



STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Review of the Ministry of Local Government Annual Report 2018-2019



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the annual review of the *Ministry of Local Government Annual Report 2018-2019*. This review was undertaken in accordance with SO 109 (2) (b) which mandates the committee to look into issues related to health, education, social services, labour, culture and media.

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs of the last term of Parliament was referred the *Ministry of Local Government Annual Report 2018-2019*. In this new term of Parliament the annual report was re-introduced and referred to the current Standing Committee. As per the normal process for report scrutiny, the Committee was mandated by Parliament to review the annual report and report back on its findings.

For the year 2018-2019 achievements that was highlighted by the Ministry is detailed below:

- a) The commencement of the Nakasi Fire Station in the 2018-2019 financial year which actually completed work in June 2020;
- b) The redevelopment of the Govind Park phase 1 which completed in the 2020-2021 financial year;
- c) The Suva Civic Centre reopened after 18 months of re-development, and this was under a partnership with the Guangdong Province in China which was basically completed around September 2018;
- d) Looking at some of the mini markets that were completed around August and November 2018 which was Tavakubu in Lautoka and Cuvu in Sigatoka;
- e) Completion and commissioning of the Rakiraki Fire Station around September 2019;
- f) There was still work in progress with the Namaka Market construction, the Rakiraki Market and the Laqere Market which were all completed in 2020; and
- g) Reappointment of a team of Special Administrators for all Municipal Councils.

The committee commends the achievement of the ministry for the fiscal year under review and pleads the ministry to continue its main objective in providing essential services and amenities and facilitate development at the local level.

To understand these essential services, the committee undertook a site visit to some of the capital project sites that were implemented in the 2018-2019 fiscal year and commends the ministry for its assistance in the review process. Though the annual review was for 2018-2019, the committee acknowledged the current data and information provided by the stakeholders. This assisted the committee in its review.

Therefore, the committee acknowledges the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry of Local Government, Ms Seema Sharma, and her staff for the assistance rendered in the committee's inquiry, furthermore the bi-partisan shown by the members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for without their support and valuable input this review report would not have been successful.

Thank you to Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure, Hon. Sashi Kiran, Hon. Parveen Bala and Hon. Viam Pillay, and not forgetting my deepest appreciation to Hon. Ketan Lal and Hon. Penioni Ravunawa the alternate members of the committee for several occasions.

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



.....
Hon. Alitia Bainivalu
Chairperson

ACRONYM

Acronym	
MLG	Ministry of Local Government
MP	Member of Parliament
PS	Permanent Secretary
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SO	Standing Order
VEP	Vat Exclusive Price

COMMITTEE REMIT AND MEMBERS

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs ('Committee') is established under Section 70 of the Constitution and SO 109. The Committee's mandate and functions are provided under SO 109 (2) and 110 (1) (a)-(d) & (f). The Committee consist of the following members:



Chairperson

Hon. Alitia Bainivalu, MP
Government Member



Deputy Chairperson

Hon. Ratu Rakuira Vakalalabure, MP
Government Member



Member

Hon. Sashi Kiran, MP
Government Member



Member

Hon. Viam Pillay, MP
Opposition Member



Member

Hon. Parveen Kumar Bala, MP
Opposition Member

RECOMMENDATION

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs conducted its review of the *Ministry of Local Government Annual Report 2018-2019* and recommends that Parliament take note of this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

On 29th August 2022 the Standing Committee on Social Affairs (the Committee') was referred to review the *Ministry of Local Government Annual Report 2018-2019* as stipulated in SO 38 (2). During the 2018-2022 parliament term, the previous committee was mandated to review the annual report and table its findings back to Parliament. This did not eventuate as dissolution of Parliament was in effect from 30th October 2022.

Therefore, the Annual Report was reinstated on 13th February 2023, and referred to the current Standing Committee as it falls under the mandate as stipulated under SO 110 (1) (c). The committee, through its review process, formulated findings and recommendations for Parliament to take note.

