



STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE

Consolidated Review Report of the Office of the Prime Minister and Fijian Immigration Department 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 Annual Reports.



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
Parliamentary Paper No. 48 of 2026

July 2026

Published and Printed by the Department of Legislature, Parliament House, SUVA

Table of Contents

ACRONYMS	3
CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD	4
1.0 COMMITTEE REMIT AND COMPOSITION	5
1.1 COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT TEAM.....	6
2.0 BACKGROUND AND TERMS OF REFERENCE	7
2.1 PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT	7
2.2 PROCEDURE AND PROGRAM	8
3.0 COMMITTEE DELIBERATIONS AND ANALYSIS.....	9
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	9
3.2 COMMITTEE FINDINGS.....	10
3.2.1 <i>Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)</i>	10
3.2.2 <i>Ministry of Immigration</i>	11
4.0 RECOMMENDATION	13
4.1 <i>Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)</i>	13
4.2 <i>Ministry of Immigration</i>	14
5.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS	15
6.0 CONCLUSION	18
7.0 COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURES	19
8.0 ANNEXURE.....	20

Acronyms

API	Advanced Passenger Information
FID	Fijian Immigration Department
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PIDC	Pacific Immigration Development Community
PNR	Passenger Naming Record

Chairperson's Foreword

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence ("Committee"), I am pleased to present this report on the review of the Office of the Prime Minister and Fijian Immigration Department for the financial years 2019–2020, 2020–2021, 2021–2022, and 2022–2023.

Over this reporting period, both institutions faced unprecedented challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted operations, strained resources, and demanded rapid adaptation. The Office of the Prime Minister coordinated national responses while managing increased public demand, digital transformation, and logistical hurdles in reaching remote communities. The Ministry of Immigration, meanwhile, navigated border closures, rising compliance pressures, and the transition from a department to a standalone Ministry.

Despite these challenges, the Committee acknowledges the substantial progress made by both institutions. The Office of the Prime Minister strengthened its oversight role, improved Cabinet coordination, and modernised service delivery through digital platforms. The Ministry of Immigration enhanced border security, introduced automated systems, and expanded services for citizens and diaspora communities. Together, both institutions demonstrated resilience and a strong commitment to transparency, accountability, and reform.

The Committee also acknowledges areas requiring continued improvement. These include ensuring equitable distribution of grants, strengthening complaint resolution frameworks, addressing staffing constraints, and enhancing enforcement against immigration breaches. We emphasise the importance of building institutional capacity, improving inter-agency coordination, and maintaining strong partnerships with development partners to meet future challenges, including pandemics, climate risks, monitoring of immigrants and transnational crime.

Our recommendations are aimed at supporting these reforms, ensuring resources are used effectively, and promoting sustainable development outcomes for all Fijians.

I extend sincere appreciation to the representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Immigration for their cooperation and constructive engagement. I also acknowledge the dedication of the Committee Members for compiling this bipartisan report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I submit this report to Parliament.



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson

1.0 Committee Remit and Composition

Under Standing Order 109(2)(e) the Committee is mandated to investigate matters related to Fiji's relations with other countries, development aid, foreign direct investment, oversight of the military, and relations with multi-lateral organisations. The members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence are as follows:



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson
Deputy Speaker of Parliament
Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs



Hon. Rinesh Sharma
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Member
Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Heritage and Arts



Hon. Penioni Ravunawa
Member
Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services



Hon. Virendra Lal Member



Hon. Taito Rokomatu
Member

1.1 Committee Secretariat Team

Supporting the Committee in its work is a group of dedicated Parliament Officers serving as the Committee Secretariat. These officers are appointed and delegated by the Secretary-General to Parliament by Standing Order 15(3)(i). The Secretariat officers are as follows:

- Ms. Tirisiane Logavatu – Senior Committee Clerk
- Mrs. Elesi Tabuyaqona – Deputy Committee Clerk

Committee contact details:

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

Parliament of the Republic of Fiji

Government Buildings SUVA, FIJI.

