



STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Consolidated Review Report of the iTaukei Affairs Board 2015- 2022 Annual Report



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
Parliamentary Paper No. 59 of 2025

July 2025

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CHAIRPERSON’S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Social Affairs report on *the Consolidated Review of the iTaukei Affairs Board 2015-2022 Annual Report*.

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

The iTaukei Affairs Board (TAB) continues to serve as the key governmental body responsible for the welfare, cultural preservation, and development of Fiji's Indigenous iTaukei communities, as its mission includes promoting the social, economic, and cultural well-being of the iTaukei Community. Over the years, the Board emphasized the preservation and promotion of iTaukei traditions, language and customs. Initiatives include supporting traditional ceremonies, festivals and cultural education programs. Efforts were made to strengthen iTaukei leadership and governance structures.

Notable accomplishments of iTaukei Affairs Board include successful community projects, increased participation of iTaukei, in national development, and improved legislation supporting land and cultural rights, on the other hand the board have challenges across the years including land lease conflicts, youth unemployment, balancing modernization with cultural preservation and resource limitations within the Board.

I sincerely thank the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the iTaukei Affairs Board and their officials for their invaluable contributions to this review process.

Finally, I thank the Hon. Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure, Hon. Alipate Tuicolo, Hon. Viam Pillay, and Hon. Parveen Bala, for their invaluable input and support. I also thank Hon. Ketan Lal for the assistance rendered on several occasions as an alternate standing committee member.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this report to Parliament.



.....
Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
Chairperson

ACRONYM

MP	Member of Parliament
SO	Standing Order
NEC	National Employment Centre
iTAB	iTaukei Affairs Board
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

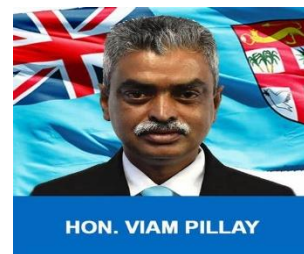
The Standing Committee on Social Affairs (**‘Committee’**) is established under Section 70 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji and Standing Order 109. The Committee’s mandate and functions are provided under Standing order 109 (2) and 110 (1) (a)-(d) & (f). Members of the Committee are:



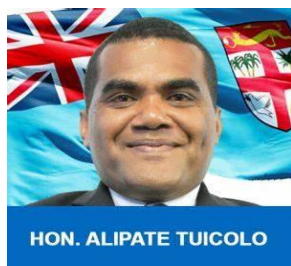
Chairperson
Government Member



Deputy Chairperson
Government Member



Member
Opposition Member



Member
Government Member



Member
Opposition Member

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The iTaukei Affairs Board 2015 to 2022 Annual Report was tabled in Parliament on 15th March 2024, and the report was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs pursuant to Standing Order (2) (b).

Standing Orders 109 (2)(b) allows the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to examine matters related to health, education, social services, labor, aviation, culture, and media.

1.1. Committee Procedures

Deliberations on the Consolidated Reports commenced in March 2025. The Committee read the reports and prepared questions, sought clarifications on key issues of interest from iTaukei Affairs Board.

The Committee held a Public Submission with the iTaukei Affairs Board on 25th March 2025.

Upon receipt of all pertinent information pertaining to the Committee's queries, which was subsequently endorsed on 29th May 2025.

The Committee received the responses from the iTaukei Affairs Board, which can be viewed at the following link <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

2.0 COMMITTEE DELIBERATION AND ANALYSIS

iTAUKEI AFFAIRS BOARD

2.1 Background

The iTaukei Affairs Board is a government entity in Fiji responsible for overseeing and supporting the interests of the iTaukei people, particularly in areas related to governance, cultural preservation, and economic empowerment. Its mission is to create a transformed iTaukei family for a better Fiji by strengthening leadership within the Vanua, developing policies and programs, and fostering partnerships with stakeholders.

The iTaukei Affairs Board operates under several key pillars, including good governance, well-being, economic empowerment, conservation and climate change, and institutional development. It plays a crucial role in coordinating provincial councils and ensuring that traditional leadership structures remain effective in serving iTaukei Communities

The iTaukei Affairs Board continues to operate under the iTaukei Affairs Act of 1944, which encompasses the iTaukei Affairs Board Regulation, the iTaukei Affairs Board (Provincial Councils) Regulations, and the iTaukei Affairs Board (Tikina and Village Council) Regulations.

Under Section 20— (1) of the iTaukei Affairs Board (iTaukei Affairs Board Regulations) 1996, it shall be the duty of the Board to: —

- (a) consider such draft legislation and other matters relating to the rights, interests, health, welfare (social and economic), peace, order, and good governance of the iTaukei people as the Minister may from time to time refer to the Board and take decisions or make recommendations thereon to the Minister.
- (b) consider resolutions relating to the same matters as are set out in paragraph (a), which members may submit to the Chairperson at least 2 weeks before the date of the next meeting of the Board and take decisions or make recommendations thereon to the Minister.
- (c) monitor all developments carried out in the provinces and to ensure that such development is in accordance with and reflects the development policies and strategies formulated by the Government.

3.0 KEY FINDINGS

Below are the key findings that the Social Affairs Committee compiled through its deliberations.

- 3.1 The iTaukei Affairs Board is concerned about the iTaukei youth who are away from village for a longer term under the seasonal work program hence the youths unable to contribute towards the community development.
- 3.2 The iTaukei Affairs Board conducted the Leadership awareness program for iTaukei community in a few provinces only.
- 3.3 The iTaukei Affairs Board faced financial challenges during the COVID-19 Pandemic, where provincial rates fell by 30% and a further 20% decrease was noted from investment income.
- 3.4 The Committee noted that traditional iTaukei customs emphasize patriarchal leaders' approach, which limits the opportunity for women to participate in the decision-making process at the village level.
- 3.5 The iTaukei Affairs Board continue with the Community Development Program in partnership with Job for Nature (JFN), Global Environment Facility (GEF), and World Bank to support Community Development.
- 3.6 The iTaukei Affairs Board assisted forty (40) villages under the Village Improvement Scheme, which is now being renamed as the Village Transformation Initiative.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends the following:

- 4.1 The iTaukei Affairs Board must collaborate positively with National Employment Centre on any foreign employment scheme under the VUVALE and DUAVATA Partnership Agreements.
 - 4.1.2 The iTaukei Affairs Board should immediately undertake a survey in all villages to determine the number of youths who are away under the foreign employment scheme and those who have moved from the villages to urban centers.
 - 4.1.3 The iTaukei Affairs Board should ensure fair employment opportunities for all our youths from the respective villages applying under the two schemes.
- 4.2 The iTaukei Affairs Board must ensure Leadership and Governance Training for iTaukei leaders to be extended to all provinces.
- 4.3 The iTaukei Affairs Board must conduct training in collaboration with FNU and other non-government organizations, in villages for women, to participate in decision making and take up leadership roles.
- 4.4 The iTaukei Affairs Board must monitor and provide relevant support towards the preparation and submission of Provincial Council annual financial reports.
- 4.5 The iTaukei Affairs Board should work closely with other relevant ministries to enhance and expand the Job for Nature Program for youths and women across Fiji.
- 4.6 The iTaukei Affairs Board should provide the scope of work to determine the total cost for the development and beautification of the remaining villages under the Village Transformation Scheme.