1.1. Committee Procedure

The Standing Committee of the previous Parliament term (2018-2022) was not able to perform its mandated review due to dissolution. Nevertheless, the current standing committee reviewed the annual report through its committee deliberations.

The committee through its deliberation, formulated questions pertaining to the *Ministry of Local Government Annual Report 2018-2019*. The Ministry of Local Government officials presented the responses on 17th May 2023. Upon receipt of all relevant information, the committee compiled its findings.

The relevant documents received are available on the Parliament website, at the following link: <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

2. MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MLG)

2.1. Background

The Ministry is designed to deliver across the two areas of Local Government and Town and Country Planning.

The *Department of Local Government* monitors legislative compliance of municipal councils and oversees the delivery of effective and efficient services and quality infrastructure for the Fijian people at the local government level. The ministry's long-term priority is to create financially and environmentally sustainable cities and towns.

Whilst, the *Department of Town and Country Planning* is responsible for the overall administration, planning and regulating of land use through the Town Planning Act Cap. 139 and the Subdivision of Land Act Cap. 140. Its focus is on strategic planning of urban and rural areas, formulation of related regulations, and compliance with development laws. The department also offers physical planning and land development advice to the whole of government, as well as to the private sector.

The department promotes planning in Fiji with the aim of supporting equitable, well-managed, well-coordinated growth that will improve Fijian quality of life.

Furthermore, MLG's commitment continues to improve waste management services, developed with financial assistance and partnership of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). For the year 2018-2019, the Government appointed seven teams of special administrators to oversee good governance at the municipal council level and include rural authorities under council service responsibility.

2.2. Highlights

The Ministry undertook major capital projects during the fiscal year. The following capital projects were implemented:

- a) The improvement of ventilation and lighting of Lautoka market;
- b) The continuation of construction works at Laqere municipal market and Lautoka Botanical;
- c) Garden Swimming pool;
- d) The completion of Namaka market; and
- e) The redevelopment of Govind Park, Ba.

To add further, the Ministry continued to improve on rezoning applications, building approvals and service goals.

3. KEY FINDINGS

The committee compiled its key findings through its deliberation and review of the Ministry's 2018-2019 annual report:

- 3.1. The delay in completion of capital projects during the financial year;
- 3.2. Employment of the right person for the right position; and
- 3.3. Late submission of proposals for government funded capital projects by municipal councils.

4. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee recommends that:

- 4.1. Timely submission of the ministry's Annual Report;
- 4.2. The Ministry to review relevant legislations as this will impact the work of the Ministry;
- 4.3. The Ministry to work in consultation with responsible municipal councils in ensuring that projects are monitored to ensure timely completion of capital projects; and
- 4.4. The Ministry to work together with municipal councils on trainings and learning development plans as this will contribute to the capacity building of municipal staff.

5. COMMITTEE SITE VISIT

5.1. NAKASI FIRE STATION, NAKASI



(Standing Committee visited Nakasi Fire Station on 18th September 2023)

5.1.1. BACKGROUND

Nakasi Fire Station consist of thirty-two (32) officers in total with two (2) female officers. The fire station is operating with one (1) fire rescue truck. The station services areas such as Narere, Wainibuku, Nakasi, Davuilevu and Naitasiri.

5.2. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SITE VISIT TO NAKASI FIRE STATION

- a) Limited accommodation units for the Nakasi Fire Station, for instance most officer's travel beyond 15 km to get to the station but also, they spend most of the time in the station as travelling day in and out is a challenge;
- b) There is no training academy for NFA to provide specialised training for its officers, therefore, stations are utilised for training purposes which is not ideal to conduct proper training for its officers and recruits. Due to the expansion of core responsibilities for fire

officers they now must undertake emergency rescue for road accidents and handling hazardous materials;

- c) Allowances is not sufficient due to the high cost of living standard that Fiji is currently facing;
- d) Fire Stations lack the specialised equipment to cater for emergencies and accidents; and
- e) No ambulance service in Nakasi Fire Station. This is essential in the area.