Phone: +679 3225600 / +679 8925210

Website: <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-foreign-affairs-and-defence/>

2.0 Background and Terms of Reference

2.1 Presentation of the Annual Report

- 2.1.1 The Speaker of Parliament, referred the following Office of the Prime Minister (“OPM”) and Fijian Immigration Department (“Immigration”) Annual Reports to the Committee for review:

	Annual Report	Date of Referral
1.	Office of the Prime Minister and Fijian Immigration Department 2019-2020	3 September 2025
2.	Office of the Prime Minister and Fijian Immigration Department 2020-2021	
3.	Office of the Prime Minister and Fijian Immigration Department 2021-2022	8 August 2025
4.	Office of the Prime Minister and Fijian Immigration Department 2022-2023	13 March 2026

- 2.1.2 The referral was made pursuant to Standing Order 38(2), which mandates that all annual reports tabled in Parliament be referred to the relevant Standing Committee for examination and report back to Parliament.
- 2.1.3 The Committee is responsible for reviewing matters concerning Fiji’s international relations, development assistance, foreign direct investment, national security oversight, and engagement with multilateral organisations.
- 2.1.4 The OPM and Immigration annual reports fall outside the Committee’s mandate, but the referral was made to assist in balancing the distribution of workload among the Standing Committees of Parliament.
- 2.1.5 The Committee notes that the Fiji Immigration Department operated under the OPM from 2019–2020 through to 2020–2021 and remained under the OPM for part of the 2021–2022 reporting period. During the latter part of 2021–2022, the Department was transferred to the Ministry of Defence, where it remained throughout the 2022–2023 reporting period and part of 2023–2024. Thereafter, the Department returned to the OPM before being formally established as a standalone Ministry of Immigration in January 2025. The transition to a standalone Ministry recognised the increasing importance of immigration as a critical national security, border management, citizenship, and migration function, providing greater autonomy, visibility, and strategic direction in delivering its mandate.

2.2 Procedure and Program

Public Submission

- 2.2.1 In relation to Standing Order 111 (1), the Committee is committed to upholding public trust in Parliament, by ensuring that there is public participation and that all such participation is given due consideration. The Committee received an in-person submissions from representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister at a public hearing convened in Suva on 8 June 2026, and subsequently from representatives of the Ministry of Immigration on 15 June 2026. The public submission was broadcast live on Parliament Facebook page and aired on the Walesi Parliament channel.
- 2.2.2 A summary of the submission is provided in a later part of this report, under the heading ‘Committee’s Deliberation and Analysis’. Copies of the written submission and the verbatim from the public hearing can be obtained from the online Appendices of the report, which can be accessed from the Parliament website: www.parliament.gov.fj

3.0 Committee Deliberations and Analysis

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This report presents a summary analysis of the OPM and Immigration annual reports for the financial years 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. It highlights key achievements, challenges, and provides recommendations for improvement to support the Ministry's operations.
- 3.1.2 The Reports provide an important account of the performance, challenges, and reforms undertaken by the two entities during a period marked by unprecedented national and global pressures, including the COVID-19 pandemic, rising public demand for services, and the transition of Immigration from a department to a standalone ministry.
- 3.1.3 In conducting its review, the Committee focused on the core mandates of both institutions: the Office of the Prime Minister as the central coordinating authority for whole-of-government policy delivery, and the Ministry of Immigration as a sovereign border enforcement agency and national security pillar. The examination has considered matters of governance, service delivery, financial accountability, institutional reforms, and alignment with national development priorities and international obligations.
- 3.1.4 The Committee's findings highlight significant reforms undertaken to strengthen Cabinet processes, modernise immigration services, improve transparency in grants management, and enhance coordination across government. At the same time, the reports acknowledge persistent challenges such as staffing constraints, logistical hurdles in remote areas, and the need for stronger policy frameworks and the lessons learned that will inform future resilience and preparedness.

3.2 Committee Findings

3.2.1 Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)

