



STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Consolidated Review Report on the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Fiji Roads Authority Annual Reports



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
Parliamentary Paper No. 105 of 2025

September 2025

Table of Contents	Page
CHAIRMAN’S FORWARD.....	3
ACRONYM.....	5
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	6
1.0 INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Committee Procedures	
2.0 COMMITTEE DELIBERATION AND ANALYSIS	8
2.1 Background of Fiji Roads Authority	
3.0 KEY FINDINGS	10
4.0 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION	12
5.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND GENDER ANALYSIS	14
6.0 CONCLUSION	15
7.0 COMMITTEE MEMBERS SIGNATURE	16
8.0 ANNEXURE	17

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Social Affairs report on *the Consolidated Review of the Fiji Roads Authority Annual Report 2019-2020 and 2020-2021*.

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

Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) is responsible for the planning, development and maintenance of Fiji's road infrastructure. The infrastructure primarily consists of approximately 6,360 km of roads and 1,388 bridges, 21 jetties, 10 landings and 9000 streetlights.

Most of FRA's roading assets are primarily managed through out-sourced contracts with the private sector.

FRA's roles also include the following:

1. Managing the land provision, network planning, designing constructing, maintaining, renewing and generally managing the use of all roads.
2. Management of traffic including road design, traffic signs and marking.
3. Provision and management of road safety.
4. Issuing over-width, height and length limit.
5. Planning and management of road survey and designs.
6. Providing advice, programme management service, design and supervision services for capital work programmes.

To achieve its goals FRA adopts sustainable procurement process. These procurement processes are done in a manner the FRA meets its core responsibilities whereby achieving its value for money.

Some challenges faced by the Fiji Road Authority during 2019 -2021 are as follows

- Lack of Resource
- Accelerated deterioration of roads due to wet weather conditions
- Heavy and overloaded vehicle on the road
- Lack of design and capacity from local contractors
- Congestion of urban centres
- Covid-19 Restrictions

I sincerely thank Mr Apisai Ketenilagi, the Chief Executive Officer, Fiji Roads Authority and his executives for their valuable contributions to this review process.

I am thankful to the Hon. Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure, Hon. Alipate Tuicolo, Hon. Viam Pillay, Hon Aliko Bia and Hon Praveen

Bala for their invaluable contribution and support. I extend my sincere appreciation to Hon Jone Usamate, for his contribution and support being an alternate member.

Finally, I thank the Secretariate for their hard work and dedication in compiling this report.

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

...



Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
Chairperson

ACRONYM

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BCM	Business Continuity Management
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment
FRA	Fiji Roads Authority
MWH	Montgomery Waston Harza Global Inc
NDP	National Development Plan

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 SO 109 (2) and 110 (1) (a)-(d) & (f).

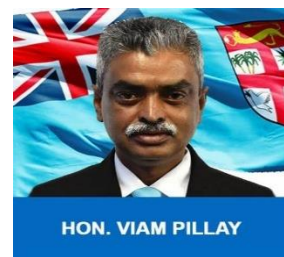
The Members of Committee are:



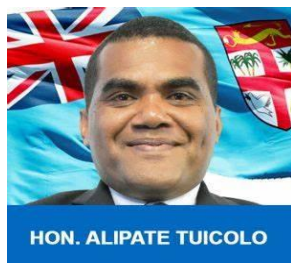
Chairperson
Government Member



Deputy Chairperson
Government Member



Opposition Member



Government Member



Opposition Member



Government Member

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Fiji Roads Authority Annual Reports 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 was tabled in Parliament on 9th August 2024 and referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs pursuant to Standing Order 109 (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 FRA Reports commenced in March 2025. The Committee read through the reports, prepared questions and seek clarifications on key issues of interest from the Fiji Roads Authority.

The Committee held a Public Submission with the Fiji Roads Authority on 2nd April 2025.

Upon receipt of all pertinent information pertaining to the Committee's queries, the report was subsequently endorsed on 15th September 2025.

The Committee received responses from the Fiji Roads Authority, 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

2.1 Introduction

Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) is a corporate body governed under the leadership of its Board of Directors reporting to the Ministry of Public Works Transport and Metrological Services previously known as Ministry for Infrastructure and Meteorological Services. FRA manages their roading asset primarily through all out-sourced contracts with the private sector. The exception to this is certain maintenance work carried out in the outer island by the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development.

FRA ensure that roads, bridges, jetties, crossing, streetlights and traffic signals maintenance services & capital works are delivered to the stakeholders to its standard. This was achieved through the business continuity programme which not only identifies and documents work around for key services but is also integrated with the corporate strategy to support the successful achievement of mission and objectives through continued delivery to the agreed standard.

FRA is therefore corporately implementing a Business Continuity Management (BCM) policy as part of an ongoing process of the current risk assessment in concurrence with the approved FRA Risk Management Framework. Its purpose is to ensure that the organization can continue to deliver its key services, while maintaining the safety and security of staff should any disruption or a threat arise.

2.2 Analysis

The Committee reviewed and analysed the Fiji Roads Authority Annual Report (2019-2020 & 2020-2021) and made one consolidated report.

During the review it was noted that the Fiji Road Authority Act (2012) commenced on 5th January 2012 and four amendments were made to the FRA Act between 2012 to 2021.

The Social Affairs Committee made the following site visits during the review of the report.

Date	Organisation	Location
6/05/2025	Balenabelo Modular Bridge	Nadroga
	Nadralla Sangam School/ Conua District School/Nawamagi Village/ Kavanagasau College	Sigatoka
7/05/2025	Saravi Road	Nadi
	Nadi Sigatoka Road Upgrades, Savalau Road & Carreras Road	
9/05/2025	Savusavu Crossing	Rakiraki
13/05/2025	Kavula Village and Banikea Village	Bua
14/05/2025	Nukusere and Duavata Secondary Roads	Macuata
15/05/2025	Korovuli Bridge	Seaqaqa

	Vesidrua Bridge	Seaqaqa
	Naviavia Crossing	Wailevu West
	Nakasava Crossing	Bua

3.0 KEY FINDINGS

The Committee conducted thorough review of the 2019 – 2021 Annual Reports and identified the following key findings:

- 3.1 The Fiji Roads Authority has taken back “in – house” several key functions that had been outsourced to MWH after their termination of contract in 2016, which led to the recruitment of several engineers and project support staffs.
- 3.2 The Committee noted that COVID -19 Pandemic affected FRA whole operation.
- 3.3 The Committee noted that FRA plans to increase the engagement of local contractors for development projects which are part of the National Development Plan (2024-2029).
- 3.4 The Committee noted there are issues that impact FRA work on maintaining and rehabilitation of roads, bridges and jetties.
- 3.5 The Committee noted that there was a rapid increase in traffic congestion
- 3.6 The committee noted that there was limited capacity in infrastructure
- 3.7 The committee noted that the payment structure for subcontractors affected the delivery of work
- 3.8 The committee noted that lack of availability of road material and issue of gravel extraction licenses that affected the road development project.
- 3.9 The committee noted that lack of proper coordination between the Fiji Roads Authority and Municipal Council regarding maintenance of roads, streetlight and drainage in municipal boundaries which affects the rate payers and general public.
- 3.10 The committee noted that there is a lack of proper monitoring system on the part of FRA towards the contractor’s undertaking maintenance & rehabilitation work and other projects.
- 3.11 The committee noted that FRA engages rural communities or social clubs with small work contracts to do the cleaning of debris, grass cutting and cutting of fallen trees after flooding and cyclone.
- 3.12 The committee noted that FRA has changed from awarding divisional contracts to awarding smaller zone contracts that will benefit local contractors.