5.3. **COMMITTEES RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a) Fire Stations to continue and build on community outreach for community warden programs as well as fire and rescue training;
- b) Proper housing plans for upgrading accommodation units from dormitory to officers' quarters for fire stations around Fiji; and
- c) NFA to invest in its inventory such as specialised PPEs, specialised equipment's to cater for complex accidents and emergencies.

5.4. **LAQERE MARKET, LAQERE**



(Standing Committee visited Laqere Market on 18th September 2023)

5.4.1. **BACKGROUND**

The Laqere Market in Nasinu caters to around 92,043¹ people of the greater Nasinu area. The market comprises of a total of 485 market stalls, with 307 vendors of which 181 are females and 126 are males. There are no women accommodation as this market as it is a non-farmers market.

5.5. **NAMAKA MARKET, NADI**



(Standing Committee visited Namaka Market on 21st September 2023)

5.5.1. **BACKGROUND**

The Namaka Market in Nadi comprises of 277 market stalls, with 89 total vendors consisting of 60 female and 29 male vendors. There are 40 beds in total to accommodate women vendors that come into Namaka market to sell their produce. This was a joint project for UNWOMEN, Fiji Government and local government in supporting women market vendors around Fiji.

5.6. **LAUTOKA MARKET, LAUTOKA**



(Standing Committee visited Lautoka Market on 21st September 2023)

5.6.1. **BACKGROUND**

The Lautoka Market comprises of 1165 market stalls, with 163 total vendors of which 84 are females and 79 are males.

¹<https://www.fijivillage.com/news/New-Nasinu-Laqere-Market-officially-opened-for-over-92000-residents-5rf8x4/>

5.7. **KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SITE VISIT TO THE THREE (3) MUNICIPAL MARKETS**

- a) Laqere market does not have sinks for washing vegetables and root crops. The vendors are washing their vegetables and crops in buckets of water which is an issue for most women vendors and takes more time for washing the produce when compared to having sinks.
- b) Upkeep of all the three (3) market is generally the main complaint made by vendors. Since they sell food produce and there are restaurant outlets, hygiene and sanitation is paramount for all markets, this is still not addressed.
- c) Ventilation in both Lautoka and Namaka market is an issue. Though the council is aware of the issue, it is working towards addressing the issue.
- d) Laqere Market Association for vendors is still yet to be formed. According to Nasinu Town Council the association would allow access to funding that would improve the Laqere market.
- e) Laqere market vendors are faced with wastage of produce as more customers are opting to street vendors along Laqere to Nepani roadside, therefore most produce of Laqere market vendors discard produce if not sold and it's a loss for the market vendors.
- f) Laqere Market do not have lamp posts or street lights around the market for safety and security of the market and its vendors. Namaka Market lacks CCTV cameras.
- g) Lautoka market has identified the presence of Asbestos in the old market complex. The entire market will be closed for the removal of asbestos and this is still in the planning stage and consultation will be conducted in due course.
- h) Ventilation and lighting at Lautoka Market is still an issue for the vendors.

5.8. **COMMITTEES RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a) Satellite market for Laqere and Nakasi to cater for the street vendors. However, there are street vendors in the Namaka area, but the council is working towards addressing this issue.
- b) Council to work together with market vendors and relevant stakeholders to be able provide health and sanitation for municipal markets.

- c) Infrastructure improvement for all markets. The plan of maintenance and upgrade is identified the funding of this improvements is still in the acquiring process.
- d) The Council to designs and submit cost estimate in the next financial year 2023-2024 for proper ventilation and lighting for Lautoka Market.

5.9. **LAUTOKA SWIMMING POOL AND BOTANICAL GARDEN, LAUTOKA**



(Standing Committee visited the Lautoka Swimming Pool and Botanical Garden on 22nd September 2023)

5.9.1. **BACKGROUND**

The Lautoka Swimming Pool consist of 3 pools; the main pool is 50 meters long with 10 lanes and amounting to a cost of \$2.725 million (vep). The warm-up pool is 25 meters long with 8 lanes cost of construction is \$985,000 (vep). The children or recreational pool is oval in shape and is 26.2 meters long by 14.8 meters wide with a cost of \$536,500 (vep).

