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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

### **Consolidated Review of Report of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services 2016-2021 Annual Report**



**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**  
**Parliamentary Paper No. 152 of 2024**

*October 2024*

# Table of Contents

<b>CHAIRPERSON’S FOREWORD .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ACRONYM.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>COMMITTEE MEMBERS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Committee Procedure.....	6
<b>2. MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Background .....	7
<b>3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4. DELIBERATION AND ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5. KEY FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7. SDG ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>8. GENDER ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>9. COMMITTEE SITE VISITS AT BA ASPEN AND LAUTOKA ASPEN HOSPITAL.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>10. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>COMMITTEE MEMBERS’ SIGNATURE .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>ANNEXURE .....</b>	<b>15</b>

## CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Committee review report on the Ministry of Health and Medical Services 2016 to 2021 Annual Reports.

The Committee also acknowledges the contribution and support provided by its development partners and international organisations and commends the overall performance and achievements of the Ministry with a few recommendations to be considered.

In accordance with Standing Orders 109(2)(b), our committee is tasked with scrutinising issues related to health, education, social services, labor, aviation, culture, and media.

Through our comprehensive review, we have identified several key concerns and challenges affecting the health sector and have put forward a series of recommendations to address these issues.

We recognise and commend the Ministry of Health's ongoing efforts to enhance the health sector through its current policies and procedures.

As part of our duties under Standing Orders 110, the Committee conducted site visits to hospitals across the western divisions. These visits highlighted several concerns, which we subsequently raised with Ministry of health officials during their public submissions to the Committee. Our report details these concerns and offers actionable recommendations to address them.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Permanent Secretary and his team for their valuable contributions to this review process.

I also wish to acknowledge the outstanding leadership and guidance of the former Chairperson of the Committee, Hon. Alitia Bainivalu, and former Committee Member Hon. Parveen Bala, alternate members Hon. Ketan Lal, Hon. Penioni Ravunawa and the current Committee members for their dedicated efforts in finalising this report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this report to Parliament and encourage all members of this esteemed House to review its findings and recommendations.



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**Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu**  
**Chairperson**

## ACRONYM

Acronym	
PS	Permanent Secretary
MP	Member of Parliament
SO	Standing Order
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency virus
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
NCD	Non-communicable Disease
PPP	Public-private Partnership
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
SD	Sub-Divisional Hospital

## COMMITTEE 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 consists of the following members:



### **Chairperson**

Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu MP  
Government Member

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### **Deputy Chairperson**

Hon. Ratu Rakuira Vakalalabure MP  
Government Member

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### **Member**

Hon. Sashi Kiran MP  
Government Member

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### **Member**

Hon. Viam Pillay MP  
Opposition Member

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### **Member**

Hon. Ioane Naivalarua MP  
Opposition Member

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# RECOMMENDATION

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs conducted the consolidated review report of the *Ministry of Health and Medical Services 2016-2021 Annual Reports* and recommends that Parliament take note of this report.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Parliament referred the *Ministry of Health and Medical Services 2016-2021 Annual reports* to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs as pursuant to SO 38 (2). Therefore, the Committee reviewed the annual reports pursuant to its mandate as stipulated in SO 110 (1) (c).

The review of the Annual Report involved collation of information and a presentation from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services which assisted the Committee members to fully understand the Ministry's operations, achievements and challenges encountered during the financial year.

The review report on the Ministry of Health and Medical Services contains the Committee's findings, Committee's recommendations, gender analysis and conclusion.

### 1.1 Committee Procedure

The Committee Deliberation and formulation of questions pertaining to the *Ministry of Health and Medical Services 2016-2021 Annual Reports* were undertaken and following this, the executive management presented its responses in a public submission. The Committee also conducted a site visit on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024 and upon receipt of all relevant information, the Committee compiled its findings and endorsed it on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2024.