- 3.13 The committee noted that FRA has a total of \$11 Billion of assets as of 2015.
- 3.14 The committee noted that FRA conducts an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) before undertaking any new projects as part of their environmental and social responsibility.
- 3.15 The committee noted that FRA has a severe shortage of technical workers, road engineers and project managers
- 3.16 The Committee noted that the Public Works Department has started constructing new rural roads on a pilot cut base.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the following

- 4.1 Fiji Roads Authority must ensure that it maintains operational efficiency, effectiveness and quality control, as it moves to carry out functions it used to be outsourced.
- 4.2 FRA should strategically improve its supply chain process.
- 4.3 FRA must support local contractors and provide sufficient training and monitoring so that they deliver work standards.
- 4.4 FRA must liaise with various stakeholders to overcome the following challenges:
 - 4.41 FRA to work closely with the respective Ministries and all stakeholders to enhance the road extension program to ease traffic congestion
 - 4.42 FRA should improve its payment system so that sub-contractors are paid on time.
 - 4.43 FRA should collaborate with the Ministry of Land and Ministry of iTaukei Affairs to access raw materials for road development.
- 4.5 FRA must ensure maintenance and upgrading of roads, streetlights, footpaths and drainage to alleviate complaints from rate payers.
- 4.6 FRA must improve the monitoring and performance of all contractors undertaking maintenance, rehabilitation work and other projects in accordance with their contractual agreements.
- 4.7 FRA must ensure the vegetation work program provided by the local community is timely and meets the required standard
- 4.8 FRA is encouraged to continue with the small zone contracts.
- 4.9 FRA must carry out a valuation of all its assets and ensure such valuations are carried out regularly.
- 4.10 FRA must ensure compliance with EIA and address all environmental issues before project approval and implementation.
- 4.11 FRA must work with relevant authorities to relocate people who have settled in areas that has been earmarked for road infrastructure development.
- 4.12 FRA must strengthen its procurement process to ensure that bitumen is available when required.
- 4.13 FRA must continue its staff's participation in International Road Federation program and find other ways to address skill shortages.

4.14 The collaboration between FRA and PWD must be strengthened

5.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND GENDER ANALYSIS PROVIDED BY THE FIJI ROADS AUTHORITY:

SDG	KEY CONTRIBUTION	DETAILS
SDG 9 – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusiveness and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	Key projects completed under TIISP include: Kings Road Upgrade, Queens Road Upgrade and Foster Road Projects – over 80km of national highway on Viti Levu was rehabilitated. TIISP also include a project to undertake the design and due diligence of key bridges and jetties on Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.	Civil Works packages included increase culverts and drainage to make it more climate resilient and improve access to markets. Both projects had inclusive designs including streetlights, village footpaths, bus shelters, raised pedestrian crossings, drop kerbs etc. The new bridges and jetties being designed to improve climate resilience and contain gender inclusive features. The first of these bridges will commence construction as part of the Critical Bridge Resilience Project in late 2025
SDG 11 – Make Cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	Key projects completed under TIISP include: Kings Road Upgrade, Queens Road Upgrade and Foster Road Projects – over 80km of national highway on Viti Levu was rehabilitated. The Critical Bridge Resilience Project will replace aging bridge assets. The design of these bridges has been completed under TIISP.	The Civil works projects have all been designed to ensure a minimum of iRAP 3 safety to improve the safety of drivers and pedestrians. Drainage and culverts have been increased in its size to promote resilience and sustainability, and gender inclusive designs have been implemented. The future Critical Bridge Resilience Project will continue this work by replacing aging bridge assets with resilient and sustainable assets that have a 100-year design life. The new bridges will improve the safety to road and pedestrian users and contain gender inclusive design features.

5.2 Gender Analysis

5.2.1 The Fiji Roads Authority fosters a no gender discrimination rule in its workplace. As part of the ongoing initiative on this matter, FRA works very closely with ADB to strengthen the social safeguards on gender equality at the forefront of the FRA's plans going forward.

5.2.2 Table below shows the FRA staffs based on gender

Year	Male	Female
2019-2020	(78%)	(22%)
2020 - 2021	(79%)	(21%)

6.0 CONCLUSION

The Committee after having reviewed the Consolidated Reports of Fiji Roads Authority 2019 – 2021 and is of the opinion that the directions and plans set by the Authority is on track to achieve its intended goals but there are still areas for improvement.

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	
Hon. Alikia Bia	
Date: 15 th September 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/>



**Responses for the Standing Committee
on Social Affairs Regarding Fiji Roads
Authority (FRA) Annual Reports (FY
2019/2020 & 2020/2021)**

Question No. 1: What were the major achievements highlighted in the annual report for the Financial Year 2019/2020 and 2020/2021?

The FRA faced significant challenges during FY 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, predominantly due to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, which led to operational restrictions and material supply chain shortages that impacted project deliveries. Despite these obstacles, FRA successfully completed the following roading infrastructure projects:

Key Road Projects (2019/2020) breakdown per division:

Central Division	Western Division	Northern Division
Kasavu Slip	Nadarivatu Nadrau Road Upgrades	Koroinasolo Road / Kavula Banieka Road
Namata Village Access Road	Draubuta Access Road	Dreketilailai - Lektululevu Road
Nakorosule - Nawaisomo Road (Stages 1 & 2)	Nadi Road Upgrades	
Kiuva - Kaba Peninsula Road		

Bridges, Jetties, and Crossings (2019/2020)

Eastern Division	Western Division
Nakodou Crossing (Koro Circular Rd) Low Level Crossing	Savusavu Crossing in Ra
	Modular Bridges Package 2 (Western Division): Balenabelo and Navaga
	Emuri Irish Crossing

Key Road Projects (2020/2021)

Central Division	Northern Division
Tamavua-i-wai Bridge	Lagi-Duavata Village Access Road
Waidamu Bridge	Korovuli Bridge
	Nakasava Bridge
	Korovula Bridge
	Vesidrua Bridge
	Low-Level Crossing Package 3 (Northern Division): Naiyarabale, Waibula, Taqaniwaqa, Naviavia Road

Question No. 2: What are the key performance targets set by FRA, and how do they align with Fiji's overall development mission?

FRA recently launched its inaugural strategic plan (August 2024) encompassing key performance targets aimed at aligning with Fiji's national development goals. This strategic plan outlines a new vision and mission alongside medium- long term objectives for FY2024/25 to FY2028/29. The plan prioritizes 5 key goals which are:

- a. Establishing clear strategic directions and implementation frameworks.
- b. Enhancing core technical expertise.
- c. Restoring essential technical systems.
- d. Developing FRA into a high-performing institution.
- e. Increasing the involvement of local contractors and consultants.

These targets align closely with Fiji's broader development mission by focusing on improving infrastructure and ensuring efficient delivery.

Question No. 3: How can FRA's performance targets align with Fiji's broader economic growth objectives?

FRA's performance targets are designed to bolster Fiji's National Development Goals, emphasizing the essential role of effective infrastructure in driving economic growth. The deterioration and insufficient capacity of transport infrastructure have highlighted the need for substantial investment, and as part of FRA's 10-year Infrastructure Development Plan, key initiatives include which are also aligned to the National Development Plan Goals:

- a. Continuous maintenance and rehabilitation of roads, bridges, and jetties.
- b. Enhancing the resilience and safety of road infrastructure.
- c. Building technical capacity for institutional strengthening.
- d. Addressing urban traffic congestion while improving rural connectivity
- e. Local contractor capacity building

These initiatives are critical to supporting sustainable economic growth in Fiji.

Question No. 4 a) how does FRA's approach to maintaining roads and infrastructure reflect its commitment to sustainability? b) What strategies can be implemented to ensure the long-term resilience of Fiji's infrastructure against adverse weather events?

- a. FRA's commitment to sustainability is evident through climate-resilient designs incorporated in its projects, adhering to international best practices and engineering standards. An example is the Vuniyasi Bridge in Nadi, which has a 100-year lifespan and improved drainage systems to sustain infrastructure.
- b. To enhance long-term resilience against adverse weather, FRA will prioritize:
 - Implementing climate-resilient designs in all infrastructure projects.
 - Regular assessments and adaptability in infrastructure planning.
 - Engaging with communities to build awareness of sustainability practices.

Question No. 5: How does FRA's sustainable procurement process contribute to its overall mission?

FRA's procurement process emphasizes open and fair competition, ensuring that projects are delivered to required standards and timelines. By developing an Annual Procurement Plan aligned with the Annual Work Plan and Asset Management Plan, FRA seeks to achieve value

for money and enhance capacity throughout all levels of infrastructure development. This strategic focus supports efficient procurement and project execution.

Question No. 6 a) What steps has FRA taken to improve operational efficiency and reduce costs? b) How has FRA's performance been evaluated against its strategic goals?

- a. FRA has established an outsourcing model for supervision of major projects to external consultants to manage the project within the timeline and budget.
In addition, FRA Board has established sub-committees namely "Procurement and Technical" for which the primary objective is to deliberate on the operational aspects of the organization. Moreover, the Audit Finance and Risk sub- committee is in place to monitor budget performance to ensure cost efficiency and cash flow management. Furthermore, Risk Compliance and Assurance function is in place to ensure proper governance processes are being followed.
- b. As highlighted earlier, FRA's strategic plan was launched in August 2024 and this establishes goals for FRA to evaluate performance.

