com.fj <ceo@nadi.towncouncil.com.fj>
Sent: 22 September 2023 08:24
To: Tevita W. Tuivanuavou
Subject: RE: Further clarification

Bula Sir

There are 80 women vendors of whom 60 are permanent and 20 casuals. The casual vendors do not come to the market daily.

Should you require any further information please feel free to let me know.

Regards,



Muni Reddy | Acting Chief Executive Officer
Nadi Town Council, Main Street, P.O Box 241, **Nadi**
Phone: (679) 6700133 Fax: (679) 6700131 Mobile: (679) 9993344
Web: www.nadi.towncouncil.com.fj

From: Tevita W. Tuivanuavou <tevita.tuivanuavou@parliament.gov.fj>

Sent: Friday, 22 September 2023 6:30 am

To: ceo@nasinu.com.fj; Craig Powell <ceo@nadi.towncouncil.com.fj>

Subject: Further clarification

Good Morning CEO Nasinu and CEO Nadi,

Apologies for the inconvenience. Respectfully if i could just get the number of women vendors in your Laqere Market and Namaka Market.

Yours Sincerely,

Tevita

Israaz Khan <israaz@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj>
To: Tevita Tuivanuavou
Cc: Atelaite Leba; 'Mohammed Anees Khan' <khanm@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj>

Fri 10/13/2023 10:30 AM

Hi

Below please find the information requested :

3 pools constructed:

main pool is 50m long, 10 lanes - **\$2,725,000.00 vep**

warm-up pool is 25m long, 8 lane - **\$ 980,000.00 vep**

Kids/Recreational pool is ovalish in shape, 26.2m long x 14.8m wide - **\$ 536,500.00 vep**

Israaz

Senior Accounts Officer

Lautoka City Council

From: Mohammed Anees Khan [<mailto:khanm@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj>]

Sent: Friday, October 13, 2023 8:31 AM

To: 'Israaz Khan' <israaz@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj>; 'Dilo' <dilo@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj>

Subject: FW: Re: Further clarification

A/HFA,

Please compile the info requested in email below and email it directly to them. Cc me in.

Kind Regards,
Mohammed Anees Khan.
Chief Executive Officer.
Lautoka City Council.

Sent from my Galaxy

----- Original message -----

From: Tevita Tuivanuavou <tevita.tuivanuavou@legislature.gov.fj>

Date: 12/10/23 15:03 (GMT+12:00)

To: Mohammed Anees Khan

<khanm@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj>, dilo@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj

Cc: Atelaite Leba <atelaite.leba@legislature.gov.fj>

Subject: Re: Further clarification

Sir,

Apologies for the delay, the committee would like to know the cost breakdown of each pool as listed below:

3 pools constructed:

main pool is 50m long, 10 lanes - \$
warm-up pool is 25m long, 8 lane -\$
Kids/Recreational pool is ovalish in shape, 26.2m long x 14.8m wide - \$

Hope to receive this at your earliest.

Respectfully submitted for your kind action.

Tevita
(8018895)

From: Atelaite Leba <atelaite.leba@legislature.gov.fj>
Sent: Tuesday, October 3, 2023 12:16 PM
To: Mohammed Anees Khan
<khanm@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj>; dilo@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj <dilo@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj>
Cc: Tevita Tuivanuavou <tevita.tuivanuavou@legislature.gov.fj>
Subject: Re: Further clarification

Good Morning,

Acknowledge receipt of your email.

Thank you
Atelaite

From: Mohammed Anees Khan <khanm@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj>
Sent: Tuesday, October 3, 2023 11:38 AM
To: Atelaite Leba
<atelaite.leba@legislature.gov.fj>; dilo@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj <dilo@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj>
Cc: Tevita Tuivanuavou <tevita.tuivanuavou@legislature.gov.fj>
Subject: RE: Further clarification

Bula Ms. Leba,

Please find Councils responses noted in red, in email below.