- 3.2.1.1 The Committee notes that the OPM faced significant operational challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, including staff constraints, increased public demand, and the need for rapid digital transformation.
- 3.2.1.2 The Committee finds that disaster funding under the Prime Minister's Fund is coordinated by the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management, with the Prime Minister acting only as trustee.
- 3.2.1.3 The Committee observes disparities in the distribution of small grants across divisions and provinces, with one province receiving 78 projects valued at over \$1.2 million, while some provinces received only one project.
- 3.2.1.4 The Committee notes that grant approvals are based on Prime Ministerial commitments, written requests, and community contributions, with verification processes involving provincial and divisional authorities.
- 3.2.1.5 The Committee finds that procurement processes are governed by Financial Regulations, requiring a three-quote system and verification by relevant authorities to safeguard against corruption and favouritism.
- 3.2.1.6 The Committee notes that while small grants provide immediate relief and uplift communities, there is limited formal measurement of return on investment beyond community satisfaction and follow-up verification.
- 3.2.1.7 The Committee observes that as of 2026, approximately \$10 million worth of projects remain pending due to insufficient capital budget allocations.
- 3.2.1.8 The Committee notes that lessons from COVID-19 have informed ongoing reforms, including decentralisation of decision-making, digital transformation, and establishment of a consolidated national social registry.
- 3.2.1.9 The Committee finds that unresolved complaints (426 cases in 2022–2023) were due to civil nature, absence of budgetary provision, or personal disputes, with OPM developing strategies to address systemic gaps.
- 3.2.1.10 The Committee notes that women hold approximately 25% of senior management positions within OPM, reflecting progress but highlighting scope for further gender balance in leadership.

3.2.2 Ministry of Immigration

- 3.2.2.1 The Committee finds that the Ministry's strategic priorities are aligned with Fiji's national security, economic development, and labour mobility objectives. Immigration has transitioned from a department to a standalone ministry, enabling stronger policy influence and representation at high-level forums.
- 3.2.2.2 The Committee acknowledges advancements in border management, including e-passports, Advanced Passenger Information/Passenger Name Record (API/PNR) systems, and strengthening document verification, but notes persistent enforcement gaps. In particular, overstayer management remains weak: removal orders are issued but not consistently executed.
- 3.2.2.3 The Committee finds that digital transformation has improved efficiency, with online visa and permit systems reducing delays. Yet, staffing constraints and system integration issues continue to affect timely responses and public service delivery.
- 3.2.2.4 The Committee observes that the Immigration (Amendment) Act 2026 and related regulations to strengthen enforcement powers, including infringement notices and penalties. Nonetheless, gaps remain in penalising employers who exploit foreign workers.
- 3.2.2.5 The Committee finds that work permits and single visas have driven post-pandemic growth, reflecting labour shortages and increased mobility demand. Compliance monitoring has improved, but cases of worker exploitation and trafficking highlight the need for stronger employer accountability.
- 3.2.2.6 The Committee notes that investigations are largely complaint-driven, with overstayer cases increasing in recent years. Fraudulent documentation and permit breaches remain common offences, requiring enhanced intelligence-led detection.
- 3.2.2.7 The Committee finds that collaboration with the Fiji Police Force, Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, and international partners has strengthened enforcement against transnational crime and trafficking. However, resource limitations hinder proactive detection.
- 3.2.2.8 The Committee observes that despite becoming a Ministry, Immigration continues to operate with departmental strength, facing staffing shortages and budgetary constraints. The freeze on recruitment has further limited frontline service expansion.
- 3.2.2.9 The Committee finds that public complaints about delayed responses and poor communication remain a challenge. Measures such as decentralised offices and improved service desks are positive steps but require sustained implementation.
- 3.2.2.10 The Committee notes Fiji's leadership role in the Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC). However, concerns remain regarding Fiji's Tier 2 Watchlist

status under the US Trafficking in Persons Report, with risks of downgrade if enforcement is not strengthened.

4.0 Recommendation

The Committee made the following recommendations:

4.1 Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)