The Committee received a written response from the *Ministry of Health* for this annual review. It is available on the Parliament website at the following link: <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

## **2. MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES**

### **2.1 Background**

2.1.1 The Ministry's role emanates from its core responsibility of delivering quality preventive, curative and rehabilitative health services to the population through its hospitals, health centers and nursing stations throughout the country in a consistent and equitable manner. There is a huge focus on maintaining continuum of care from community-level primary health care services up to tertiary level care at Divisional Hospitals. This is supported by a broad range of relevant policies, standards, and protocols to ensure safe, high quality services are delivered at all levels of the health system, from nursing stations, health centers, sub-divisional hospitals up-to divisional hospitals.

2.1.2 The Ministry of Health and Medical Services in Fiji provides a wide range of services to support public health and medical care across the country. Some of the key services include:

#### **(i) Primary Healthcare Services**

- General Outpatient Care: Treatment for common illnesses, minor injuries, and general health consultations at health centers and clinics.
- Maternal and Child Health: Prenatal, antenatal, postnatal care, immunizations and child growth monitoring.
- Family Planning: Access to contraceptive services, counselling and reproductive health education

#### **(ii) Hospital Services**

- General and Specialized Hospital Care: Medical, surgical, paediatric, obstetric care including emergency and intensive care services.
- Laboratory and Diagnostic Services: Blood tests, X-rays, ultrasound and other diagnostic services for the detection of diseases and medical conditions.
- Pharmacy Services: Access to prescribed medications through public hospitals and clinics

#### **(iii) Public Health Programs**

- Disease Control and Prevention: Programs to control communicable diseases like tuberculosis, dengue fever, HIV/AIDS and including vaccination campaigns.
- Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Prevention: Initiatives targeting diabetes, heart disease and cancer through education, screening and lifestyle promotion.
- Mental Health Services: Support for mental health, including counselling, psychiatric care and substance abuse programs.

#### **(iv) Emergency Services**

- Emergency Medical Response: Ambulance and emergency services for urgent medical attention.
- Disaster Preparedness and Response: Health-related services during natural disasters such as cyclones, floods or disease outbreaks.

**(v) Environmental Health Services**

- Water Quality Monitoring: Ensuring safe drinking water supply and sanitation services.
- Food Safety: Monitoring food establishments and ensuring compliance with health regulations.
- Vector Control: Programs to reduce mosquito-borne diseases like dengue, malaria and filariasis.

**(vi) Health Promotion and Education**

- Community Outreach Programs: Health education initiatives on hygiene, nutrition, sexual health and healthy lifestyles.
- Health Advocacy: Promoting awareness about diseases, healthy living and preventive measures.

**(vii) Specialized Services**

- Dental Services: Dental care, including tooth extractions, fillings and oral health education.
- Eye Care Services: Eye examinations, surgeries and treatments for vision-related issues.
- Rehabilitation Services: Physical therapy and rehabilitation for people recovering from injuries or illnesses.

2.1.3 These services are provided through a network of hospitals, health centers and nursing stations spread across urban and rural areas of Fiji.

### **3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

3.1 There are strategic goals in place aligning to the National Development Plans to produce better and skilled creators that support and grow economies for future of Fiji. These are the ten major Strategic Priority Categories for the Ministry.

- (i) Non-communicable diseases, including primary care, nutrition, mental health and injuries;
- (ii) Maternal, infant, child and adolescent health;
- (iii) Communicable disease, environmental health and health emergency preparedness, response & resilience;
- (iv) Continuum of care and improved service quality and safety;
- (v) Productive, motivated health workforce with a focus on patient rights and customer satisfaction;
- (vi) Evidence-based policy, planning, implementation and assessment;
- (vii) Medicinal products, equipment & infrastructure; and
- (viii) Sustainable financing of the health system



## **4. DELIBERATION AND ANALYSIS**

The purpose of this report is to scrutinise the performance of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services based on the 2016-2021 Annual Reports:

