



STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Review of the National Fire Authority Annual Report for the 7 months period ended 31 July 2016



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 *National Fire Authority Annual Report for the 7 months period ended 31 July 2016*. 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 was referred the *National Fire Authority Annual Report for the 7 months period ended 31 July 2016* on 17 February 2023. 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.

The Standing Committee would like to commend the work carried out by National Fire Authority (NFA) for responding to emergencies and be able to perform to its level best. In addition, NFA ensured the effective and efficient provision of fire rescue and emergency services whilst pursuing the completion of its capital projects; the new Korovou, Korolevu, Seaqaqa, Taveuni and Savusavu Fire Stations.

Nevertheless, cyclone Winston devastated most parts of the country during the year. This did not deter NFA from playing its key role but continued to assist the emergency partners in providing timely assistance to the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO).

It is commendable to note that government continues to support NFA through capital grants for expansion of its essential services to every community in both the urban and rural centers in pursuance of government policy of not leaving anyone behind.

To see first-hand and witness the operation one of the essential services, the committee undertook a site visit to three (3) fire station namely; Korovou, Levuka and Korolevu Fire Station. The committee held *Talanoa Sessions* (discussion forums) with each fire station and compiled its findings and sought clarifications that assisted the committee to recommend resolution that will improve the service provided by the first responders. Though the annual review was for 7 months ended 31 July 2016, the committee acknowledged the current data and information provided by the stakeholders. This assisted the committee in its review.

I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure, Hon. Sashi Kiran, Hon. Parveen Bala and Hon. Viam Pillay for their valuable input and support. I would also like to extend my deepest appreciation to Hon. Ketan Lal and Hon. Penioni Ravunawa as the alternate members of the committee for several occasions.

I also extend my gratitude to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of National Fire Authority, Mr. Soane Puamau, and his staff for their timely assistance in this review process.

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



.....
Hon. Alitia Bainivalu
Chairperson

ACRONYM

Acronym	
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NFA	National Fire Authority
MP	Member of Parliament
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SO	Standing Order

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 *National Fire Authority Annual Report for the 7 months period ended 31 July 2016* and recommends that Parliament take note of this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs ('Committee') was referred the *National Fire Authority Annual Report for the 7 months period ended 31 July 2016* on 17 February 2023, pursuant to SO 38 (2). Therefore, the Standing Committee was referred to review the annual report as pursuant to its mandate as stipulated in SO 110 (1) (c).

1.1. Committee Procedure

The standing committee reviewed the annual report through its committee meeting deliberation and formulated questions pertaining to the *National Fire Authority Annual Report for the 7 months period ended 31 July 2016* were undertaken. Hence, the executive management from NFA presented on the responses.

The responses and any supporting documents is available on the Parliament website, at the following link: <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

2. NATIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY (NFA)

2.1. Background

The National Fire Authority (NFA) provides firefighting, road accident rescue, urban search and rescue, hazmat, natural disaster management, flood and swift water rescue and emergency ambulance services to protect life, property and the environment. Its core strength is a service delivery model that ensures share responsibility with various communities to minimize the likelihood and consequences of emergencies.

The pace of change in NFA's environment, both internal and external, is increasing significantly, presenting with both challenges and opportunities. These changes will impact on Fiji's communities and will challenge the traditional way that NFA delivers programs, products and services.

To be relevant and valuable to Fiji's communities, NFA will need to provide leadership to, with and across the sector to establish accountability for fire and emergency management outcomes.

Following the devastating effects of TC Winston, NFA continued to work with other service providers to increase interoperability between agencies and, in most instances, took the lead role during major disasters. The development of a new legislation to capture the core roles of the NFA has been completed and awaits Parliamentary approval before implementation.

2.2. Highlights

For the period under review NFA continued with achieving its targets, therefore, below are few highlights that made NFA performance a success:

It was noted that as at 31st July 2016 total income for NFA increased to a totalling amount of \$8.1 million. This was attributed from the increased fire insurance levies, water levies, structural fire safety compliance earnings and receipt of government grant and ambulance operating grant;

NFAs emergency incident response for the period totalled up to 2,884. These emergency incident responses are from property fires, bush fires, malicious fires, vehicle fires, ship and boat fires, road accident rescue, private fire alarms, swift water rescue and emergency ambulance service.

3. KEY FINDINGS

The committee compiled the key findings through its deliberation and review of the Authority's 2016 annual report:

- 3.1.** Increased number of structural property fires and high level of grass, bush and cane fires as this is still a growing concern;
- 3.2.** NFA response time to incident sites is still lacking as notification to fire authority is a delay; and
- 3.3.** Establishing a training academy for NFA to capitalize on capacity building for the region.

4. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee recommends that:

- 4.1.** Timely submission of Annual Report;
- 4.2.** NFA to continue and build on its community outreach programs with rural and urban communities, agencies responsible for Housing Development and other relevant stakeholders;

- 4.3.** NFA to engage in the Public Private Partnership initiatives to address housing needs for its officers in the three divisions; and
- 4.4.** NFA to organize trainings for its officers locally and internationally for capacity building and specialised trainings.

5. COMMITTEE SITE VISIT

5.1. KOROVOU FIRE STATION, KOROVOU



(Standing Committee visited Korovou Fire Station on 19th September 2023)

5.1.1. BACKGROUND

Korovou Fire Station has twenty six (26) officers in total with no assigned female officers. The fire station is operating with one (1) fire rescue truck and one (1) emergency ambulance truck. The station services the district of Vugalei, Wainibuka, Dawasamu and Sawakasa this also includes the island of Qoma and schools in the district.