5.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND GENDER ANALYSIS:

We note that the Annual Report makes limited reference to the SDGs and does not specify which SDG each of the iTaukei Affairs Board's programs and activities relate to SDG.

However, during the public submission, the iTaukei Affairs Board has stated that they will endeavor to progress the SDGs and how it has mainstreamed SDGs into their programs and activities.

5.1 Goal 1: NO POVERTY

The iTaukei Affairs Board aims to address poverty within the iTaukei community through various initiatives. These include supporting the development of iTaukei resources, promoting sustainable livelihood programs, and ensuring equitable access to government services and programs.

5.2 Goal 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

The iTaukei Affairs Board plays a crucial role in Fijian education, particularly in promoting cultural awareness and knowledge and the preservation of Fijian culture and language, ensuring the economic and social well-being of iTaukei people.

5.3 Goal 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

The iTaukei Affairs Board plays a crucial role in reducing inequalities within Fijian Society, particularly for the iTaukei population, by focusing on improving livelihoods, promoting sustainable development, and fostering economic empowerment. The iTaukei Affairs Board ensures it works and focuses on social inclusion and cultural preservation. This also includes safeguarding of the iTaukei customs, language and traditional governance systems. The iTaukei Affairs Board also ensures active participation of iTaukei women and given equal opportunities in leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

5.4 Goal 13: CLIMATE ACTION

The iTaukei Affairs Board is actively addressing climate change, particularly its impact on rural communities and iTaukei population. They are focused on enhancing resilience, mainstreaming climate change adaptation into development programs, and utilizing traditional knowledge to improve adaptation efforts.

5.5 Goal 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS






The iTaukei Affairs Board plays a crucial role in promoting peace and justice within the iTaukei community. This is achieved through its focus on good governance, well-being, and the preservation of iTaukei traditions and culture, as outlined in the iTaukei Affairs Act of 1944. It encourages the participation of iTaukei communities in decision making processes. Through this, it provides empowerment and create capacity building in order for them to look into the current and future challenges.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The Committee after having reviewed the iTaukei Affairs Board Consolidated Reports is of the opinion that the directions and plans set by the Board is on track to achieve its intended goals.

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. Iliesa Vanawalu Chairperson	
Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure Deputy Chairperson	
Hon. Alipate Tuicolo Member	
Hon. Viam Pillay Member	
Hon. Parveen Bala Member	
Date: 29 th May, 2025	

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/>

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

MINISTRY OF iTAUKEI AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORT

**SUBMITTEE: Ministry of iTaukei Affairs
iTaukei Affairs Board**

Big Committee Room, Parliament

Wednesday, 26th March, 2025

VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD AT THE BIG COMMITTEE ROOM, EAST WING, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON WEDNESDAY, 26TH MARCH, 2025, AT 2.15 P.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: (1) **Ministry of iTaukei Affairs**
 (2) **iTaukei Affairs Board**

In Attendance:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Mr. Pita Tagicakiverata | - | Permanent Secretary /CEO iTaukei Affairs Board |
| 2. Mr. Paula Tuione | - | Director Development |
| 3. Mr. Emosi Caniogo | - | Director iTaukei Language and Culture |
| 4. Mr. Mosese Nakoroi | - | DOPS |
| 5. Mr. Kititone Vesikula | - | PAO Taukei Lands and Fisheries Commission |
| 6. Mr. Josefa Toganivalu | - | Deputy CEO, iTaukei Affairs Board |
| 7. Mr. Savenaca Nalagi | - | PAO, LSU |
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MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, members of the media and the public, the Secretariat, viewers, ladies and gentlemen; a very good afternoon to you all. It is my absolute pleasure to welcome everyone, especially to the viewers who are watching this session. I am privileged to Chair this meeting of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, which is being aired live on Parliament Channel through the *Walesi* platform and livestreamed through Parliament's *Facebook* page.

For information purpose, pursuant to Parliament 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 will also be aired live, as I had mentioned earlier.

For any sensitive information regarding this submission that cannot be disclosed in public. This can be provided to the committee, either in private or in writing. However, please be advised that, pursuant to Standing Order 111, there are only few specific circumstances that allows for non-disclosure, and this includes;

- national security matters;
- third party confidential information;
- personnel human resources matters; and
- Committee deliberation and development of Committees' recommendations of the report ahead of us.

This is a parliamentary sitting, and all information gathered should cover under the parliamentary power and privileges. However, please bear in mind that we do not condone slander or libel of any sort. Any information brought before this committee should be based on facts. In terms of protocol of this committee meeting, please minimize the usage of mobile phones and all mobile phones to be on silent mode while the meeting is in progress. I wish to also remind our members and our guests this afternoon that all questions asked got to be addressed through the chair. I would also like at this time to introduce members of this committee, I will ask our members to introduce themselves.

(Introduction of Committee Members)

MR. CHAIRMAN.-The Committee will be hearing submissions from the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the iTaukei Affairs Board. The Committee welcomes the Permanent Secretary and his team. The submissions are in the relation to the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs 2017 to 2019 and 2019 to 2022 Annual Reports, and the

iTaukei Affairs Board 2015 to 2022 Annual Reports. I now invite the PS and his team to introduce themselves, and then begin with the presentation straight away, and after which there will be a question and answer session. Please also note that if there is any question from the Members of the Committee, they may interject, or we will wait till the end of your presentation to ask our question.

On that note, due to time limitation, I may ask PS to keep the presentation brief as possible, so that the two responses in front of us are well covered throughout this public submission.

(Introduction of representatives from the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs)

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Mr. Chairman, I will now go straight to the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs Annual Report 2017 to 2019 and 2019 to 2022 while Mr. Josefa Toganivalu will cover the iTaukei Affairs Board Annual Report.

Question No. 1:

Performance and achievements.

(a) What were the major achievements of the Ministry during these reported years?