Question No. 7

Financial Performance

- a. **How did the Fiji Roads Authority manage its budget during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years?**
FRA managed to deliver budget expectation, however the authority was restricted due to the impact of COVID – 19 pandemic. Therefore the budget for the respective financial years was underspent.
- b. **What were the major sources of revenue and key areas of expenditure?**
FRA is fully funded by Government grant and ADB/WB loan for Transport Infrastructure Investment Sector Project.
FRA's budget is divided into two categories operational and a capital budget. Main areas of expenditure under the capital budget were new capital projects, maintenance and renewal programmes. The operational budget caters for the operational expenses for the organization.
- c. **How does FRA ensure the accuracy and reliability of its financial statements?**
FRA ensures timely internal and external audits of financial statements as required by the FRA act.
- d. **What role does the Ministry of Economy play in the approval of funds appropriated through the annual budget?**
The MOE scrutinizes the utilization of budget on a quarterly basis before releasing the grant for the next quarter.
- e. **What role does flexibility in budget management play in FRA's ability to respond to unexpected events?**
Budget flexibility enables FRA to respond to unplanned situations, such as emergency restoration, which allows reallocation of budget to priority areas in rehabilitating affected road infrastructure.

Question No. 8 a) What were the major infrastructure projects completed during these periods? b) Were there any significant delays or cost overruns in these projects? If so, what were the causes?

- a. Major infrastructure projects completed in FY 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 include numerous road upgrades and bridge constructions as highlighted previously.

Key Road Projects (2019/2020)

Central Division	Western Division	Northern Division
Kasavu Slip	Nadarivatu Nadrau Road Upgrades	Koroinasolo Road / Kavula Banieka Road
Namata Village Access Road	Draubuta Access Road	Dreketilailai - Lektululevu Road
Nakorosule - Nawaisomo Road (Stages 1 & 2)	Nadi Road Upgrades	
Kiuva - Kaba Peninsula Road		

Bridges, Jetties, and Crossings (2019/2020)

Eastern Division	Western Division
Nakodou Crossing (Koro Circular Rd) Low Level Crossing	Savusavu Crossing in Ra
	Modular Bridges Package 2 (Western Division): Balenabelo and Navaga
	Emuri Irish Crossing

Key Road Projects (2020/2021)

Central Division	Northern Division
Tamavua-i-wai Bridge	Lagi-Duavata Village Access Road
Waidamu Bridge	Korovuli Bridge
	Nakasava Bridge
	Korovula Bridge
	Vesidrua Bridge
	Low-Level Crossing Package 3 (Northern Division): Naiyarabale, Waibula, Taqaniwaqa, Naviavia Road

- b. While there were delays in project timelines, primarily due to resource availability and the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, however the majority of projects remained within budget. However, some timelines were inevitably pushed back due to these challenges.

Question No. 9: What challenges did FRA face during the reporting period, and how were they addressed?

FRA encountered several challenges, including:

- a. Resource availability due to external supply chains.
- b. Accelerated infrastructure deterioration
- c. prolonged adverse weather.
- d. Urban traffic congestion.
- e. Contractor capacity and COVID-19 restrictions.

FRA adapted by implementing zonal work plans and engaging closely with stakeholders and contractors to maintain road networks within zones, despite the challenges. This was coordinated in line with the COVID provisions set by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services.

Question No. 10

Asset Management

- a. How has the value of FRA's assets changed over these years?**

The last valuation of FRA assets was done in 2015 which amounted to \$11 billion. FRA faces challenge of expertise not available locally to undertake such exercise and is in the process re-evaluating its assets through consultants.

- b. What measures are in place to ensure the maintenance and longevity of these assets?**

FRA maintains a timely schedule of maintenance cycle as per the Routine and Periodic programme of activity works to ensure longevity of assets. FRA also closely monitors quality of works in accordance with the required standards.

Question No. 11: How can FRA enhance its contractor capacity while focusing on local resources?

Currently, FRA is revising the technical and financial contract requirements within the maintenance programme to suit local contractor competency.

Question No. 12

Environmental and Social Impact

- a. How did FRA address environmental and social concerns in its projects?**

FRA has Environment Impact Assessment that addresses the environmental and social concerns. FRA involves multiple stakeholders such as focus groups, consultations, grievances readdress mechanism (GRMs) to gather social concerns and implement the same in project delivery. This was facilitated via virtual interactions due to the COVID restrictions.

- b. Were there any significant environmental or social challenges faced during these periods?**

Yes.

- Restrictions
- Participation of relevant stakeholders
- Submission of timely and accurate data/information

Question No. 13 a) How has FRA engaged with local communities and stakeholders in planning and executing its projects? b) What feedback mechanisms are in place to ensure community concerns are addressed?

- a. FRA prioritizes community engagement through regular meetings and consultations with stakeholders to ensure transparency and inclusivity. It employs focus groups to gather diverse feedback, especially addressing gender disparities, thereby facilitating active community participation throughout project development and implementation. FRA also organizes stakeholder consultation to gather feedbacks in regards to project planning and execution.
- b. Constructive feedbacks are gathered, analyzed and in many instances incorporated during planning and designing phase of projects.

Question No. 14: What challenges does FRA face in resource availability, and how can these be addressed?

FRA relies heavily on road making materials such as bitumen and aggregates which is either sourced by a single supplier or due to non-availability of material at project source site. These delays the completion of programmed works. FRA is encouraging contractors to import their own bitumen and is also engaging resource owners to better manage availability of aggregates.

Question No. 15: How does FRA promote gender equality in its recruitment and training processes?

Recruitment:

- FRA upholds Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) as outlined in our staff manual, Section 18.1 (a) & (b).
- While we cannot restrict applications from men for engineering roles, we actively encourage female participation by including the statement: "Women are encouraged to apply" in our job advertisements.
- We are working towards achieving gender balance in interview panels to minimize bias. However, for technical roles, most senior-level technical staff are currently male, which poses a challenge in achieving equal representation in these panels.

Training & Development:

- FRA ensures equal access to training for both male and female staff.
- To address women in leadership positions, FRA has collaborated with Australian Aid and Ethos to provide Inclusive Leadership for Women training, aimed at preparing women for senior roles. This is inclusive of all other training opportunities provided by FRA.

Question No. 16

Future Outlook

a. What are FRA's strategic priorities for the coming years?

FRA's strategic plan identifies the key strategic priorities for the next 5 years which are as follows has outlined key goals as outlined in question 2. Other immediate priorities include;

- a. Establishing clear strategic directions and implementation frameworks.
- b. Enhancing core technical expertise.

- c. Restoring essential technical systems.
- d. Developing FRA into a high-performing institution.
- e. Increasing the involvement of local contractors and consultants.

b. How does FRA plan to address any identified challenges or areas for improvement?

FRA conducts half year business review on its performance, we review and formulate strategies to realign organizational directions. FRA also has an annual internal assurance programme in place which focuses on independent appraisal on key controls and processes.

Question No. 17: How does FRA's commitment to building resilient infrastructure align with SDG 9?

In line with Goal 9 seeks to build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation FRA's strategic plan is well aligned with the SDG goal in building resilient infrastructure, e.g. design life for bridges 100 years and road pavement 10 years. FRA's roading infrastructure designs incorporate climate resilient aspects such as raising of roads and bridges especially in flood prone areas. FRA also seeks to incorporate innovation in project designs and measure the same against industry/international standards.

Question No. 18: When will FRA submit its outstanding Annual Reports?

FRA has submitted the FY 2021/2022 annual report to the line ministry. Other pending annual reports are currently work in progress and will be submitted accordingly.

ENDS...

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

FIJI ROADS AUTHORITY 2019-2020 AND 2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORTS

SUBMITTEE: **Fiji Roads Authority**

VENUE: **Big Committee Room, Parliament**

DATE: **Tuesday, 2nd April, 2025**

VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AFFAIRS HELD IN THE BIG COMMITTEE ROOM ON TUESDAY, 2nd APRIL, 2025 AT 1.51 P.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: **Fiji Roads Authority**

In Attendance:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| (1) Mr. Apisai Ketenilagi | - | Chief Executive Officer |
| (2) Mr. JoeL Mastapha | - | Financial Controller |
| (3) Mr. Ravi Lal | - | Head of Risk and Compliance |
| (4) Mr. Ashneel Singh | - | Manager Communications and Public Relations |
-

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable members, members of the media and the public, the secretariat, ladies and gentlemen. *Ni sa bula vinaka* and a very good morning to you all. It is a pleasure to welcome everyone to his public hearing session. At the outset for information purposes pursuant to Standing Order 111 of the Standing Orders of Parliament, all committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, the submission meeting is open to the public and the media and is aired live on the Parliament's channel, through the *Walesi* platform, live streamed through the Parliament's *Facebook* page.