- 4.1.1 The Committee recommends that the OPM strengthen staff capacity and digital infrastructure to ensure resilience in times of national crisis, drawing from lessons of COVID-19. *(reference 3.2.1.1)*
- 4.1.2 The Committee recommends clearer public communication on the management of disaster funds, including the Prime Minister's Fund, to avoid confusion over accountability and acquittals. *(reference 3.2.1.2)*
- 4.1.3 The Committee recommends equitable distribution of small grants across divisions and provinces, with transparent criteria to reduce disparities such as those noted between provinces. *(reference 3.2.1.3)*
- 4.1.4 The Committee recommends that verification processes for grant approvals be further strengthened, with community awareness campaigns to ensure all provinces understand how to access the scheme. *(reference 3.2.1.4)*
- 4.1.5 The Committee recommends continuous monitoring of procurement practices, with independent audits to safeguard against corruption and ensure compliance with Financial Regulations. *(reference 3.2.1.5)*
- 4.1.6 The Committee recommends that OPM develop a formal framework for measuring the impact and return on investment of small grants, beyond anecdotal satisfaction, to guide future allocations. *(reference 3.2.1.6.)*
- 4.1.7 The Committee recommends that Cabinet consider increasing capital budget allocations to address the backlog of pending projects, currently estimated at \$10 million. *(reference 3.2.1.7)*
- 4.1.8 The Committee recommends that OPM institutionalise lessons from COVID-19 by embedding decentralised decision-making, digital governance, and a consolidated social registry into long-term policy frameworks. *(reference 3.2.1.8)*
- 4.1.9 The Committee recommends that unresolved complaints be systematically analysed to inform policy reform, with budgetary adjustments and clearer jurisdictional guidance to reduce recurrence. *(reference 3.2.1.9)*
- 4.1.10 The Committee recommends that OPM set progressive targets to increase women's representation in senior management beyond the current 25%, in line with national gender equality commitments. *(reference 3.2.1.10)*

4.2 Ministry of Immigration

- 4.2.1 The Committee recommends that the Ministry continue aligning its priorities with national security, economic growth, and labour mobility, and strengthen its role in high-level decision-making. *(reference 3.2.2.1)*
- 4.2.2 The Committee recommends that the Ministry strengthen enforcement of removal orders and invest in intelligence systems to close gaps in overstayer management. *(reference 3.2.2.2)*
- 4.2.3 The Committee recommends that the Ministry address staff shortages and improve system integration to ensure faster and more reliable services. *(reference 3.2.2.3)*
- 4.2.4 The Committee recommends that the Ministry extend legal reforms to penalise employers who exploit foreign workers, ensuring accountability on both sides. *(reference 3.2.2.4)*
- 4.2.5 The Committee recommends that the Ministry expedite the review of regulations in relation to the Immigration (Amendment) Act 2026, Passports (Amendment) Act 2026 and Citizenship of Fiji (Amendment) Act 2026. *(reference 3.2.2.5)*
- 4.2.6 The Committee recommends that the Ministry move from complaint-driven investigations to proactive detection, supported by better training and technology. *(reference 3.2.2.6)*
- 4.2.7 The Committee recommends that the Ministry deepen collaboration with national and international partners, backed by more resources for proactive enforcement. *(reference 3.2.2.7)*
- 4.2.8 The Committee recommends that the Ministry work with the Ministry of Civil Service to review the staffing capacity, in view of the current freeze on civil servant recruitment and also secure adequate funding so it can operate fully as a standalone entity. *(reference 3.2.2.8)*
- 4.2.9 The Committee recommends that the Ministry sustain improvements in decentralised offices and service desks and ensure quicker responses to public queries. *(reference 3.2.2.9)*
- 4.2.10 The Committee recommends that the Ministry use Fiji's leadership role in PIDC to strengthen regional cooperation, while urgently improving enforcement to avoid downgrade in the US Trafficking in Persons Report. *(reference 3.2.2.10)*

5.0 Sustainable Development Goals

5.1 Office of the Prime Minister

5.1.1 SDG 1 – No Poverty

The Committee observes that OPM's Small Grants and Community Development Programme directly supports poverty reduction through targeted investments in rural and remote communities. Between 2019 and 2023, the OPM funded 203 community-based projects valued at approximately \$4.48 million, supporting essential infrastructure, water access, transportation, education facilities, and livelihood initiatives across Fiji's divisions and provinces. These interventions help improve living standards, reduce vulnerability, and create opportunities for socio-economic development, particularly in underserved communities.

5.1.2 SDG 5 – Gender Equality

The Committee notes the OPM's commitment to maintaining an inclusive workforce that promotes women's empowerment and supports the Government's broader objective of advancing gender equality across the public service. The Committee acknowledges that women currently occupy approximately 25 percent of senior management positions within the OPM. While this demonstrates progress towards increasing female representation in decision-making positions, the Committee encourages the OPM to continue strengthening gender mainstreaming initiatives and leadership development opportunities to further enhance women's participation at senior levels. The Committee further observes that the OPM's community development programmes, including support for women's groups and income-generating initiatives, contribute to improving the socio-economic participation of women and advancing inclusive development outcomes throughout Fiji.