Mr. Chairman, one of the ongoing need of the diaspora is for us to bring our services to them, and in that regard, we have taken our services overseas through road shows conducted in England targeting sons and daughters of Fiji serving in the British Armed Forces, as well as those residing in the United States of America and Australia. One of the services of the ministry that has become very popular is the *Vola Ni Kawa Bula* (VKB), the registration of children in the *Vola Ni Kawa Bula*. In regards to VKB registration, a total of 13,728 new registration to the *Vola Ni Kawa Bula* and 407 traditional titles were filled with 24 village boundaries demarcated and gazetted. These are local entrants and traditional titles that were filled.

(b) How did the Ministry's initiatives contribute to the well-being and governance of the iTaukei community.

Mr. Chairman, as you have mentioned, I will be very brief, because the answers are there before the Committee Members. One is through preservation and management of cultural registers, the other is through cultural and heritage as a safeguard of iTaukei language. This is an ongoing task for us.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, with your permission, may I intervene. We are talking about management of land and customary titles and records, filling of vacant, chiefly titles. Maybe this is the best time, if you may update us on or highlight on the recent ruling by the High Court on the Tui Nadi title.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- As we speak, we are meeting the Solicitor-General on the next steps to be taken. After this meeting, this afternoon, we will have a clear picture of what needs to be taken, and we will follow those steps that we will discuss.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman through you, I just want to declare my interest. There has been issues about the *Marama na Tui Ba* title, can you update us on that.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Mr. Chairman through you, we have covered eight provinces so far. Ba is one of the few remaining provinces that we will cover during the year.

On environmental sustainability, we are addressing climate vulnerability and also resettlement issues. This is an ongoing challenge for the ministry, but we have started our outreach to the informal sector in the informal

settlement, we have started with Wailea and Nanuku last week, and based on the data we will gather, we will suggest policy issues, and policy development in coordination with our ministry before we take it to Cabinet.

On policy advice, we have implemented policies to address the needs of iTaukei population.

Question No. 2:

(a) What were the main challenges faced by the Ministry during the reported years?

One of the main challenges we faced was that of resource allocation. This has been an ongoing issue in terms of funding our programmes, and we are grateful that we have been given some leeway in terms of funding to access and also cover our programmes last year, this year, and hopefully in the new budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I may intervene, just an issue of concern. When we look at question two, when you talk about municipalities, the urban village, if I talk about urban village, the locality, where they are based and what we are trying to receive clarification on is what is the Ministry's plan with urban villages?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Firstly, there is a realignment of boundaries. Taskforce going on right now in the ministry, headed by the Ministry of Rural Development, that committee has met three times already on realigning all the boundaries to be consistent - a provincial boundary, the local government boundary, the police boundary, the health boundary. But specifically for urban villages, we have responded to a Cabinet paper from the Ministry of Local Government to realign their boundaries so that they will have access to the services of the town council and city councils in the provinces.

HON. P.K.BALA.- While we are talking about municipal councils, the villages that are within towns and cities, and the *mataqali* who has learned within the towns and cities, but resides outside town boundary. Before they had the privilege of voting in the municipal election, but in the recent amendment, that Right had been taken away. What was the reason?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Mr. Chairman, your guess is as good as mine. We have no idea of the reasons that led to that decision.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- PS, you may continue.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- The empowerment of iTaukei institutions, we have targeted poverty, equality and inequality and access to services. On environment sustainability, one of the perennial issues that iTaukei communities face; we are addressing climate vulnerability and again, resettlement issues.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, through you, in regards to resettlement, as PS mentioned, how many communities or villages has been identified that needs resettlement, what is the progress, and whether funding is available for that?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Mr. Chairman, if I may, through you, the work on the settlement is led by the Ministry of Environment. To the best of my recollection, we had 45 villages on the list, and the funding is sourced from the climate trust fund that is with the climate change unit. And so far, to the best of my recollection, that trust fund has been used to resettle Nabavatu Village.

Question No. 3:

Policy implementation

(a) What new policies were introduced and how effective were they?

We developed policy papers over the years between 2017 to 2022 and so far we have developed 17 policies, 15 in 2022-2020 and 10 in 2021. These are policies targeting good governance and well-being of the iTaukei.

Question No. 4:

Community Development –

(a) What programmes were implemented to support community development?

(b) How did these programmes impact the iTaukei communities? I will ask my Director Development to respond to that question.

MR. P. TUIONE.- Through you Mr. Chairman, honourable Members, as being stated in the narrative on community development targets, more on the leadership of our communities, looking to how we can improve our training, on leadership, also on cultural mapping and also on revitalization efforts to improve these areas of development. It also looks into how we can improve certain curriculum that will improve our leadership, as has been registered in the narrative, that is typically in leadership and management. Succession plans are in place on how we can improve in that regard, looking to the challenges that are out there in our communities, but we see that our future leaders has to be capacitated and empowered so they can improve their leadership in the future. And I think, stated in the narrative that Nadave is one of our institutions that are leading this role, and we believe that our future leaders and the future people in the communities will be capacitated and trained in this institution.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.-

Question No. 5:

What proactive approaches to sustainable development has the Ministry embarked on in order to create more resilient iTaukei communities to climate change? Again, I will ask the Director Development to respond to that.

MR. P. TUIONE.- Through you Mr. Chairman and honourable Members, the Ministry has taken steps to address climate change. Very importantly, in how we can promote sustainability, sustainable development through national resource owners committee. Committees have been tasked and assigned to look into these areas in which 14 provinces are part of this Committee, their respective representative from these provinces, looking to how we can focus more on how we can have sustainable development and take into consideration the climate change issues. We also look into how we can carry out awareness, advocacy and how we can socialise very important policies that really address how we can conserve, conservation policies looking into climate change.

In this regard, Mr. Chairman, the Ministry also carries out the role as secretary to these committees and in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and relevant stakeholders in trying to look into this very important, critical issue. There are some pending policies that are in place, but we are continuing to work with our conservation officers.

We hope that the honourable Minister for Environment will give them the leeway that they can be part of this team of policy issues, and also facilitate and assist in areas of improving the Environment Impact Assessment out in the field. Additionally, the Ministry adopted the integrated approach for sustainable development. It provides policy support, role of government ensuring proactive climate resilience initiatives, and achieve focus outcomes on iTaukei communities.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- I will ask the Director iTaukei Language, Institute of iTaukei Language and Culture to respond to Questions Six to Nine.

MR. E. CANIOGO.-

Question No. 6:

Cultural preservation.

(a) There has been efforts to preserve and promote iTaukei culture and language and traditions. This is on the period in question, we are working together with the other cultural agencies to promote and save the culture and traditions of the iTaukei. Lately, we have been discussing the culture mapping programme, which was highlighted by Director Development. We have completed the culture mapping of the 1,172 villages all over Fiji. This has been collated, and we are into the second phase of the culture mapping programme. We are currently doing the data management programme, and part of it is the culture verification programme which is funded by the Government. That is the data veracity phase of the programme. We covered the period in question. We have covered mostly in Namosi and Serua for the culture revitalization, verification and they have been migrated to the new A Traditional Knowledge & Expression of Culture Management Information System database.