For any sensitive information concerning the submission that cannot be disclosed in public, this can be provided to the committee either in private or in writing, but do note that this will only be allowed in specific circumstances, which include:

- i. National security matters;
- ii. Third party confidential information;
- iii. Personnel or human resources; or
- iv. Deliberations and discussions conducted in the development and finalisation of committee recommendations and reports.

I wish to remind honourable Members and our invited submittees that all comments and questions are to be addressed through the chairperson. Also be mindful that only invited submittees will be allowed to ask any questions or give comments to the Committee. This is a Parliamentary meeting, and all information gathered here is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act and the Standing Orders of Parliament. Please note that the Committee does not condone libel or slander or any allegations against any individual who is not present today to defend themselves. In terms of other protocols of this committee meeting, please be advised that whilst the meeting is in progress, movement within the meeting room will be restricted. There should be minimum usage of mobile phones. Answering of phones should be done outside this room, and all mobile phones to be on silent mode.

(Introduction of Committee Members)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Today the Committee will be hearing submission from the Fiji Roads Authority. This is in relations to the FRA 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 Annual Reports. I now invite the CEO and his team to introduce themselves and then begin with the presentations straight away after which there will be a question and answers sessions. Please also note that if

there are any questions from the honourable Members they may interject or we will wait to the end of the presentation to ask the question that is before end.

(Introduction of representatives from the Fiji Roads Authority)

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- Mr. Chairman, as has been outlined in the overhead in front of us, I hope you also received a copy on our response on the report that was tabled in relation to 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021 Annual Reports.

Question No. 1: What were the major achievements highlighted in the annual report for the Financial Year 2019/2020 and 2020/2021?

We encountered a bit of a constraint and restriction during COVID-19, but we were able to deliver some of the work that were given to us on that period of time. For example, in the Central we had about three crossings; some of the roads were upgraded in the Western side as well, including the Nadi corridor. For the North, most of these projects were rural-based such as, Koroinasolo Road, the one going out to the coast side of Macuata and Dreketilailai, Lekutulevu and inside of Bua District.

On bridges and crossings

We have a few crossings that were upgraded in the maritime islands, especially, the one in Koro; and, a long crossing in Savusavu in Ra. Similarly, some of the model upgrades were built in Balenabelo in Nadroga, in Navaga in the highland; and the Emuri Iris Crossing in Nadroga.

Key projects

Some of the key projects that we also did was Tamavua-i-wai. The one close to Delainavesi. We built the two Suva-bound lanes. Right now, a new two lane will be constructed by JICA. The two Lami-bound lanes are already completed; and the Waidamu Crossing in Vuci Road close to Raralevu. In the Northern Division, we also have the Lagi-Duavata Road that goes towards the tip end of Macuata, and the Korovuli Bridge, Nakasavu, Vesirua and the main Nabouwalu corridor, and crossings along the Northern Division, such as Narebale, Wainibula, Taqaniwaqa and all that.

Question No. 2: What are the key performance targets set by FRA, and how do they align with Fiji's overall development mission?

This had been established through our strategic plan. Our Strategic Plan was launched last year, and is one of the first Strategic Plans for FRA. It has five key priority study codes. One of them is to establish a clear direction on how we implement framework. Secondly, to enhance our core technical expertise. That is something that has been lacking with us and we have been struggling to maintain our technical expertise. That is one of the technical constraints that we encounter right now. And also trying to restore our system to assist us in how we can effectively and systematically manage our work, especially on our maintenance and asset management side of it.

Part of the strategic target there is to develop FRA into a high performing institution, a case-based institutional strength that we need to develop. We already engaged a consultant to

do our FRA reorganisation. One of the key targets is how we can promote and involve the local contractor to participate in delivering some of our road network projects. Historically, most FRA contractors were from overseas, while local contractors served as sub-contractors. Now, we are planning to expand and involve local contractors in delivering our road works.

Question No. 3: How can FRA's performance targets align with Fiji's broader economic growth objectives?

This is one of the key areas on how we align our targets with the national development goal. These goals set targets such as the continuous maintenance and rehabilitation of roads and bridges, the enhancement of resilient road safety and infrastructure - meaning we have to build infrastructure that can withstand disaster-related effects. Similarly, part of this involves building capacity within our organisation. One of the confronting issues right now is traffic congestion along the main corridor, especially the Suva-Lami and Nausori-Suva corridors. Additionally, we are exploring ways to promote local contractor participation.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, through you - at the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment. You have talked about traffic along Suva-Nausori corridor. What are some of FRA's plans to cur broad congestion?

MR. A. KETEILAGI.- Honourable Member, one of the challenges confronting us is the rapid increase in traffic on our roads and the limited capacity of infrastructure to cope with traffic demand. We have identified key sections of roads that need widening. For example, the Laqere – Nadera section has two lanes. We have already finalised the design and construction plan for that corridor. The investigation and design will start at Laqere junction of Ratu Dovi Road, linking to Fletcher Road to Laucala Bay Road. That is part of our capacity development plan, to widen these roads into four lanes. We will begin with the Laqere - Nadera section, as it currently has only two lanes. We have started with that.

One of the constraints we identified is that Laqere serves as the only entry and exit point towards Nasinu and Suva. There is a regional road provision connecting Makoi to Tuirara, which links directly to Valelevu and Veikoba, there is a proposed housing development at Veikoba. That is another plan we have already in place to provide an alternative traffic route. Additionally, we have received a lot development applications within Valelevu area. We foresee a lot of traffic in the new development in Valelevu Tax-Free Zone. Our plan aims a directly from Tuirara to Veikoba, link back to Khalsa Road so it can relieve the traffic.

Another ongoing development is the connection from Koronivia Road, which link directly to Savuniwaqa. Work is already in progress on the ground, and this route will serve as a bypass for Nakasi and surrounding areas that can bypass the frontage of Nakasi, so they can link back to Savuniwaqa back to Nakasi.

The other one is the Princess Road, from Reservoir Road to Khalsa. That is also an area identified as one of the congestion areas, especially those who come into town every morning. We are planning to widen the road into four lanes.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, through you, first of all, I would like to thank FRA for the two reports and the work done during those years. On Question No. 3:

- (a) continuous maintenance and rehabilitation of roads; and

(b) enhancing the resilience and the safety of road infrastructure.

Today, I see that most road accidents in Fiji are attributed to road conditions. On (a) - continuous maintenance and rehabilitation of roads is not happening, especially rural roads. Before there was periodic maintenance work done for rural roads, but it is not happening. The road users and the people of Fiji are suffering because of road conditions. As I said earlier, most accidents are attributed to road conditions. What is the reason, CEO? The Committee needs to know whether the issue is due to funding, contractors, or human resources? What is the real issue? As the Committee, we can decide on recommendation before reporting back to Parliament. When we travel through these roads, we notice that FRA's response during disasters to clear these access roads is very poor. We see FRA vehicles travelling back and forth, observing road conditions, yet nothing is being done to improve them. What is the real issue, or what is the real challenge, CEO?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- Mr. Chairman, through you, these are valid queries regarding the maintenance of rural roads which we have been observing closely. The issue is associated to the way contract have been structured. Currently, one contractor is responsible for managing the entire Central Division, and another for the Western Division. However, the contract has been stretched out, with rural roads being assigned to subcontractors who have not received a lot of attention, resources or support. As a result, subcontractors have failed to deliver the expected work. At the same time, there has been a lack of monitoring from our side. While the main contractor is responsible for managing the contract, they have delegated work to subcontractors without ensuring proper oversight. We have identified that contracts awarded on a single basis. The new contract will be awarded on a zone basis, ensuring that each contractor focuses on their respective zone, rather than relying on a single main contractor. Currently, the main contractor does not fully concentrate on rural road maintenance, instead passing the responsibility to subcontractors.

Additionally, the payment structure for subcontractors has affected performance and work delivery. When subcontractors are not paid on time, their ability to complete work efficiently is compromised. This issue has been identified, and we are looking to address it in the new contract. Ultimately this has impacted the timely maintenance of rural roads, which should be conducted on a routine and periodic basis as rightly mentioned. It is supposed to be based on a routine and periodic basis. But that is something that it is not really done on a cycle basis.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, through you, we have seen in past years where these contractors have been working with the subcontractors. There was not any issue in regards to the maintenance of rural roads or even the roads in the peri-urban and urban areas. When we go now and we travel through towns and cities we see the poor road conditions everywhere. So, how long it will take to fix whatever you have said, in regards to the contractors and the subcontractor issue? With your response, I do not see any issue of funds, but you have mentioned that there is an issue of contractor and subcontractor. It has taken quite a number of months or few years and still it is not addressed. And because of this poor road condition the people of Fiji are suffering. So any timeline to fix this, CEO?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, one of the key areas to identify is the lack of resources available in those areas. For example, the availability of material, you know, license source in those areas where the maintenance has to be carried out. So, what we have done basically, we have started to engage with our key stakeholders, for example, the

Ministry of Lands, the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the resource owners. We were trying to engage them, to see how we can assist the resource owners to secure the license because what happened the license that has been given is only on an annual basis. For example, whoever is a contractor coming to secure the license is only given on an annual basis.