5.2. LEVUKA FIRE STATION, OVALAU



(Standing Committee visited Levuka Fire Station on 20th September 2023)

5.2.1. BACKGROUND

Levuka Fire Station has twenty two (22) officers in total with no assigned female officers. The fire station is operating with one (1) fire rescue truck. The station services the island of Ovalau and neighbouring islands.

5.3. KOROLEVU FIRE STATION, SIGATOKA



(Standing Committee visited Korolevu Fire Station on 21st September 2023)

5.3.1. BACKGROUND

Korolevu Fire Station has twenty four (24) officers in total with two (2) female officers. The fire station is operating with one (1) fire rescue truck. The station services the nearby villages and businesses along the coral coast.

5.4. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SITE VISIT FOR THE THREE (3) FIRE STATIONS

- a) Limited accommodation units for stations to cater for the increase number of officers. Most officers travel from home residence to the station due to the lack of accommodation units, 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) 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. Also for the new added responsibility for officers to undertake emergency rescue for road accidents and handling hazardous materials.
- c) Allowances is not sufficient due to the high cost of living that Fiji is currently faced with.

- d) Basic equipment in stations which cannot cater for road accident emergencies and hazardous material spillage. In addition to the above, fire stations reuse specialised PPE due to the lack of funds to procure new equipment. In most cases once this PPE is used it should be discarded as it is a risk to reuse PPEs.
- e) Ambulance emergency service is not available in some stations. This service is vital especially for areas far from health centres, and considering major number of vehicle accidents along the Suva-Sigatoka and Korovou Tailevu highway.
- f) Network connectivity that hinders the service for Korovou and Korolevu Fire Station, leading to delay in responding time to emergencies. However, it was noted that the three (3) fire stations undertake outreach programs to communities on fire basic trainings to assist the fire stations on fire basic emergencies or rescues.
- g) Levuka Fire station has not undergone any renovations from 2006, since its inception.

5.5. COMMITTEE 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 upgrade of accommodation units from dormitory to officers' quarters for fire stations around Fiji.
- c) NFA to invest in its inventory as well as PPEs to avoid reuse that might be a risk and may cause serious accidents.
- d) NFA to work in partnership with overseas fire authorities for capacity building. This will enhance officers' capacity in attempting hazardous chemical emergencies.
- e) NFA to work in partnership with WAF to address water problems in Korolevu and other fire stations to avoid problems when attending to fire emergencies.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) ANALYSIS

NFA has incorporated its National Development Plans and Sustainable Development Goals into its Strategic Plan 2021-2026 and implemented through the development of its annual operational plans cost, with specific targets, timelines, and responsibilities to ensure progress towards the achievement of these plans and the achievement of the Authority's *Vision* for the next 5 years that is *Resilient communities with effective Emergency Services*.

Whilst the Government, through the Ministry of Housing, has established a relief package of \$5,000 for the recovery of all fire victims who lost their homes in a fire, NFA assists by providing the fire victims with the necessary forms to complete and submit to the Ministry for processing.

The Authority has also implemented its NFA Command Centre and Computer Aided Dispatch System which receives and digitizes all 910 fire emergency calls, enhancing the Authority's response, efficiency, and effectiveness of its service delivery to the communities for the early mitigation of the impact of fires.

The Authority has also identified new initiatives in its Strategic Plan and annual operational plans to design and implement measures to localize and realize the Sustainable Development Goals through the:

- a. Implementation of the framework for an integrated community approach that involves the Authority working with Communities on the concept of training and certifying selected Community Fire Wardens for the prevention or early mitigation of home fires in their communities;
- b. The Authority's key role in the current review of the Fiji National Building Code for strengthening fire safety aspects of the Code to enhance fire safety compliance in all building structures in Fiji;
- c. Development of Fiji Fire Service Standards as a supplementary document to Fiji's National Building Code to regulate and strengthen all fire-related issues in Fiji; and
- d. The introduction of ISO standards in the Authority is also expected to raise the standard of service provided by the Authority.

Furthermore, there are some measures that require good coordination for the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, they are:

- a. Development of a policy framework to support fire safety compliance for all structures;
- b. Provide incentives for donor agencies to support fire safety awareness;
- c. Border control of all substandard electrical items and firefighting equipment; and
- d. Develop an effective mode for knowledge transfer so that the public can quickly learn from others' experiences and prevent fires.

NFA's contribution towards SDG 5 has been in the inclusion of females into the predominantly male career firefighter profession. This inclusivity approach commenced in 2006 with the recruitment of its first female firefighter. However, infrastructural improvements were also a key component that needed to be expedited such as Fire Stations having to include female facilities in relation to dormitories and conveniences. Whilst the recruit selection criteria are consistent for both genders, the required fitness levels differ due to their physical structure and competency.

Government funding assistance provided in 2009 enabled NFA to commence the upgrade of its fire station facilities to include female facilities, starting with the new Nadi Fire Station in 2010 with further funding assistance from Government, NFA was also able to establish modern Fire Station facilities in Korolevu, Korovou, Rakiraki, Seaqaqa, Savusavu, Taveuni, Nakasi, Lami and Nabouwalu. With the inclusion of female facilities in these new fire stations, NFA has been able to progress the inclusion of more females into the firefighting profession. As of 31st July 2016, NFA had a total of 6 female firefighters, compared to 7 in 2015.


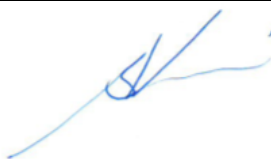

7. CONCLUSION

The committee fulfilled its mandate to review the 7 month period ended July 31 2016 Annual Report of NFA. As part of its review process, the committee heard evidence from the Executive Management, undertook site visitation and collaborated with NFA officials in an open forum discussion in relation to the inquiry made by the committee.

In this review, the committee highlighted various areas that needs to be strengthened by NFA with 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/>