- 4.1 The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in Fiji, leading to significant changes in its policies and operations from 2016 to 2021.
- 4.2 The pandemic highlighted existing gaps in Fiji's healthcare system, particularly in areas of capacity, infrastructure and workforce.
- 4.3 The geographical isolation of Fiji's maritime and remote areas presents a formidable challenge for the effective delivery of healthcare services.
- 4.4 The Ministry has undertaken maintenance and upgrading of health facilities throughout the country. Health facilities such as Nadi Sub-Divisional Hospital (SDH), Nabouwalu SDH, Tavua SDH, Navua SDH among others had undergone maintenance.
- 4.5 The Ministry is well-equipped to scale up its efforts in preventing HIV and drug-related problems.
- 4.6 The Ministry has instituted various strategies to bolster the healthcare workforce, encompassing recruitment, retention and professional development.
- 4.7 The Committee urges the Ministry to maintain its collaboration with international partners and stakeholders to harness resources, technical expertise and funding in support of ongoing healthcare advancements.
- 4.8 Strengthening public-private partnerships (PPPs) can lead to more innovative solutions that will help to improve infrastructure and better service delivery.

## **5. KEY FINDINGS**

The Committee identified the following issues while deliberating on the 2016 -2021 Ministry of Health and Medical Services Annual Reports:

- 5.1 There is a need to review the Ministry of Health and Medical Services Regulations and Policies.
- 5.2 Taking into consideration the reality on the ground, the Committee feels that there is a major challenge pertaining to infrastructural development and this needs to be addressed. Staff Accommodation has been an ongoing challenge for the Ministry.

- 5.3 The increase in numbers of exodus health care workers is a major problem and has contributed to the shortage of staff including nurses, doctors and other cadres within the Ministry.
- 5.4 The Ministry needs to collaborate more with international organisation/partners and donors at regional and global level for upgrade of health care facilities, new health centres and relocation in response to climate change.
- 5.5 There is lack of resources to fight against NCD's, HIV/Aids and drug related issues.
- 5.6 Inadequate accessibility and transportation to the rural and maritime islands.
- 5.7 There is a need for maintenance work in all health facilities across the country.
- 5.8 The need to upskill and train health care workers to operate the biomedical machines and equipment.
- 5.9 Absence of policies, manuals and guidelines to guide the Ministry in preparation and response to COVID 19.
- 5.10 There is a need to review the Doctors, Nurses and Patients ratio to reduce waiting time in all health centres.
- 5.11 Private-Public Partnerships should be further strengthened.
- 5.12 There is still a short fall in achieving the relevant SDG targets related to health.

## **6. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Upon deliberation and review of the annual report, the committee recommends:

- 6.1 That the Ministry should submit its Annual Reports on time.
- 6.2 That the Ministry, given the lessons learnt from the COVID 19 Pandemic in 2020, to review the Regulations and Policies and ensure that medical professionals are adequately equipped to deal with similar unprecedented situations in the future. It should also ensure that all programmes and activities undertaken by the Ministry are aligned with its strategic goals and objectives.
- 6.3 The Ministry to work with relevant stakeholders to address challenges pertaining to infrastructure development and related crucial areas such as the current staff

accommodation. This timely upgrade will boost staff and client morale and positively impact service delivery standards.

- 6.4 The Ministry should review the current staff retention policy to address the staff migration challenges.
- 6.5 The Ministry should work closely with international organisations and donor partners in building new health care facilities, refurbishment or retrofitting or even relocation due to climate change.
- 6.6 The Ministry should increase awareness on social media platforms to address the recent rise in drug abuse, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and the surge in HIV/AIDS cases affecting the nation.
- 6.7 The Ministry to address the challenges faced by medical professionals and patients in accessing transport to the rural and maritime areas.
- 6.8 The Ministry to ensure that health care workers go through proper training in handling biomedical equipments.
- 6.9 The Ministry to do a comprehensive analysis to determine the factors contributing to the extended waiting time in health centres and subsequently introduce measures to improve services.
- 6.10 The Ministry of Health should work towards achieving the SDG targets.
- 6.11 The Ministry should ensure that the services provided by Ba Aspen hospital and Lautoka hospital under the public private partnership should continue for the benefit of the people of Fiji.