So, what we are trying to do now is to, for example, one of the contractors has to source the material right from Nasinu right up to the highland because in the highland area there is no permanent license being available there to be able to maintain some of those roads. That is one of the constraints with us, readily available material to be transported. We have started talking with the Ministry of Lands and Ministry of iTaukei Affairs to see how we can promote the resource owners to at least readily secure the license for contracts to work in the respective rural areas. The license is already available but one of the constraint is the prolonged process of securing it. It almost takes six months to secure a gravel licence. We already have a consultation with the key stakeholders to see how we can assist the resource owner to secure a licence. At least when the contractor comes we work directly with them in sourcing the material from the source that is close to where they are going to work and the project that is going to happen in those respective areas.

Similarly, on the quality of maintenance. We are strengthening now our monitoring side. It is a bit lacking too from our side in trying to properly monitor the problem because the current contract solely rely on the contractor to deliver. But we are strengthening that area to try and see how our team can be regularly visit the site and monitoring the quality of work so that whatever the work is being done on the ground is done on a quality basis based on the standards that we want.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, I also wanted to express the similar sentiments that has been expressed by honourable Pillay in regards to the contracts. I mean, we as a Committee are not here to justify the work that was done in the past and the work that has been done now. We do not want to debate or argue. But the fact is that, these were the same contractors, the principal contractors and the local contractors who were doing the job. I mean, let us accept it. The other reason why there was a nominated principal contractor because in the past it was found that the contractors that Fiji Roads Authority used to appoint, if there was a defect, they did not have the type of money, capital to repay Fiji Roads Authority or get that work done. So, the idea was to get a principal contractor with a good background, reputable, but now most of the contractors that you are talking about, CEO they are out of job now, because of the formation of Public Works Department (PWD) but still there is some disconnect. Someone will have to come out very open and clear why this is happening. I will give you one example. In Ba, the Special Administrator told me that he has written about 20 to 30 emails to Fiji Roads Authority to fix roads in municipal boundaries. You go and see Ba Town today. Please take out your time and go and see the roads. Then you will know what we are talking about. There is constant complaints. So, we really do not know. When people go to the town council, they say it is FRA. So, where is this disconnect?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- Mr. Chairman, I think our team in the division are actually trying to cope with the demand that has been coming especially from the respective local town councils. I think they always focus on the main arterial road network, on the understanding that the township is managed by the council. We have told them now, the Government wants all road has to be taken care of by us. We are responsible for all the roads throughout Fiji including the township corridor. I think the only challenge now for the past few months is the weather. It was not favouring us to do maintenance. That is why we are concentrating the most on the one

that has been affected so much by the floods, the cyclone. But, yes, we have been asking them to sort of carry out a routine and regular site visit on all our roads especially the township corridor that needs to be paid a lot of attention because we have a lot of traffic and a lot of users - few coming up from Lautoka and Rakiraki as well. We have directed our team in the Western Division to make sure they focus on this township corridor because that is where a lot of users are.. As we said most of the rural road we are still maintaining and not PWD.

The PWD started constructing the new road on a pilot cut base where we just came in and upgrade it to a standard. That is where we are right now. But, yes, for the rural road, we still maintain most of the rural roads in the whole network throughout Fiji.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, while we are on municipalities, let us get over with these debates that is going on and we have heard from some of the municipal councils about this. But before going on that, you have said that some of your staff still feel that municipal roads are the responsibility of municipal councils. Those staff should not be sitting there because in the last 10 to 15 years all roads within the municipality has been taken by the FRA. So, they should know that, that is the first thing.

Secondly, we were told by some of the municipal councils during our visit that they want roads and the maintenance of street light to be given back to them. What is this saga going on?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- Mr. Chairman, through you, I am not aware of any discussion right now. As for now we are still maintaining all the street lights and traffic lights around Fiji. But there are some brief discussions being ongoing, but we have not really formalised any kind of discussion where most of this maintenance of the main township corridor including the road has to be transferred back to the local government. Nothing has been formally discussed with the key stakeholders right now. It is kind of informal discussion around that. But that is something that can be done. I do not see any problem if that can be transferred back to the council to maintain their own streetlights and traffic lights. That is the possibility.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, I understand the honourable members will agree, we have visited a number of municipal councils and have seen the road conditions. The councils have presented to the committee in regard to the number of requests they made to the Fiji Roads Authority to repair the streetlights, clean the drain and do road maintenance. They have informed the committee that either they are not attending it or it takes a very long time for them to respond to the request made to FRA. What is FRA is doing to improve on this, CEO?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- Through you, Mr. Chairman. We have been in a close consultation with most of the local councils, the Local Government, local city and town council representatives. For example, in the Suva City administration, we have been talking and discussing with them. We had a meeting with Suva Retailers Association. We had a site visit together to see some of the footpaths and streetlights that need to be attended, and that is how we have been coordinating closely with the council.

We still need to go out to the other three divisions, in the Western, Northern and Eastern divisions for a consultation. That is why we have been assisting most of them in upgrading the roads and streetlights along those corridors. One of the constraints with the streetlights in the West is we do not have any contractor right now. The one who used to work with us could not deliver the work. We are trying to engage a new contractor now. They are trying to mobilise

to catch up with some of the streetlight defects and the maintenance of most of our streetlights in the Western Division. That is an area we have been progressing on.

We have a request from Nausori Town Council too. We already had a meeting with them last week. Part of that was a close consultation with them on how we can assist in the maintenance of some of the streetlights and roads, including the drains in those areas. That is the kind of approach we are also going to undertake to the Western Division. Our team in the West has not been seeing that. We are going to encourage them to start talking with the Municipal Council in the Western Division, to see how they can work closely with them to identify some of the priority areas that need to be attended, especially on the footpath and streetlights that are pending for a number of years, as rightly mentioned by the honourable members. Mr. Chairman, our procurement process is being implemented on an open and fair basis. We always let out our tender links ...

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, may I intervene? We have missed four. They are talking about Vuniyasi Bridge. Am I right in saying that this bridge is on the main road?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- Yes.

HON. P.K. BALA.- We have identified that next to the bridge there is a temple and a creek.

Just two weeks ago we have observed there is a soil erosion. If it is not taken care of, this bridge will collapse. I thought that I will put it to you people. The other thing is, a few months ago, or almost two months ago, there was a bridge called Vuniyasi Bridge in the rural area that had been washed away. Is there any plans for that? The reason I am saying this is, the school students now have to come to town even though they are given extra fare and catch another transport to go to their respective schools. Is there any plan to rebuild that bridge?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- Mr. Chairman, through you - yes, we are planning to upgrade the bridge, which was built by the Fiji Sugar Corporation for rail transport. Later, provisions were made to allow vehicle access. However, the bridge has been washed out, and there is a plan to upgrade and replace it with a more resilient structure.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, while we are discussing the bridge, I would like to ask the CEO regarding the Irish crossings. I still remember that in the past FRA presentations, they mentioned there were over 400 Irish crossings. They were looking to see how slowly they can build a box-type crossings, similar to the one built in Korotari. Are there any Irish crossings currently under construction of that type? When we go around in the communities, across Fiji, particularly in Ba – such as the Ebuto Crossing, Maranitawa Crossing, and Varadoli Backroad, we see that many need replacement. What plans does FRA have to upgrade these Irish crossings and slowly turn them into box type culvert crossings?

MR. A. KETEILAGI.- Mr. Chairman, through you – since last week, we discussed our plan for the next financial year, which includes plan to build about 20 Irish crossings to box culverts. We might purchase 20 box culverts at a cost of \$800,000. This procurement plan will allow us to begin construction in the next financial year, with 20 crossings identified by the respective divisions. The distribution will be 10 crossings per division. This is in line with our plan to elevate bridge levels, ensuring accessibility during minor flooding events so that the public including public transportation can continue to use them.

Question No. 5: How does FRA's sustainable procurement process contribute to its overall mission?