Kind Regards,



Mohammed Anees Khan

MBA, BE-Civil, MEngNZ

Chief Executive Officer

Lautoka City Council

Tel: (679) 666 0433 | Fax: (679) 666 3288 | Mob: 9908550

Email: khanm@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj | Website: www.lautokacitycouncil.com.fj ,
[\[www.facebook.com/ltkcitycouncil\]](https://www.facebook.com/ltkcitycouncil) www.facebook.com/ltkcitycouncil

"Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of high intentions, intelligent direction, and skilled execution. It represents a wise choice amongst many alternatives." - W. A. Foster

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From: Atelaite Leba [<mailto:atelaite.leba@legislature.gov.fj>]

Sent: Wednesday, 27 September 2023 6:15 pm

To: dilo@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj; khanm@lautokacitycouncil.com.fj

Cc: Tevita Tuivanuavou <tevita.tuivanuavou@legislature.gov.fj>

Subject: Further clarification

Good Afternoon,

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs is grateful for the successful and well organized site visit that was conducted by the council last week. The committee deliberated on few challenges faced by the Council and further would like to clarify on few issues as listed below;

1.Can the Council provided the full breakdown of how many swimming pools is constructed and the size of these pools?Provide pending work that still needs to be done to complete the contrsuction? **3 pools constructed: main pool is 50m long, 10 lanes, warm-up pool is 25m long, 8 lanes. Kids/Recreational pool is ovalish in shape, 26.2m long x 14.8m wide.**

2.What actions did the Lautoka City Council take with the contractors in relation to the incomplete work undertaken in the swimming pool construction?what are the issues breached by the contractors? **A legal review, and Peer Review, were done on respective designs and contracts, and legal notices issued for breaches and non-performances. Council intends to appoint, via Tender, a new Project Manager, to manage and oversee the design and construction to completion, based on the budget allocation for the financial year 2023-2024.**

3.Ventilation in Lautoka Market, can the Council provide a timeframe when the issue of ventilation be addressed? **While temporary measures for additional lights and wall-mounted fans are in place, Council is planning to have the designs and cost estimate finalized in this financial year 2023-2024, and look at making a budgetary provision for implementation in the financial year 2024-2025. The cost estimate in 2019 was approx. \$1.2m. we expect this to increase as VAT, freight and material costs have gone up since. Hence, we have the option of phasing out the implementation over 2 – 3 years.**

4.The challenge of asbestors in Lautoka Market, when is the Lautoka City Council addressing this issue?If there temporary closure where will the market vendors be temporary relocated? **If**

there is temporary closure of certain sections, then Council will ensure the affected vendors are provided alternate spaces to continue their business uninterrupted. Council will consult the vendors association before any decisions are made.

MARKET NAME	COUNCIL	SECTION	NUMBER OF STALLS	STALL FEES	NUMBER OF VENDORS
Lautoka Municipal Market	Lautoka City Council	Main Market	971	\$1.27	163
			127	\$1.69	
			67	\$1.79	
		Root Crop	314	\$1.27	63
			8	\$1.69	
			4	\$1.79	
		Bus Station	185	\$1.27	47
			5	\$1.69	
			22	\$1.79	
		New Wing			
			264	\$1.79	144
		Handicraft			
			73	\$1.27	28
		Sweet Cart	7	\$3.42	16
			9	\$6.13	
		Grog			
			35	\$1.79	24
		Cook Food			
			27	\$1.79	27
		Juice			
			10	\$4.75	10
		Casual			
			692	\$2.22	350
		Fish			
				\$0.35 / KG	8
		Lock Up			
			6	\$247.83 / Month	6

Tavakubu Satellite Market	Lautoka City Council		68	\$2.22	34
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MALE / FEMALE	# OF ACCOMODATION UNITS PROVIDED TO VENDORS
Female - 84 Male - 79	70 BEDS
Female - 37 Male - 26	
Female - 12 Male - 35	
Female - 82 Male - 62	
Female - 27 Male - 1	
Female - 6 Male - 10	
Female - 14 Male - 10	
Female - 26 Male - 1	
Female - 4 Male - 6	
Female - 300 Male - 50	
Female - 2 Male - 6	
Female - 1 Male - 5	

Female - 21	
Male - 13	none

Priya Singh <priyas@batowncouncil.com.fj>

To:Tevita Tuivanuavou

Cc:Atelaite Leba

Fri 11/17/2023 8:48 AM

Good Morning Sir,

The first phase of the project began in 2018 and was completed in 2022. The first phase was almost complete by 2019, however there were a number of defects which needed to be rectified by the Contractor.