(b) Were there any specific projects or initiatives focused on cultural preservation? As I have alluded earlier, we have already done Namosi province and Serua. They have been migrated to the culture database, and the digital preservation is now one of our main programme in the division.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, I have a question. With the safeguarding of iTaukei language, is there any assistance available to those interested in doing research and publication, and preservation of their own dialects?

MR. E. CANIOGO.- Mr Chairman, through you, the division or the unit of the Institute have the library that is available with information that have already been researched along the language and culture issues, topics. We are open during the official hours, and we are also receiving a lot of researchers from universities and schools around Fiji.

Question No. 7:

Cultural Awareness and Advocacy

(a) How does the *Noda Vosa* programme, social media articles, and *Lialiaci* Publications contribute to the promotion and preservation of iTaukei Language and Culture?

Mr. Chairman, through you, the *Noda Vosa* Programme continues until to date, and it has been seen that is one of the most successful programme because it is covering the wider communities in Fiji, including those in the rural areas.

In terms of social media, the team is now creating reels and short video clips for our children around Fiji. The students and children around Fiji.

On community engagement, the team is also engaged in culture awareness around Fiji, in the villages and also the rural and also the informal settlements around the urban areas.

Social media articles we have analysed covers a wide range of communities; iTaukei communities around Fiji and also the diaspora. For the *Lialiaci* Publication we have improved the publication from being published in English, we are now publishing it in a dual lingual, *Na vosa vaka Viti kei na vosa vaka Peritania*.

We also do pre and post programme surveys. This is in particularly the cultural revitalization. We have revitalized, for the period in question, we have conducted nine workshops around Fiji to revitalize artifacts, and conducted nine visitations around Fiji to check on the sustainable practices of people around Fiji with their artifacts. We always do feedbacks and evaluations, and we have seen that it is one of the most important parts of our work, the cultural revitalisation. So far, we have revitalized more than 41 elements in our five domains in UNESCO.

(c) What specific educational audio resources has the iTaukei Institute of Language and Culture developed in response to the Ministry of Education's request, and how do these resources support the understanding of *Vosa Vaka Viti* among students? How effective has this been?

We have been having several meetings with the curriculum advisory services, and we were providing the team with education, audios and information for them to conduct the awareness through educational radio programme for *Vosa Vaka Viti*.

Question No. 8:

As I alluded earlier, we have revitalized nine elements in the culture revitalization programme. One of the most important issue we have identified is the living human treasures. *Qo saka o ira na radau*. It is very important for us, because we have some of the living human treasures. Some of them have passed on without transmitting the knowledge that they have. We are currently working on improving their records and working on a living home treasure database.

Question No. 9:

What types of Cultural Revitalisation Programmes were undertaken in the years under review?

In the years under review, we have conducted revitalization on two; *meke vakavanua*, traditional *meke ni yaqona* and we have six mostly on artifacts. Those are the areas where we have completed during the period in question.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Director, may I just ask a question on what we have discussed so far. In terms of understanding the importance of this revitalization, how successful are these programmes from the perspective of the Ministry?

MR. E. CANIOGO.- Mr. Chairman, through you, we have done our revision to check on the sustainable practice of the artifacts and the elements that have been revitalized. So, far we can see that it has been 90 percent success. When I say 90 percent success, one of the elements that we revitalized, people are not practising anymore for those nine that was revitalized during that period.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.-

Question No. 10:

Financial Management.

(a) How did the Ministry manage its budget and financial resources in the reported years?

Through strategic allocations and enhancing the well-being and governance of the iTaukei communities. In 2018 to 2019 financial year, the Ministry was allocated a total of \$15.8 million from the \$13.2 million allocated for 2017 to 2018. Over the reported years, it was noted that the budget provision fluctuates with a reduced budget of \$14.1 million in 2020-2021 from \$15.4 million in 2019-2020. This further reduced in 2021-2022 of \$13.8 million as a result of the post COVID-19 adjustment.

(b) Were there any notable financial challenges or successes?

The Ministry faced challenges relating to staff shortages and high turnover which impacted on its financial and accounting responsibilities. However, funding was secured to create positions and improve staff retention.

Question No. 11:

How does the Ministry implement its gender policy in the context of recruitment, training, hiring, promotion and capacity building?

On recruitment, the Ministry's recruitment, hiring and promotion is guided by the OMRS. It is a policy right across the service. It ensures that the process is fair, just, neutral and inclusive.

On capacity building, the Ministry on an annual basis compiled the training needs of officers and await the training officers from the Ministry of Civil Service as well as training funded by our stakeholders and partners.

Question No. 12:

Effective leadership within the community. How successful is leadership training?

In terms of encouraging effective leadership within the community, the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the iTaukei Trust Fund Board co-funded the 14-weeks Certificate III in Leadership Training which was attended by 90 participants from Tailevu, Rewa, Ba, Nadroga, and Serua.

Additionally, 118 leadership awareness programmes were held at the village, *tikina* and provincial levels with the goal of enhancing governance and leadership in the rural areas.

Question No. 13:

Future plans. What are the Ministry's strategic goals for the upcoming years?

Mr. Chairman, we have just launched our revised strategic development plan this year in Sabeto and it is aligned to the National Development Plan that was launched last year by the honourable Prime Minister, and that will be our guidance until 2030.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.-

Question No. 14:

How is the Ministry incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals into its policy framework and strategic planning? I will ask Director Development, if he can touch on this question.

MR. P. TUIONE.- Mr. Chairman through you, the narration clearly stated the alignment of our planning document into the SDG framework looking on how to incorporate the importance of the planning to ensure that

development of iTaukei communities aligned to the global sustainable standards, respecting and promoting cultural heritage, socio-economic wellbeing of the iTaukei people. Some of the ways the Ministry have integrated the SDGs into their policies and strategies that is into the aligning of policies with the national SDG framework. The Ministry ensures that the needs and aspirations of iTaukei communities are reflected in the country's broader SDG strategy, particularly in areas such as poverty reduction (SDG1), quality education (SDG4) and climate action (SDG11).

Further to that Mr. Chairman, the Ministry has been working to ensure that SDG10 (Reduced Inequality) is upheld by focusing on social inclusion and cultural preservation. This includes safeguarding of the iTaukei customs, language and traditional governance systems. We are also looking into how communities are allocating courses in rural areas that are vulnerable to climate change are taken to consideration emphasizing on SDG13 on climate action.