As I said, our procurement process is done through Tenderlink. Every project or contract has to go through a request for tender and proposal before being let out to the market through Tenderlink. We also publicise tenders in local media and on our *Facebook* page. The reason for this is to encourage a more open and competitive bidding process, ensuring we maximise value for money when engage a supplier or contractors for road construction and the supply of road- making materials.

Question No. 6:

- (a) What steps has FRA taken to improve operational efficiency and reduce costs?**
- (b) How has FRA's performance been evaluated against its strategic goals?**

As briefly mentioned, we already established an outsourcing model for the supervision of our major contracts. One area where we identified operational inefficiencies is in the management of major projects. These projects requires a dedicated supervision team, which is why we have engaged external consultant – rather than relying solely on FRA staff – to assist in project management. This ensures that projects are managed efficiently and effectively, in accordance with timelines and budgets.

In the past, one of our key constraints was managing in-house projects while also handling routine operations. Due to time limitations, it became challenging to oversee both effectively. This is why we began engaging consultants to manage projects, allowing for smoother and more timely delivery. Consultant start managing the project so it can be delivered effectively and efficiently, they are closely monitored the project efficiently and effectively according to the timeline and the budgets.

Question No. 7:

Financial Performance

- (a) How did the Fiji Roads Authority manage its budget during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years?**

I would like to invite our Financial Controller who can assist me in response to this question.

MR. S. GOUNDAR.- Mr. Chairman and honourable Members, the Fiji Roads Authority managed to deliver the budget but due to the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, there were some restrictions and it affected the overall performance of FRA.

- (b) What were the major sources of revenue and key areas of expenditure?**

Sir, FRA's revenue is purely from Government grant and loan from ADB/WB loan. In terms of expenses, there are two budget lines - operating budget and capital budget. The operating budget caters for operational expenses and capital budget - is where maintenance, renewals and new capital projects.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, what is the percentage breakdown between capital and operational?

MR. S. GOUNDAR.- The operational budget is 4 percent or 5 percent of the capital budget.

(c) How does FRA ensure the accuracy and reliability of its financial statements?

As per the Act, the Fiji Roads Authority has internal and external audits every year to scrutinise its records.

(d) What role does the Ministry of Economy play in the approval of funds appropriated through the annual budget?

Now, the Ministry of Finance scrutinises the budget quarterly. Each quarter, they scrutinise the utilisation of the budget before issuing a new budget. Secondly, the other quarters focus on disbursement. They scrutinise the previous quarter before issuing the next.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, through you - do you get timely release of funds from the Ministry? I think last year, your line Minister mentioned something about funds from the Ministry of Finance.

MR. S. GOUNDAR.- Mr. Chairman, before the Ministry of Finance releases the funds, they check how much is in our account. Based on that, they allocate funds for the next quarter. For this year, we have been receiving our allocation on time.

(e) What role does flexibility in budget management play in FRA's ability to respond to unexpected events?

In the case of FRA, budget flexibility enables FRA to respond to unplanned situations, such as emergency restoration. In the last few months, we have experienced adverse weather conditions. This budget flexibility has enabled us to respond quickly to these unexpected events.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, through you - I totally disagree with what the member has said in regards to response time after disaster. During the last few floods I have seen in Ba, people themselves cleared the big trees from the Irish crossings, especially in the Maranitawa Crossing. The crossing sites that are washed away during floods has stayed there for weeks. And the response is that the timely funding was available and quickly they responded to such situations. CEO, if you can you can advise why this is happening because access is very important. After any flood or any disaster the people from the other side especially the school kids, the sick or the farmers they need to have access to move out from there even to get their food. So, why the response time is very late? I have seen that with my own eyes.

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- Mr. Chairman, we acknowledge some of our response time are not on a timely basis especially when the needs are there right on the ground. I think it is associated with the availability of our resources especially the contractors to be able to mobilize on a timely basis. We have identified that as one of the key weaknesses in our response to those areas and we have started developing some kind of initiative. As of this week, we have drawn

up some kind of memorandum of agreement with our rural communities. They will participate in this kind of small work contract such as clearing of debris from the crossings even the grass cutting and cutting of falling trees. They already in Rakiraki, Ba and Western Division this week. Part of that is a consultation in our rural communities to establish participants. We already advertised on the local media and the response was very positive from the rural communities. We acknowledge the fact that some of the rural areas are very isolated and it would be best to give the responsibility to those communities who are readily available and can respond directly to some of the emergency work that needs to be done. For example, the one that has been raised by the honourable Members, the clearing of debris and that is the kind of initiative that we are engaging right now.

This week our team are actually doing consultations. They are trying to give them some understanding of their responsibility of maintaining those areas. We started off with a small contract like a weeding contract, clearing of debris from the crossing as you rightly mentioned honourable Member and the falling of trees. That is the small work and the initiative that we are undertaking now. From there they are going to move to other three Divisions.

Question No. 8:

- (a) What were the major infrastructure projects completed during these periods?**
- (b) Were there any significant delays or cost overruns in these projects? If so, what were the causes?**

I think these are the same projects that I mentioned earlier during 2019 to 2020 period, Kasavu Slip, the Namata Village Access Road, Nakorosule, Kiuva, Kaba, Nadarivatu Nadrau Road Upgrade, Draubuta, Nadi Road Upgrade and the one in Northern Division, Koroinasolo, Dreketilailai and Lekutulevu Road. In the Eastern Division, in Koro. In the Western Division the Savusavu Crossing and the two modular bridges. For the Central Division, the one I mentioned earlier in the Tamavua-i-Wai, Waidamu and the other listed bridge that I mentioned there.

Why there was a delayed the project timelines? There were delays in project timelines, primarily due to resource availability and the impact of COVID-19 restrictions.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chair, through you, CEO if you can also elaborate on what are some of the current projects like the bridges that is under construction for this financial year? What is the status that may be if you do not have the information now you can provide that to the Committee later on?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.-

Question No. 9: What challenges did FRA face during the reporting period, and how were they addressed?

One of the key challenges that we have is resource availability especially for the gravel licensing in respective areas and isolated locations. Like I said, the licensing are only given mostly for the new project. When they come into the project it is done and it is finish with the licensing. But to have a license for the long period is done on an annual basis. That is something we have been discussing now with the stakeholders like the one who issued the license, the Minister for Lands and the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs on how we can issue a long-term license

so that the material can be readily available when our maintenance contractor or the new project contractor come and build a road in their respective zones and locations. That is one of the big challenges that we are trying to address.

And also, is how we are developing the new contract now. As earlier mentioned the principal contractor was managing, but now we are going to divide the respective division into either three, four or five zones. Each zone will be given directly to any of our local capable contractors to manage. They will be responsible rather than the Principal Contractor. The principal to give back to the sub. This one will be dealt with directly without the main contractor on the new zone that will be to be developed under the new contract. That probably will solve some of the availability of resources issue in those respective areas. Also, we have a lot of deterioration in our roads and that is something that we need to address when we have resources to be able to attend to those maintenance, which is on a timely basis, based on the cycle has been mentioned earlier on the periodic and routine maintenance. And one of the key challenge we are encounter is the problem adverse weather condition as we witness for the last month.

Since we get on our budget we are confronted with flooding and cyclone effects until today. And that really divert most of our resources in trying to restore some the affected sections of our roads based on adverse weather conditions. It is really affecting our utilisation, our implementation on our main more coreactivity that we target to achieve in this kind of financial year. And that is the kind of challenge right now for us because of this adverse weather. And similarly, as I highlighted earlier is traffic congestion. You know from the infrastructure side we can only receive what has been licensed and given on the use of the roads. We cannot control the importation of vehicles, like I said, it is something beyond our control. Somethings can however be addressed at the policy level. The infrastructure is very limited. Our capacity of implementation is very limited based on the amount of funds. Funding were given on an annual basis.

And something that we have seen and noticed the budget allocation, they are not with us. As soon as we receive the budget, we encounter the wet weather. So it is really affecting us. It is not like when it is given on a calendar base, but on the financial year, it is actually one of the constraints. Right up to date we are still focusing on trying to restore some of the effect of flooding and due to the ongoing flooding effect. So, that is something that I just want to highlight in here that can be addressed on that regard.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chair, while we are on traffic congestion let us go to Nadi. You people have changed the one way to two lanes. What we hear from the people in Nadi that the previous one was better than the one that you people have. I mean people will come up with all sorts of things. But we want to know from FRA is this going to work better than what it was before?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- Mr. Chairman, just today I was discussing that particular issue with one of our engineers in the West, where they had already done some trial run on that basis and it is workable now. We are still maintaining and implementing the two lanes, but they have directed all the trucks and the bus towards the back. They do not have to come through the main township corridor. The buses and all other trucks have to go to back of the town, rather than coming to the main town corridor.

