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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

### **Consolidated Review of Report of the Ministry of Women and Poverty Alleviation 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Report**



**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**  
**Parliamentary Paper No. 103 of 2024**

*September 2024*

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## **CHAIRPERSON’S FOREWORD**

I am pleased to present the report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the Consolidated Review Report of the Ministry of Women and Poverty Alleviation 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports.

As mandated under Standing Orders 109(2) (b), the Committee looks into issues related to health, education, social services, labour, aviation, culture and media.

The period under review was during the time Fiji and the world were hit by the global pandemic, COVID 19 which resulted in changes to the normal standard operational procedures. In light of this development, the Ministry continued to provide services to its clients through the deployment of staff in areas that were on lockdown.

The Committee, through its mandatory role stipulated under Standing Orders 110, conducted a visit to the Golden Age Home and the Saint Tabith Home in Lautoka. The Committee noted concerns from the visit, which were raised to the Ministry Officials during their public submission to the Committee.

Moreover, the Committee highlighted concerns raised during the visit and identified possible recommendations.

I wish to convey my gratitude and sincere appreciation to the Permanent Secretary and her team for their valuable contribution to this review process.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the former Chairperson of the Committee Hon. Alitia Bainivalu for her leadership and guidance. To the former Committee Members; the Hon. Parveen Bala, alternate members Hon. Ketan Lal and Hon. Penioni Ravunawa for their constructive input and tremendous teamwork, and the current Committee members for the finalisation of this Committee report.

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



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

## ACRONYM

Acronym	
PS	Permanent Secretary
MP	Member of Parliament
SO	Standing Order
REACH	Rights, Empowerment and Cohesion for Rural, Urban Fijians
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

## 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 Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports* and recommends that Parliament take note of this report.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs (‘**Committee**’) was referred the *Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports* on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2023, as pursuant to SO 38 (2). Therefore, the 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 Committee Deliberation and formulation of questions pertaining to the *Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports* were undertaken. Following this, the executive management presented its responses. The Committee also conducted a site visit on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024 to the Golden Age Home and the St Tabith Home in Lautoka. Upon receipt of all relevant information, the committee compiled its findings and endorsed it on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2024.

The committee received a written response from the *Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation* 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 WOMEN, CHILDREN AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

### **2.1 Background**

The Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation is the government ministry of Fiji responsible for overseeing the well-being of women, children and the disabled in Fiji.

### **2.2 Deliberation and Analysis**

The purpose of the review was to scrutinise the performance of the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation based on its 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports.

- A total of **1,727 cases** were reported in the financial year 2020-2021, compared to the same period in the last financial year (2019-2020), a total of 1,478 cases were reported. There was an increase in the reporting of child welfare cases.
- The challenges faced by the Ministry include a lack of rehabilitation centers, budget constraints, and the children's preference to stay on the streets due to a perceived lack of love at home. The efforts to reintegrate children into families have been met with resistance, as many children feel more at home on the streets, highlighting the need for a holistic approach to tackle the root causes of the problem.
- The Ministry is currently working with the Methodist Church and Salvation Army for shelter needs.
- The REACH (Rights, Empowerment, and Cohesion for Rural and Urban Fijians) programme is an initiative by the Fijian Government where Government and its stakeholders collectively work together to ensure that services are delivered to communities in rural and urban areas. These services foster peacebuilding, social cohesion, and raise awareness on social, economic and legal rights of all Fijians.
- Economic empowerment programs for persons with disabilities have benefitted 60 individuals (38 males and 22 females), highlighting the Ministry's commitment to supporting vulnerable groups through targeted funding.
- The Ministry faced significant challenges due to COVID-19, impacting service delivery and leading to low or no utilisation of programs.

### **3. KEY FINDINGS**

Below are the key findings that the committee compiled through its deliberation and review of the Ministry of Women and Poverty Alleviation 2019-2020 and 2020- 2021 annual report:

- 3.1 The increasing number of street kids and the challenges faced by the Ministry in combating the issue due to budget constraint and lack of rehabilitation centers.
- 3.2 There is recognition that some existing policies are outdated and require updates to meet the changing needs of recipients
- 3.3 Increase the allocation of the Budget to the ministry with regards to Social Protection.
- 3.4 The Lautoka Golden Age Home is in the process of being relocated due to structural concerns, with a new site identified for the residents while their current home is rebuilt. However, the committee noted that the site identified is not suitable for the relocation of our elderly citizens as it is too close to the road.
- 3.5 High Staff turnover due to 4 exits per month and during this reporting period there were 34 vacant positions.
- 3.6 It has been noted that grants allocated to disability institutions and NGOs were underutilised.
- 3.7 The REACH Programme is found to be valuable as multi-stakeholders are able to take their services to the underprivileged in most remote and maritime areas.

### **4. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

- 4.1 The Ministry to continue to work with all relevant stakeholders in addressing the issue of Street kids.
- 4.2 The Child Justice and the Child Care Protection bill process is to be expedited and be tabled in Parliament.
- 4.3 The budgetary allocation for the Ministry be increased to ensure various Social Protection programs are well-resourced.

- 4.4 The Ministry to consider the relocation of senior citizens from Natabua Golden Age Home as a matter of urgency to ensure the residents are in a more conducive environment.
- 4.5 The Ministry is to have a retention policy for staff and all vacant posts to be filled as soon as possible.
- 4.6 The Ministry to conduct an impact analysis on the grants provided to the Women's NGO's and to open up assistance to other women's institutions.
- 4.7 The Ministry to work closely with stakeholders to build a rehabilitation center for street kids.
- 4.8 The Committee strongly recommends that the ministry continue with the REACH Programme to serve those in need in remote areas.

## **5. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

A Full detailed of the Ministry's achievements on the SDG can be found on the annexures of this report.

# Committee Site Visit Golden Age Home and St Tabith in Lautoka



## **6. CONCLUSION**

The Committee commends the Ministry for its operations during the pandemic. The Committee looks forward to the implementation of the recommendations put forward.

## 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: 12/9/2024	

## 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/>