In addition to that, Mr. Chairman, SDG16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs emphasizes on the participation of iTaukei communities in decision making processes. Through this, it provides empowerment, also create capacity in order for them to look into the challenges that are coming in and also the future challenges.

Collaboration with the other institutions such as TLTB, TTFB, TAB, CATD in Nadave and various national agencies, NGOs. We are trying to see how best we can work together to achieve those commitments in the SDGs that are already mentioned.

Last but not the least, Mr. Chairman, is focusing also on the economic, social and environmental sustainability and promoting inclusive development which enable the Ministry working towards how we can building a more sustainable, resilient and equitable future for the iTaukei people.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Our last question, Mr. Chairman, when will the Ministry submit its outstanding annual reports? The annual report 2022 to 2023 has been submitted to Cabinet and tabled in Parliament at the last Parliament sitting.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much PS and team. Honourable Members, any supplementary questions before we go to the second submission that is in front of us this afternoon?

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman through you, we have heard and we have read in the Report, a very comprehensive Report I would say, but in real terms on the ground what we see is different from what the report says, especially the youths. What are some plans to retain the youths in the villages? I mean, most of the youths that we have seen and observe in informal settlements, unemployed, there is no employment. Is there any plan? Just last week, I was with a friend working at Vinod Patel, and he told me that the Ministry officials are now trying to find people who have left their villages (*koro*) and moved to urban centers. Is there any truth in it? So is there any plan or programme?

iTAUKEI AFFAIRS BOARD:

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- Through you Mr. Chairman, can I cover that in my presentation for the iTaukei Affairs Board? I think it is covered in the iTaukei Affairs Board's presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will wait for that one.

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- Mr. Chairman and honourable Members, for the iTaukei Affairs Board institution tasked with good governance and well-being of the iTaukei under the iTaukei Affairs Act, and the iTaukei Affairs Regulations of 1944 and also 1996 respectively.

Question No. 1:

The significant achievements of the Board during the reported period.

I will answer the question together with (b) on the impacts on the communities. The first one that I have there is the strengthening of the role of the *Turaga ni Koro*. We have managed to improve the role of the *Turaga ni Koro* through the Job Description. And also, we found that increasing their allowance was effective. As they started off with \$20 a month in 96 to \$200 a month by 2022. As we speak, it is now \$200 per month paid out quarterly. It is not an easy task if you look at their JD. We are glad that we have been able to assist the *Turaga Ni Koro* in this area.

Secondly is the Community Health Workers (CHW) Initiative proclamation. This was done during the reported period. The CHW, the *Nasi ni Koro* was recognized through collaboration with the Ministry of Health and also the payment of their stipend, something they enjoy to this very day. What happened was there was a MOU with the Ministry of Health, and the CHWs were covered under the iTaukei Affairs Act as Assistant *Turaga Ni Koro* so that they can be covered by legislation for their stipend to be paid. With the CHW, the communities now get access to basic health services and advice, and also the CHW maintain the contact with Ministry of Health through the district nurses, providing relevant and timely information and data.

Village profiling and Integrated Village Development Plans (IVDP). Our offices carried out profiling in various villages, in all the villages in Fiji, capturing important data sets by villages and the Integrated Village Development Plan is then produced out of this data by prioritization by the villages. The last village profiling was done in 2023. Village occupants in villages now stands at 167,597, families around 46,000, houses around 59,981 and the workforce population is around 89,243.

Fourthly, in this period, there were about three major cyclones, *TC Winston*, *TC Harold* and also *TC Ana*, the iTaukei Affairs Board, Councils and *Roko Tui* played of pivotal roles in supporting the affected communities. The iTaukei Affairs Bord coordinated efforts with the NDMO and the provincial council office through the Roko Tui communication and provide that guidance to the local leaders. And also assisted provincial administrators in the district and divisions. Their contribution led the importance of culturally sensitive approach to disaster management, fostering resilience and unity. Lives were rebuilt and villages assisted back to normalcy.

Another important achievement was networking with civil societies and NGOs grew during this period. The collaborations resulted in capacity building, conservation of resources, and also the injection of funds from case work initiatives into the villages and community.

We also carried out during this period community trainings. Packages were developed taken across to the *vanua* such as the *Sauvaki ni Vanua* programme, the *Sausauvou* programme as already mentioned by the Ministry, the *Ketekete ni Marama* for women, and also the *Çoke Vou* currently developed, or has been recently developed, for the schoolchildren in schools. The board has successfully organised training sessions nearly every villages in Fiji, with several villages receiving additional sessions based on their request.

Number seven was commercial unit. The commercial unit was set up and I expanded to oversee the economic empowerment of the iTaukei. A team was tasked with networking stakeholders and set a platform for the iTaukei communities to access markets and finance. The iTaukei is assisted by the unit through financial literacy and also access to finance and markets through development of business plans and other assistance.

Number eight is conservation unit expansion saw the provision of one Conservation Officer per province, and gradually all are now paid under government.

The communities now need specialists to assist them on the conservation of their resources and help keep of environment and advise them on developments coming into their communities.

We also developed our operational platforms during this time. We are now operated on the five operational platforms which were developed to streamline the board and also the provincial council roles and concentration were placed on the good governance, well-being, economic empowerment, conservation and climate change and everything to deal with the *vanua*.

These allowed budgeting to take place, to be allocated to the five platforms and reflected in the setup of the operation framework, which we use to date.

Our Monitoring and Evaluation Unit – The period also saw the setup of the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. The Unit started with setting out the planning documents, the receipt of the quarterly reports and the evaluation reporting to management.

We also managed to start on the Provincial Council audit backlogs during this period. This was reported to the Public Accounts Committee on Monday. That answers question one.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Carry on, Sir.

Question No. 2:

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- The strategic priorities as I have already mentioned, we now have five operational platforms, good governance, well-being, economic empowerment, conservation and climate change, the *vanua* and also institutional development which act as our support services to these five operational platforms.

(b) How effectively were these priorities addressed?

Good governance. Progress was made through strengthening structures through training and awareness, attendance to village, *tikina* and provincial council meetings, as reported in the annual reports, were crucial, but the challenges hindered the remote access, especially in the remote areas and maritime provinces. The well-being of the iTaukei communities. The health and social welfare programmes had a positive impact, especially during COVID-19 pandemic, but some initiatives as I have said faced logistical challenges in reaching remote areas as well.

Economic empowerment. Sustainable livelihoods projects showed promise. This is an area where iTaukei Affairs Board especially the decentralization of the commercial unit into our 14 provinces as part of the recommendation after the recent iTaukei Affairs Board review.

We now have Senior Economic Planning Officers, four now stationed at the iTaukei Affairs Board, and we will decentralize them into the 14 provincial councils when we have the full 14 on board.