The contractor completed the defect works in 2022 and that is when his final payment was released.

The first phase of the project lacked continuous monitoring by team engaged from CIU and the Council then which is something we are strongly focused on in the second phase.

For the second phase of the project, the lead consultant has been hired and we as Council is continuously engaged and monitoring every stage of the second phase to avoid any delays.

Kind Regards,

PRIYA SINGH

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

BA TOWN COUNCIL | CIVIC CENTRE | TABUA PLACE | P. O. BOX 184 | BA | FIJI

Ph: +679 6674277 (Ext:106) | Mob: +679 9994859 | Web: www.batowncouncil.com.fj |

FB: www.facebook.com/batowncouncilfj/

Tevita Tuivanuavou

To:Priya Singh <priyas@batowncouncil.com.fj>

Cc:Atelaite Leba

Wed 11/15/2023 11:11 AM

Thank you Madam, we are looking forward till then.

respectfully,

tt

Priya Singh <priyas@batowncouncil.com.fj>

To:Tevita Tuivanuavou

Cc:Atelaite Leba

Tue 11/14/2023 12:05 PM

Good Morning Sir,

Kindly note that we have a number of preparations for the upcoming cyclone, therefore I am requesting time till Thursday afternoon to provide details of the delay in the completion of the first phase of the project.

Kind Regards,

PRIYA SINGH

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

BA TOWN COUNCIL | CIVIC CENTRE | TABUA PLACE | P. O. BOX 184 | BA | FIJI

Ph: +679 6674277 (Ext:106) | Mob: +679 9994859 | Web: www.batowncouncil.com.fj |

FB: www.facebook.com/batowncouncilfj/

Tevita Tuivanuavou

To:priyas@batowncouncil.com.fj

Cc:Atelaite Leba

Tue 11/14/2023 11:05 AM

Good morning Madam,

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs would like to clarify on the delay of the completion of the Govind Park. Can the council explain where it lacks that can be addressed so that the completion of the capital project be in a timely manner.

Hope to receive confirmation from your end before 4pm today.

Respectfully,

Tevita

The following tenders were received for Expression of Interest for Design and Build Services for the Redevelopment of Govind Park.

	<u>NAME OF TENDERER</u>	<u>QUOTATION</u>	<u>DURATION</u>
1	WESTERN BUILDERS LIMITED	OPTION 1:	NOT MENTIONED
		\$15,422,000.00	
		OPTION 2:	
		\$14,050,000.00	
		OPTION 3:	
		\$11,352,000.00	
		OPTION 4:	
		\$6,830,000.00	
		(ALL VEP)	
2	FOUR R ELECTRICAL & GENERAL	8,000 SITTING CAPACITY	6 MONTHS
	CONTRATORS LTD	\$4,175,000.00	
		(VIP)	
		EXCLUDING TOWER LIGHTS	
		AND DEMOLITIONS	
3	DESIGN ENGINEERING (FIJI) LTD	\$8.5 MILLION FJ	12 MONTHS (1 YEAR)
4	CIVIL & ENVIRONMENTAL		
	ENGINEERING SOLUTION LTD	\$22.0 MILLION	55 - 60 WEEKS
5	ASHOK BALGOVIND & ASSOCIATES	\$8.980 MILLION	AS PER COUNCIL'S PREFERENCE

Govind Park Payments - Pavillion A

Demolishing of Govind Park	\$ 167,716.31
Consultancy HLK Jacob	\$ 57,988.00
Contractor Four R Electrical General	\$ 4,175,000.00
Quantec Pacific	\$ 85,020.00
NRW Macallan	\$ 171,250.00
Total	\$ 4,656,974.31

Bucket Seat capacity of Pavilion A	8000
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