5.10. **KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SITE VISIT TO THE LAUTOKA SWIMMING POOL**

- a) Cost of constructing the three (3) swimming pools is \$4.3 million. Construction work is still pending with consultation still in progress.
- b) The monitoring of the project was lacking this resulted in the delay of completing the Lautoka Swimming Pools and Botanical Garden.
- c) A legal and peer review was done on respective designs and contracts. This resulted in legal notices being issued for breaches and non-performances. The council intends to appoint, via

tender, a new Project Manager, to manage and oversee the design and construction to complete the project.

5.11. **COMMITTEES RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a) The aim of having this international standard swimming pool will contribute to the return on investment for Lautoka by hosting international, regional and national swimming competitions.
- b) Lautoka City Council will need to work with tourism authorities to assist in boosting its attraction on water sports, water therapy programmes and other water sports competition.
- c) The vision of Lautoka City Council is to be the best city for sports tourism in the Pacific. Therefore, Lautoka to work with municipal councils like Sigatoka, Nadi, Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki, government authorities and stakeholders (international sporting bodies, tourism organisations and association) for development of sporting facilities in the western region to cater and host international sports tournaments.

5.12 **GOVIND PARK, BA**



(Standing Committee visited Govind Park on 22nd September 2023)

5.12.1 **BACKGROUND**

Govind Park project total cost is \$7.67 million. Phase 1 was the design and Building of the Pavilion A. The budget allocated for phase 1 was \$4.175 million. The work for phase 1 was completed and within budget. Phase 2 of the project is still underway and was allocated a fund of \$3.5 million. The scope of work includes electrical and mechanical works in the building, construction of the ground this is for the turf and drainage, construction of the boundary fence and perimeter fence, ground embankment, ticket booth and scoreboard.

5.13 **KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SITE VISIT TO GOVIND PARK**

- a) The lack of monitoring and control measures for government funded projects resulting in the delay of works in completing the projects.

5.14 **COMMITTEES RECOMMENDATION**

- a) The council to work together with government authorities and stakeholders to be able to complete Govind Park.
- b) Monitoring and accountability should be the main priority of all stakeholders involved.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) ANALYSIS

It is important to note that Fiji is progressing in achieving SDGs. However, the ministry is not completely on track to achieving the 2030 target. It will need to review the indicators that best suits the ministry's goals which will be aligned to the SDGs.

The Ministry's way forward is to develop SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities Roadmap to guide the work of local government and other key partners that will contribute to SDG 11. This guide will allow the indicators to capture the work that is being done on the ground and contribute to the overall progress of SDGs.

Furthermore, 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 Master Plan, which is not for 5 or 10 years but for a longer period of 50 years. Therefore, the Ministry is focused on completing the work that started in 2019 on the Master Plan for Viti Levu as this will promote better development plans for towns and cities.

The Ministry is ensuring that government-funded capital projects have a green aspect to the buildings being constructed as this will allow compliance to the National Building Code for protection against natural disasters.

Green towns and cities the vision the Ministry of Local Government is working towards. 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.

In addition to the above, 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.

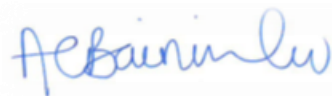


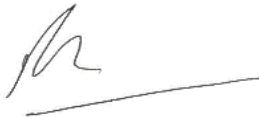
7. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the committee fulfilled its mandate to review the 2018-2019 Annual Report of the Ministry of Local Government. As part of its review process, the committee conducted an inquiry and heard evidence from the Executive Management of the ministry.

In this review, the committee highlighted areas that needs to be strengthened and support its recommendations for the resolution of issues.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS' ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE

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

Committee Member	Electronic Signature
Hon. Alitia Bainivalu, MP (Chairperson)	
Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure, MP (Deputy Chairperson)	
Hon. Sashi Kiran, MP (Member)	
Hon. Viam Pillay, MP (Member)	
Hon. Parveen Bala, MP (Member)	
Date: 8 November 2023	

ANNEXURE

Published evidence

Written evidence, transcripts and supporting documents can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>