Conservation and climate change. The environmental projects, like reforestation was successful in targeted areas, but broader climate adaptation efforts face funding and coordination challenges.

Networking with NGOs conservation initiative continues.

The *vanua* community trainings continues. This is an area we are currently working on with the *Veitarogi Vanua* and the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) to fill traditional posts and train the current and future leaders. This area was raised before. This is an area we are working on through the community trainings. Our strategy.

Together with the Veitarogi Vanua, iTaukei Land and Fisheries Commission and also the GCC office to fill the traditional post and train the current and future leaders.

Internal institutional development, internal improvements enhance service delivery, but ongoing monitoring and valuation were needed to ensure consistent progress. This is an area that we are working on in our current change management approach.

Question No. 3:

(a) How did the Board ensure good governance and compliance with relevant regulations?

The iTaukei Affairs Board ensures good governance. We strengthen the governance structures through framework with the provincial councils, *tikina*, village councils and the Secretariat ensuring transparency and accountability in decision making processes. Regular internal audits were conducted, a capacity building internally, and also in the communities, monitoring valuation and also external oversight by the office such as the Auditor-General and also other officers who provide oversight, including the Ministry.

These efforts collectively reinforced the board's commitment to good governance and regulatory compliance.

(b) Were there any challenges?

The challenges during the reported period, were the resource constraints, the COVID-19 pandemic, the community engagement, ensuring active participation was a challenge, full participation was a challenge, the environmental challenge, the compliance and governance, and also the disaster recovery, as I've already said, which took some time to implement some programmes moving forward as community members were trying to rebuild their lives.

Question No. 4:

Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the operations and initiatives of the iTaukei Affairs Board. The operational disruptions, lockdowns and movement restrictions led to the closure of our offices and limited in person meeting. So we have to adapt to virtual meetings and also training sessions to continue to ensure continuity.

The financial challenges. The pandemic cost a 30 percent reduction provincial rates, and also 20percent decrease in income from investments affecting the board's financial stability.

Community support. Board played a crucial role in supporting rural and maritime communities during the pandemic, and also the programme delays, some planned initiatives were postponed or scaled down due to resource constraints and logistical challenges.

(b) What measures were taken to mitigate.

The board mitigated through work from home initiative, lowering administration and office operational costs. And also, one thing we did during the COVID-19 was the development of our iTaukei Institution Group Emergency Response (TIGER) Team. Our TIGER teams to assist in our planning and also our work allocation. Personnel were allocated according to the wards in which they decided, together with the resources for them to use. During lockdown, most could not access the market, for example, so a team two took action especially in

Sawani and Logani borders. The team outside the lockdown zones facilitated goods at the border and liaise with teams inside the lockdown zones who found the markets for the produce, and then we facilitated transportation to supply the goods and transfer the proceeds to the sellers, mainly our farmers in the communities.

(c) Through lessons and experience, we will see to the development of TAB pandemic resource plan for future operations, and it is part of our change management approach.

Question No. 5:

Community developments. The programmes are implemented to support our community development. The iTaukei Affairs Board has implemented several programmes to support the communities, and mostly some of these were done through the sustainable rural livelihood framework programme, through an integrated approach involving multiple stakeholders.

We mostly do the facilitation and the other stakeholders coming with the funding into our iTaukei communities.

Our GEF funding focused on reforestation, smart agriculture, governance improvements, we have to strengthen government structures within provincial councils and the iTaukei Affairs Board secretariat and also the COVID-19 response.

The Jobs for Nature Programme was launched in June 2021 and focus on environmental restoration projects. Community groups such as women and youth applied and were financially compensated. These programs reflects the board's commitment to the iTaukei people.

(b) How did the programmes benefit the iTaukei communities? Through economic stability, environmental stability, skills development, health and safety, cultural preservation and also improve governance.

The JFN Programme as I have already said, has already three chances so far. It includes cash distribution, farming implements and FNPF contribution to 642 groups in 640 communities impacting a total of 12,606 individuals. This is a programme by the World Bank. It is facilitated by the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of the iTaukei Affairs and the iTaukei Affairs Board to the communities.

Question No. 6:

Financial management - how did the board manage its financial resources?

HON. P.K. BALA.- Just going back on how did these programmes benefit the iTaukei communities especially, item No 3, skill development. Is this training that you are saying here is in the mainland or maritime areas as well? If it happens only here in the mainland, then how does the youths who are residing in the maritime areas get access to this training? Is there any provision for mobile training? Because I remember when I was in Government, when we went in for the first time we had a real experience of youths. I mean he was there as well. And then we started with this mobile training because all of them cannot come here. So is there any program in this or is just for the youths who are in the mainland?

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, the programme is working together with the Fiji National University. They provide mobile training to communities outside the main urban areas. It is done upon request. And also we have identified areas for them to conduct the trainings in. It includes the remote communities as well.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, can I just suggest that your Ministry work closely with Ministry of Youth? I mean, it is not only your Ministry, there has to be other line ministries to fulfil what we are basically

talking about and there are a lot of programmes under Ministry of Youth and you people can coordinate. It will be better for the youths in maritime.

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- Point noted, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Sir.

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- During the reported period in Question No. 6, TAB received Government subvention which was solely allocated towards Personnel Emoluments (PE) while TAB operational expenses were subsidized by dividend income earned from investments.

As the major shareholder of Fijian Holdings Limited(FHL), the FHL dividend accounts the highest in the investment portfolio. So we had to maintain stringent cost controls implemented to ensure optimal spending and alignment to strategic priorities in the most efficient way possible as Government subvention was not sufficient to cover full operational costs.

Investment allocation are made in the annual budget to ensure sound and cost effective decisions are made during the financial year to ensure savings and investment.

Mr. Chairman, TAB did not venture into property loans except for vehicle loans in its efforts to enhance service delivery.

Overall, income and expenses are tracked against operational targets by the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Unit to ensure operational efficiency.

Bi-annual performance reviews are conducted to maintain financial stability and also achieve goals.

(b) The financial challenges or notable successes mentioned – management inherited the challenge of audit backlogs on provincial councils and TAB annual accounts. Having to deliver new targets, existing resources had to be allocated to establish a taskforce mainly to fast track the preparation and submission of financial statements particularly for provincial councils. Without additional personnel, TAB had to readjust within its Personal Emoluments subjected to budget to accommodate the new Project Unit under the Finance Department.

In addition, the lack of Government support in fully funding TAB operations had resulted in cut backs on some of our priority programmes. For instance, the low to nil FHL dividend income received during COVID-19 placing TAB on a hot plate of trying to manage its finances without reducing work hours nor redundancy.