They had trialled that and that is workable, because from Andrew Street going towards King Charles Park, and at the back, the buses are not coming now to the town. All those who

are going towards Namaka or Denarau, have to come through back, to come towards, rather than coming direct to the front of the main township. That is really relieving and helping a lot in the solution that is congesting the main township corridor.

There has been a close consultation with the Nadi Retailers Association and the Nadi Town Council. There were regular meetings in trying to find a solution. They had done a trial last week, and found it is solving the problem there right now. That is how we want to progress further with the implementation of those two lanes.

Question No. 10:

Asset Management

(a) How has the value of FRA's assets changed over these years?

In terms of assets, we continue to increase our road asset network, while we are continuing building our new roads and bridges and crossings, including the jetties. In terms of the valuation, it was done only in 2015. We have not done any valuation since then and the value of that asset amounted to \$11 billion. We are now in the process of engaging one consultant to undertake the valuation exercise for all our assets, including the bridges, crossing and the jetties. We manage all the jetties as well, including the road in the outer islands.

(b) What measures are in place to ensure the maintenance and longevity of these assets?

If the assets are maintained on a timely basis and we have reasonable resource, it should not have a problem with the level of service that we are expected from our road network. That is the kind of challenge we have right now. We really need to make sure that we have reasonable resource, and the maintenance has to be done on a timely basis to maintain the longevity of our assets, especially when you build a road for 10 years or the bridges, it has to be maintained on a timely basis so that it can maintain its lifespan. That is the requirement we need to do from our side in our responsibility, and how we actually monitor the quality too. That is very important to maintain the longevity of all these assets.

Question No. 11: How can FRA enhance its contractor capacity while focusing on local resources?

We are revising the technical and financial contract requirements within our maintenance programme to suit our local contractor. These are the initiatives that we have undertaken, as I mentioned earlier. For the new maintenance contract, we have done a Fiji-wide consultation. We went to the Northern Division, Western Division, and the Central Division on how the new contract will be implemented. Previously, it was only one contractor for each, but now we are going to break it down into three, four or five in each division so that each contractor has its own responsibility for their respective areas. For example, in Ba only one particular contractor will be managing all the roads in Ba. Similarly for Rakiraki, Lautoka, Nadi, and Sigatoka. That is how we are going to lay out the new contract right now and similar for the other three divisions.

This is why a lot of our local contractors will be participating - they will focus on and be directly responsible for road network maintenance in their respective areas and zones.

Question No. 12:

Environmental and Social Impact

(a) How did FRA address environmental and social concerns in its projects?

Before starting any project, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is carried out. We apply through the Ministry of Environment, which guides us on what needs to be undertaken for each specific project. For example, jetties and bridges, have to go through an Environmental Impact Assessment to identify key areas that need to be addressed during consultation. Additionally, we consider the social safeguard aspect. For instance, how does the project affect local communities that regularly use the infrastructure? Crossings and nearby creeks are used for washing or for fishing, so we provide necessary facilities and access to ensure continued use. These things are taken into consideration as part of our environmental and social safeguard consultation to make sure they are incorporated into the planning and design of new infrastructures before implementation. Similarly, we consult landowners who will be affected in those areas.

(b) Were there any significant environmental or social challenges faced during these periods?

Sometimes, we have restrictions and constraints from locals, especially on fishing rights and squatters settled in locations where we plan to build new infrastructure, such as bridges. These are some of the challenges we must address. Currently, we have to find ways to relocate them, either compensating them or providing new homes for relocation. This is the approach we are undertaking. For example, in Medraukutu, near the cement factory, two houses are situated on the mangroves underneath the bridge. We have to compensate them and relocate them to a new location. These are the kind of things we are addressing as part of our social safeguard responsibilities, ensuring a clear way for us to proceed with the process, especially on seaside that are mostly affected, but on the land side, it's not.

These are the kind of messages we are undertaking to address concerns from rural communities. Regarding fisheries, jetties and crossings near rivers, we undertake fisheries studies in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries. They do study for all our projects and carry out assessments in close coordination with the Department of Lands. The Department of Lands does land evaluations for all acquired lands, and we pay respective landowners and fishing rights holders based on assessments made by our agencies. This is how we manage environmental and social safeguard issues on all our projects.

Question No. 13:

- (a) How has FRA engaged with local communities and stakeholders in planning and executing its projects?**
- (b) What feedback mechanisms are in place to ensure community concerns are addressed?**

As I have highlighted in my earlier presentation, we have done local consultations with communities to see how they can participate in road maintenance and other projects.

Question No. 14: What challenges does FRA face in resource availability, and how can these be addressed?

One of the key challenges we currently face is the timely supply of bitumen. There is only one local supplier, Technix Pacific Pte Limited. At times, the supply of Technix bitumen affects the delivery of our work, especially on sealed roads. I think they are trying to sell the operation here, but we have encouraged our local contractors to source bitumen directly from overseas. We cannot rely solely on the only local supplier, as most of our contractors source their bitumen from Technix Bitumen in Walu Bay. That is one of the major challenge we are facing right now. We are discussing with the contractors, and they can source directly from wherever they can outside Fiji.

As I mentioned here, is the material, the quality of the material for our work and the licensing of our material are important. As I alluded to earlier, there are a lot constraints in sourcing materials for road projects we want to maintain and build in the respective areas, such as the North, the interior of the Viti Levu, and the West.

Question No. 15: How does FRA promote gender equality in its recruitment and training processes?

This is something we are trying to address internally within our organisation. A few women have already joined the technical areas, and we are trying to promote this initiative. I think our funding agencies, like ADB and World Bank, have been insisting that we increase the percentage. We told them, ‘well, it all depends on the interest of our female partner - whether they want to return to career development’. I had mentioned to them that, back in the technical institution, the ratio of women participating in the study is very limited. This is something we need to address – perhaps at the high school level – by developing career pathways that promote interest in this engineering technical area, where the women can participate more.

In the last 30 years of my experience in the industry, there have only been one or two women within the organisation. Similarly, in the organisation, we have only one or two women in the technical side. That is the kind of experience I have shared with our lending agencies. The Fijian Government has been insisting that we promote and encourage more women to participate in the technical side. However, in other areas such as HR and Accounts, we have a balanced of women participating in these respective corporate services. In the technical side, it is a bit of a challenge to see how we can promote women to participate in these areas. We continue to encourage more women, even in our recruitment process, where we see a lot of women applying. We give them the opportunity to participate in the interview and see how competent they are, as well as how they can engage in the organisation. That is the kind of initiative we took.

Training and development continues within our organisation. We try to maximise staff training, especially after they graduate from school, as they do hands-on training on the job. At the same time, they help projects across the country and even the region. We also send them to participate in additional training.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Mr. CEO, if I may - you have talked about training development. While listening to your presentation on the challenges, I am interested in whether your team

currently has the capability to manage the technical aspects of wider, larger projects within your organisation. I am talking about the local expertise.

MR. A. KETEILAGI.- Mr. Chairman, that is one of the major challenges with us in terms of the qualified and experienced local members capable to manage projects. We do not have enough. We probably have one or two with us. That is what I can honestly say today. But, that is why we are approaching about getting an external consultant to come and manage the supervision of our projects. So, most of our major projects now will be led out to a consultant either local or overseas consultant. They can participate in the managing of the project and implementation. When it comes to projects it is very critical that we have a direct project management supervision team to manage, not people like us who come and start sharing the responsibility, no. That is where some of the loops and the gaps are. It is always good to have a dedicated supervision team.

In-house - we are setting up our Project Management Unit. It is part of our recruitment process. They will be directly managing all the capital projects within FRA. So, we are progressing now with the recruitment to undertake those responsibilities.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, just a follow up supplementary question on one of the five key goals of the FRA strategic plan is the enhancing core technical expertise as alluded to by the CEO that FRA is faced with challenges in achieving this goal. How is FRA addressing these challenges?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- Mr. Chairman, to enhance our technical capabilities, we have started engaging some external institutions more similar to our industry. They call it the International Road Federation and similarly to other institutions who are actually providing that kind of technical training to our staff even the International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC) condition of contract. Those are the kind of training where we have engaged our staff to participate. And that is the kind of training that they are enhancing their technical capabilities and their knowledge. You know, they are exposing themselves to some kind of international standards and practices.