## **7. SDG ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 From 2016 to 2021, Fiji's Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MOHMS) made significant progress in advancing health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 on good health and well-being. Key achievements include reducing infant and maternal mortality rates through enhanced maternal health services, achieving high immunization coverage for childhood diseases like measles and polio, and strengthening primary healthcare to address non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. The Ministry also played a crucial role in managing Fiji's COVID-19 response, with high vaccination rates achieved by late 2021. Additionally, mental health services were expanded to meet rising demand during the pandemic.
- 7.2 Under SDG 6, the Ministry improved access to clean water and sanitation, particularly in rural areas and reduced waterborne diseases through hygiene promotion and infrastructure improvements. For SDG 2, the Ministry worked with international agencies like UNICEF to reduce child malnutrition and supported food security through nutritional programs.

- 7.3 The Ministry also addressed climate-related health risks under SDG 13 and fostered strong international and local partnerships under SDG 17 to enhance healthcare services and public health initiatives. These efforts reflect the Ministry's commitment to improving health outcomes in Fiji.

## **8. GENDER ANALYSIS**

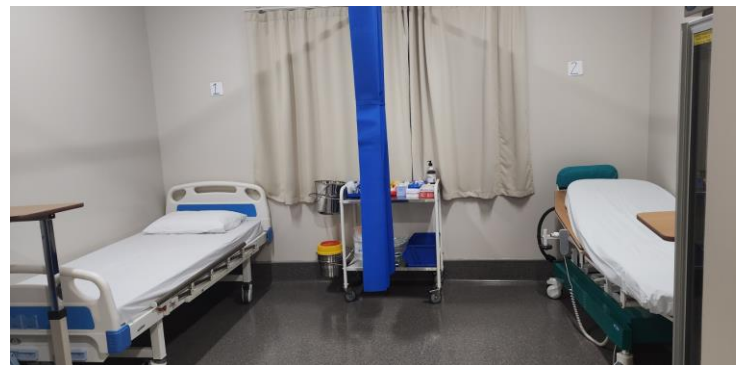
- 8.1 Gender is a critical dimension of parliamentary scrutiny. Under Standing Orders 110 (2), when a committee conducts an activity listed in clause (1), the Committee shall ensure that full consideration is given to the principle of gender equality, specifically regarding the impact and benefits for both men and women.
- 8.2 The Committee noted that in support of SDG 5 on gender equality, the Ministry strengthened maternal and reproductive healthcare and provided integrated services for survivors of gender-based violence.

## 9. COMMITTEE SITE VISITS AT BA ASPEN AND LAUTOKA ASPEN HOSPITAL

### A. Lautoka Aspen Hospital



### B. Ba Aspen Hospital



## 10. CONCLUSION






- 10.1 In conclusion, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) has made significant strides in enhancing healthcare delivery across Fiji, particularly in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry has focused on decentralizing health services, expanding the healthcare workforce, and upgrading medical facilities to ensure equitable access to care, especially in rural and maritime areas. The need to advocate and create awareness for NCDs, HIV and drug related issues remains paramount given the high number of cases in the country.

Moving forward, the Committee encourages the Ministry of Health and Medical Services to sustain its investments in healthcare infrastructure, workforce development, and public health initiatives, a proactive approach in collaboration with international partners and local communities as it is pivotal in building a more resilient and responsive healthcare system for Fiji's future. The Committee has emphasised on strengthening the Public Private Partnership to boost the Ministry services and the upskilling of health workers to handle modern biomedical machines and equipments.

The Committee commends the Ministry for its exemplary performance during the pandemic and anticipates the successful implementation of the proposed recommendations.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURE

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

Committee Member	E-Signature
Hon. Ilesia Vanawalu Chairperson	
Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure Deputy Chairperson	
Hon. Sashi Kiran Member	
Hon. Viam Pillay Member	
Hon. Ioane Naivalarua Member	
Date: 18/9/2024	

## ANNEXURE

### Published evidence

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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/>