(c) Did the Board pursue any grants or external funding? Through strategic partnerships with partners such as UNDP and World Bank, TAB secured funding to support the Ridge-to-Reef programme and also the Village Profiling Exercise under the Conservation and Wellbeing priorities.

These also includes the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Funding and focused on approaches to land, water, biodiversity and also enhance the eco-systems and climate resilience to our iTaukei communities. Funding under the Social Protection Programme with the World Bank aided the completion of the Village Profiling exercises.

(d) How was the budget distributed across various programmes and initiatives?

The iTaukei Affairs Board allocated its budget based on strategic priorities and operational platforms as I have already mentioned. They are all listed there. The areas are all listed there from good governance to

institutional development. The well-being platform received the most funding reflecting the Board's commitment in improving iTaukei general well-being and empowering iTaukei community by addressing the evidence based needs.

(e) The level of budget for the reporting years for the Board, these shall be provided upon completion of audit by the Office of the Auditor-General and also the receipt of the full audited reports Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- When we can be provided with these reports? Are there any timeline?

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- By the end of this year, we should have our full report.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Okay, we will take note of that.

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.-

Question No. 7:

Cultural Preservation. What initiatives were undertaken to preserve and promote iTaukei culture and traditions. This is already explained on by director of Institute of language and culture. We only are tasked with the governance aspect that is in embedded in our community training as mentioned earlier. The specific projects highlighted, that was the *vanua* community programme that I have already highlighted in the earlier question.

The monitoring and evaluation. The community training programme develops action plans which are then monitored by the provincial councils and also the TAB monitoring and evaluation team.

Question No. 8:

How has the iTaukei Affairs Board work to improve governance and accountability at village level?

One is the strengthening of iTaukei development forums. This includes the village council, *tikina* council and also the provincial councils. Village guideline was adopted after the delay in the village bylaws. Former Roko Tui were brought in to conduct a review, and we are finalizing the village guidelines as we speak. The village and also the *tikina* were also encouraged to present their annual reports yearly to capture activities and also aspirations. This is part of our building a programme, and we are getting into monitoring that they all provide the annual reports. We are trying to do that this financial year, so we can present a full annual report to the committee and also to the Government.

Village Profiling and Integrated Village Development Plan (IVDP), The VP Exercise enabled the compilation of crucial village data for planning and decision making which was then captured in the IVDP. The IVDP Document allowed the Communities to access funding for Community improvement projects sources from Government and Non-Government sources.

The challenges faced or encountered, as in part of the question during this period with the Rural, urban drift, rural youth leaving for overseas employment on longer terms. I say this as a challenge, because people who should be developing the village, people who should be utilizing the resources, people who should feed the markets, carry on the building repairs, footpaths, and also the social projects, and also those that perform the traditional roles, they are not in the village.

So this is a challenge that the iTaukei Affairs Board is working on, and as partly answered the question is by the honourable Member. What we have also developed is the urban strategy. We've gone into our informal settlements lately, two in Vatuwaqa, and also one in Nasinu. It has just started, and we have allocated a special

unit to look after this, called the urban services unit in the iTaukei Affairs Board. This was also part of the recommendation by the review team that we bring back the Urban Services Unit.

It was there before, but pre 2003 I think, it was taken out of the institution, and now we are bringing it back to deal with these communities. We have realized what has been raised by the honourable members, especially the youths. So what we've done, we've got into these communities, we've tried to determine their status, those who want to go back to the village, and those that can move through the formal settlements that are there, especially the iTaukei communities. We're still developing our data and also the findings that we've found from these communities as a way forward in addressing all the issues that are in there. I want to assure the Committee, Mr. Chairman, that we are working on this as we speak.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, are you saying that the villages are affected because the youths from those respective villages are going to work overseas under the seasonal work programme. Is that so?

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- We are only concerned with the duration. Some are going for four years. What we have proposed to NEC, in fact, one of our officers right now, in a workshop with them, we developed a package that is seven months.

We are working with the Maoris from New Zealand. Packages just for seven months, and also the income that they earn is monitored by the board, and it is used for the community development and also the family development.

What we are trying to say is the longer they go, the more affected the village is and also their families. That is something that we are still discussing with the NEC. And also NEC is now interested in a programme that we have developed. It involves certain districts in Serua, district of Nuku, and also the village of Nabukaluka in Naitasiri.

Question No. 9:

The iTaukei Affairs Board has worked closely with government agencies and NGOs to improve service delivery through several initiatives, integrated approach. I've already touched on this, and our role is to facilitate to the communities.

Secondly, is the capacity building in training programmes for village leaders and communities to strengthen governance and accountability mechanisms. These programmes are financed through the collaborations with government and non-government entities.

Sustainable development partnerships with NGOs have focused on projects like conservation, cultural preservation, and also economic empowerment. An example was in 2020 when *TC Harold* hit Fiji, the iTaukei Affairs Board worked in collaboration with the NDP for the supply of power tools to nine districts in Kadavu and three districts in Lau. The cash for work initiative and also facilitated carpentry training conducted by FNU for 100 students in the Kadavu province. This allowed the communities to make use of their resources and rebuild their homes and lives.

Question No. 10:

How did the iTaukei Affairs Board contribute to national initiatives? First is on Community Based climate adaptation. Collaborated with the stakeholders to integrate traditional knowledge into climate adaptation. This includes promoting sustainable land use and conservation practices in iTaukei villages. This was conducted to the NGOs such as Vinaka Fiji in the province of Ba in 2015.

The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programmes. This was done with Red Cross and NDMO, the partnerships with NGOs, and government agencies the policy advocacy and post disaster recovery. These efforts reflect terms commitment to planning cultural heritage with modern approach carried out by the conservation unit and our 14 PC offices.

Question No. 11:

The key challenges faced, in promoting gender equality within the patriarchal structure of traditional iTaukei society. This is indeed a very good question. And also, we also found this to be a sensitive question, when asked within the iTaukei circles.

First of all, the cultural norms and traditions. Traditionally, iTaukei customs often emphasize male leaders approach, which can limit the opportunity for women to participate in the decision making processes at the village level. This is an area that we are working on with our partner organization, especially UN women, in trying to address this issue.

Resistance to change. Efforts to promote gender equality may be met with resistance from some community members who view such initiatives as conflicting with cultural values and traditions. The limited representation and also balancing modern and traditional values.

TAB has a daunting task and a sensitive role to navigate the delicate balance between respecting traditional customs and aligning with national and international commitments to gender Equality.

Resource constraints. Limited financial and human resources can hinder implementation of programmes aimed at empowering women, addressing gender disparities.

Awareness and education. Lack of awareness and education about the benefits of gender equality.