At the same time when we finish the training we involve and engage them directly on some of the projects so they can develop their experience on what they have learned from the specialised training. Almost every week we are training of our staff through those institutions. They are external institutions, but their area of responsibility is more related to the road industries. That is why most of our staff are trained through that. It is like a more advanced training.

Mr. Chairman, I think part of the question that was raised by the honourable Members was part of FRA's strategic priorities for the coming years which has been outlined in our strategic plan. It is listed there to establish a clear direction on how we implement this framework, to enhance our co-op technical expertise and restore our essential technical systems.

I just want to elaborate more on the technical issues. This is one particular area we used to have a good systematic system within previously, but we lost a lot during the transition especially how we manage the road assets, the accounting system and the traffic management system. Such as the bridge maintenance management systems. It is an area we are trying to restore now. That is why it is basically highlighted there because when we have a system in

place, it is sort of a guideline for us in terms of where we are and what we need to do in the future in terms of road work plan. That is an area we are focusing on to try and re-establish our technical system.

One of our challenges regarding our road network is the congestion. Most of our traffic lights are not communicating. They are operating in isolation as of now. So, they are not communicating. Communicating means they should be coordinated. You can see on the road, there are loops on the swarm mark. So, as soon as the vehicle passes through it, communicates with the controller and the communication is to direct to the next station. So, that is why it triggers. Even it automatically driven how the facing of lights and how the priority during the peak period and right now that is one of the challenge because they operate in isolation, they are not coordinated. That is an area we are looking at to enhance to see how we can coordinate those systems in place. That is an area we are focusing right now to address is the traffic congestion.

And the last part of it is trying to increase our local contractors and consultants in participating in some of our Road Code. How does FRA plan to address challenging areas?

Like I said, we always conduct our half yearly business review of our performance. We will review and formulate our studies and try to realign according to our direction focus that we want to achieve at the end of the financial year or the period of work especially based on what we have been appraised to target and achieve.

Question No. 16: How does FRA commit to building resilient infrastructure to align with the Strategic Development Goal 9?

As I mentioned here right now we have started planning to build our infrastructure to be more resilient. For example, most of the new bridges that we are building, now we have to raise the building by more than one meter from existing. It is based on the study, on the flooding effect, even on the ...

Part of our budget component is resilient. So that is why most of the sections of our roads we have to lift it up. At the same time, some of the crossing we have to lift it up and build a new crossing altogether to be able to be resilient and avoid any future flooding or effect on accessibility especially to school, emergency and the markets and so forth. And that is the kind of approach and plan we are we incorporate now in all our projects that we have implemented.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, very interesting. Some years back, there was a saying that if your bridges are at a lower level when flood waters come they do not damage the bridge. I mean, that was the theory at the time. But now that has changed. Now you people are looking at doing high-rise.

MR. K. KETENALAGI.- Mr. Chairman, , that is how it was designed initially. You call it an Irish crossing or a lay level crossing. When it is flood, is flood bit it affect the accessibility of people, public, school, hospital and everything. That is something that we realize. We might have to and we cannot continue with this because there are lots of . developments. After road access continues we upgrade the roads. There are lots of developments and economic activity in those areas even agriculture. So, we can continue with the same kind of crossing. We really need to build another level of crossing so that it can be accessible at all times.

Question No. 17:

That is basically what was mentioned earlier. Like I said, these are some of the areas that we have been trying to address. You know we are listing some of the roads. Even we are doing a lot of coastal protection now on most of the roads that are on the coastal areas. We are developing some coastal protection with the big boulders. There has been a discussion with the Australian Infrastructure and Financial Facilities on how we can promote a green kind of nature-based protection. What we have told them, on the coast, it will be very difficult to build a nature-based protection. We really need to plan together with the hard solution and the nature-based, because the experience that we have locally is the tidal effect. With the effect of tidal, the low waves and the current, you really need to build something solid and resilient. If you build a nature-based, you have to build it after building the hard-rock kind of a solution to sustain any future effect on all these coastal. Even on the river erosion, we have started some protection on the river through Sawani and Princes Road.

We have identified some other areas that we had carried out some protection on the river erosion, especially the one close to our road corridor. That is an area we are also looking at. There are five new bridges coming up and we are going to raise most of the bridges and carry out some ground improvements so that they will not be affected in any future flooding or other adverse weather conditions. That is how we are addressing the resilience of our infrastructure in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 9.

Question No. 18: When will FRA submit its outstanding Annual Reports?

Sir, FRA has submitted 2021-2022 Annual Report to the line Ministry. Other pending annual reports, which we are currently working on now will be progressively submitted accordingly to the line Ministry.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much, CEO, for the very impressive presentations. Honourable Members, if there is any additional supplementary question, please feel free to ask.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Mr. Chairman, just a general question. The interior of our main island of Viti Levu is divided into four, namely, Colo East, Colo West, Colo North and Colo South, and the road conditions in these regions are very much deteriorating. Is there any planned routine road maintenance programme in place for the public roads in these areas?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- I have been discussing this with our delivery team, especially the division from Western, Central and Northern. Now, at least we have overcome the adverse weather conditions, and with four months left for us, we still have underutilised funds. We have to intensify our work by allocating more resources. We have managed to engage or procure new contracts, apart from the main contracts that already exist. We have our emergency contract and rip-and-remake contract. These are the ones that will be complementing our main maintenance contract and they will be assigned.

In each division, probably about three or four new contractors are available to be mobilised. In our discussion, we really have to mobilise most of our resources to undertake the maintenance work that is required from the respective network in our rural areas. Especially with only four months left and we have started experiencing some good weather condition, we really have to intensify and increase our resource allocation to those areas. That is probably

how we can address some of the maintenance needs that are out in most of our rural areas in the interior of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, some general observations on this beautification programme, especially near Nadi Airport, Nausori, Nasese. Is that programme still in progress or the contractors have been taken out?

MR. A. KETENILAGI.- It is still in place, honourable Member. We already have some brief discussions with our Municipal Council. We have decided that they might have to engage beautification contracts for those who can provide landscaping services on some section of our roads. For example, in QED, we have consulted with Suva to engage a landscaping supplier, and we will cover the costs. This is the arrangement we have made, and it is something we continue to promote, including in Nausori. However, maintenance has been lacking on our side, particularly in ensuring the removal of overgrown grass and flowers from the central median. These are areas we are trying to address while continuing with beautification.

As I said, we rely much on the local council, especially in areas where they want more landscaping beautification along township corridor. For example, in QED we are still waiting to engage a landscaping supplier. We have already provided them with the provisions to do landscape work. Similarly, in Nausori, on the main road and the new section we are upgrading, especially in the Vuci side and all that area.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I have two general questions. Can the CEO and the team provide an update on the progress of Waidalice Bridge? Secondly, what is the current status of Ellington Wharf.

MR. A. KETEILAGI.- Mr. Chairman and honourable Members, we are progressing with the repair of the jetties at Ellington Wharf. Today, we sent an extension of time until August, when we plan to complete the repairs before allowing shipping services to continue their service from the jetty.

There is an issue with the Waidalice Bridge, especially on Korovou side where foundation failures have been identified. We have engaged consultants to review the problem, and they have come up with a design that is progressing as part of the design-and-build contract. Once the design is finalised, we will progress with the continuation of the Waidalice Bridge. It is scheduled for completion next year, likely by early or mid-year. The project is currently funded through the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility. We are working closely with them, and they are providing technical support in engineering input in the design, especially the failure side on the Korovou end of the bridge. These issues need be rectified before we progress with the completion of the new bridge construction. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much, CEO and the team. I believe our discussion today, through the presentation, has covered the whole report. We had many questions, and now we look at the reports, it is clearer to us moving forward, the challenges you are currently facing. When you talk about utilities, it is important you talk about the nation of Fiji, especially from the aspect of Fiji Roads Authority. I believe we are all in a learning process, and there is much to take back and discuss with the team.

What we are trying to say is that the question asked today will give us a clear picture of how best we can formalise our recommendations, which will go straight to Parliament. Once

tabled, a date will be set for deliberate on that same subject. Overall, this will help FRA on how best we can look at areas for improvement as we move along.

We thank CEO and your team, on that note, we congratulate you on your appointment. We believe that the task is not easy, with a lot of ups and downs and challenges ahead of you. We wish you and your team well in continuing the good work. Hopefully, when you come back for your next submission, you will be able to see where we have left and area that you have improved on. I believe there will be less questions from the honourable Members.

At this juncture, I sincerely thank you all for availing yourselves for this public hearing session. We hope you will avail yourself for any further queries or clarification that the Committee may have on these Annual Reports. With these concluding remarks, I now close this public hearing session.

The Committee adjourned at 3.21 p.m.