Despite these challenges, TAB has made efforts to address gender inequality by collaborating with organizations like the Ministry of Women, UN Women, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, and integrating gender perspectives into community development programmes.

Our Assistant *Roko Tui* have all received gender based violence training from these organizations. This effort seemed to create a more inclusive environment while respecting cultural heritage.

We also have had sessions coordinated by UN Women and the Ministry of Women to address this with Provincial Council chairman in the 14 provinces, and we have encouraged the participation of women at all level of the iTaukei traditional and also administration structure.

Question No. 12:

The future plans. What are the board's plan and goals for the upcoming years? How does the board plan to build on its past achievement? The iTaukei Affairs Board team management strategy for 2025 is part of its broader SDP for 2025 to 2030. This strategy reflects a transitional phase aimed at modernizing operations, promoting good governance and enhancing service delivery to iTaukei communities.

Key elements include alignment with national goals, focus on inclusivity, institutional review and strengthening, collaboration and partnership, flexibility and adaptability, programme evaluation and impact reporting. Also, the board has learned a lot from the past moving forward, and it has transformed from a secretarial role to a more operational role.

It has learned to operate in political environments and also different challenging scenarios, and survived to the state and era.

Question No. 13:

How is the Board incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals into its policy framework and strategic planning? This has been cascaded through our Current SDP and other planning documents, capturing National Development Goals as well in the process. The establishment of the TAB Board subcommittees has assisted the Board to realign its policy framework and strategic direction aided by our Solesolevaki Framework with iTaukei Institutions will also assist.

Question No. 14:

When will the board submit its annual report? The board is currently finalizing 2022 and 2023, and 2023-2024 annual report, and we will submit this soon.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much PS and the team. I believe we have completed the other portion, part of it to just respond the team has already been alluded to. On that note, I ask honourable members if there are any supplement questions for the team.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, thank you for the presentation. We have heard a lot of empowerment of our iTaukei communities. There was a proposal to open up a development bank to assist the iTaukei community. How far has that gone?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- M. Chairman through you, that proposal is with the team, and they are currently putting together the governance framework. It will not be a fully-fledged commercial bank. It will start a credit facility before we transition to a financial institution.

HON. P.K. BALA.- We also heard about Village's Programme under Ministry of iTaukei. There was an announcement made by the honourable Prime Minister in terms of beautification of villages. If I read it correctly, there were plans, I mean I do not know what is the number. How you people have prioritized. But how many villages have been included for this financial year to have that program in place. The beautification of villages. And the other thing that I want to know is villages in the municipality or peri-urban or in rural.

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- Mr. Chairman, the Scheme is called the Village Improvement Scheme and lately it has been renamed to Village Transformation Initiative. It includes development and also the beautification of the villages.

Last financial year we had around 40 villages mainly due to the cost of projects involved. So, now we have left the evacuation centres and also the community halls, new construction to the Ministry of Rural and Maritime, and we have carried out the smaller developments within the villages.

For this financial year, we are looking at over 300 villages to be assisted from the \$2 million administrative budget for villages.

HON. P.K. BALA.- This financial year?

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- This financial year.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, we have also heard from your presentation about women empowerment. And I read somewhere that there were some plans to open up the Rural Resource Centre for Women in terms of empowerment. How far has it gone?

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- The Rural Resource Centre for Women. It is done jointly with the Ministry of Women and also the Sogosoqo Vakamarama iTaukei. The plans are all with the Ministry of Women. I believe that they are looking at some of these rural areas for this year. For the villages, they are also encouraged to have their own resource centres that we have developed over the years with them and also the Ministry of Women.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Mr. Chairman, I have two supplementary questions.

One, the achievements. I understand that the *Turaga ni Koro* go through trainings on a quarterly basis. Do the community health workers also go through some form of training in regards to their roles and responsibilities and how often are these trainings conducted?

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- Through you, Mr. Chairman trainings are conducted for the community health workers, some quarterly and some done on annual basis by the Ministry of Health. And also, they have close contact with the district nurses especially in the districts and also in the remote areas as well.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- My second supplementary question is on disaster recovery efforts. I understand that the iTaukei Trust Board and the Provincial Council offices play pivotal roles in supporting affected communities. Apart from that role, does the Board conduct awareness to the affected villages on how to address the challenges in the future?

MR. J. TOGANIVALU.- The Disaster Risk Awareness Programme is conducted by our Conservation Officers in the Province. They are tasked with conducting disaster risk management programmes in our communities to prepare communities for disasters as such.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman through you, my questions to the PS and this is in regards to Levuka. Levuka being a heritage site in the UNESCO and the Department for Heritage and Arts with the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs. There were some announcement made by the honourable Minister in Parliament of some funding allocation with regards to some of the projects in Levuka, whether these projects have been implemented.

As we have heard a number of times from the Levuka Town Council and the people of Levuka and we have also visited Levuka a number of times and we have been advised that from the 14,000 plus population, it has decreased to 9,000 population numbers now.

The residents are finding very difficult with this strict guidelines given, to do any repair and maintenance of the structures.

The other point is, if there is a cyclone and the members of the Committee will agree that most of the structures will be blown away., So one is, according to the announcements whether those projects have been implemented and whether there is any funding available or whether residents can be assisted with some funding for them to do the maintenance and repair the structures.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Mr. Chairman through you, \$1.5 million is set aside for Levuka Old Heritage Project. \$500,000 is specifically for the National Trust of Fiji to renovate the old town hall and that renovation is ongoing. \$1 million is to renovate the 22 heritage buildings in Levuka and the building that you are referring to honourable Member.

We have just had eight volunteers from Japan, funded through JICA who finished the scoping last week and they will go back and give us the report. While we wait for the report, we are mobilizing the \$1 million which is going to be given out to residence of Levuka to renovate their house. It is not a simple straightforward renovation because these are heritage buildings, so we will wait for the recommendation from our Japanese team which should be with us next month and then we will roll out the assistance to Levuka residents.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much PS and your team. I just want to highlight on the two questions. One is on the 2019-2020 annual report, the strategic objective 5.1 was not detailed and provided. If it can be provided to us.

Secondly, while looking at your 2018-2019 annual report, your strategic objective 3.2 is missing from the report which talks about the platform 3 of the economic development of the iTaukei, if it also can be provided to us.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Okay, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I believe that is all from the Committee. On that note, I thank the Permanent Secretary and your team for being here with us this afternoon. At this juncture, I would like to sincerely thank you for availing yourselves for this public hearing session. We thank you for your time and hope that you will avail yourselves for any further queries or clarification that the Committee may have on these annual reports. With those concluding remarks, I now close this public hearing session. *Vinaka saka vakalevu na nomudou yaco mai.*

The Committee adjourned at 3.45 p.m.