5.1.3 SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation

The Committee notes that a significant proportion of OPM-funded projects focus on improving access to safe and reliable water supplies in rural and maritime communities. Through the construction of boreholes, water reticulation systems, and community water infrastructure, the OPM has contributed to improving public health outcomes and ensuring communities have access to clean drinking water. The Committee considers these initiatives particularly important for remote and maritime communities where access to basic water infrastructure remains a challenge. Such investments directly contribute to improving quality of life and reducing health risks associated with inadequate water supply systems.

5.1.4 **SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**

The Committee recognises that the OPM plays a central role in strengthening governance, public administration, and institutional effectiveness. Through enhanced Cabinet governance processes, improved policy coordination, strengthened monitoring systems, inter-agency collaboration, and accountability mechanisms, the OPM has reinforced its role as the central institution responsible for ensuring coherent and effective Government decision-making.

5.2 **Ministry of Immigration**

5.2.1 **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth**

The Committee observes that the Ministry facilitates the entry and regulation of foreign workers, investors, students, and visitors through a structured permit and visa framework that supports Fiji's economic development objectives. Between 2019 and 2023, work permit applications increased significantly, rising from 4,813 applications in 2019 to 6,371 applications in 2023, reflecting increased labour mobility and growing economic activity following the COVID-19 recovery period. The Ministry also undertakes compliance monitoring of employers and permit holders to protect local employment opportunities, prevent labour exploitation, and ensure adherence to immigration laws. These measures contribute to sustainable economic growth, labour market integrity, and decent work outcomes.

5.2.2 **SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**

The Committee notes the Ministry's commitment to modernising immigration services through digital transformation and technology-driven border management systems. Significant progress has been made through the implementation of online permit and visa application systems, the introduction of e-passports, planned online passport services, enhanced document forensic capabilities, and the development of advanced passenger information and profiling systems. These investments improve service delivery, strengthen operational efficiency, and enhance the Ministry's ability to respond to emerging migration and border security challenges through innovation and modern infrastructure.

5.2.3 **SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities**

The Committee recognises that the Ministry contributes to safe, orderly, and regular migration through transparent permit and visa processes, citizenship services, and immigration compliance mechanisms. The Ministry's efforts to decentralise services through the establishment of additional offices and the expansion of online services improve accessibility for citizens residing outside major urban centres. Furthermore, the regulation of labour migration and oversight of migrant worker conditions support fair treatment, accountability, and protection for both foreign workers and

local communities. These initiatives contribute to reducing inequalities in access to public services and migration opportunities.

5.2.4 **SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**

The Committee finds that SDG 16 is the Ministry's strongest area of contribution. The Ministry is responsible for protecting Fiji's borders through intelligence-led border management, immigration compliance, investigations, enforcement actions, and inter-agency cooperation. Between 2019 and 2023, the Department conducted 699 investigations relating to immigration compliance, including complaints, overstayers, investor inspections, citizenship matters, and permit-related investigations. The Ministry also strengthened enforcement through removal orders, risk profiling, watchlists, intelligence sharing, and collaboration with the Fiji Police Force, Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, INTERPOL, and regional security partners. These efforts strengthen the rule of law, improve public security, combat transnational crime, trafficking in persons, document fraud, and irregular migration, and reinforce public confidence in Fiji's border management systems.

5.2.5 **SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals**

The Committee notes that the Ministry actively works with a wide range of domestic, regional, and international partners to strengthen immigration management and border security. The Ministry collaborates with agencies such as the Fiji Police Force, Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, Fiji National Provident Fund, Ministry of Employment, and the Transnational Crime Unit. Internationally, the Ministry works closely with INTERPOL, the Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC), Australian Border Force, Immigration New Zealand, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Committee further notes Fiji's assumption of the Chairmanship of the Pacific Immigration Development Community, demonstrating the Ministry's growing regional leadership role in advancing cooperation on migration governance, border security, labour mobility, and transnational crime prevention.

6.0 Conclusion

The Committee concludes that the **Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)** has strengthened its role as the central hub for government policy, ensuring better Cabinet oversight, clearer accountability, and improved coordination across ministries. By introducing digital systems, tighter grants management, and stronger monitoring processes, the OPM has modernised service delivery and provided direct support to rural and remote communities, helping advance national development priorities and align programmes with sustainable development goals.

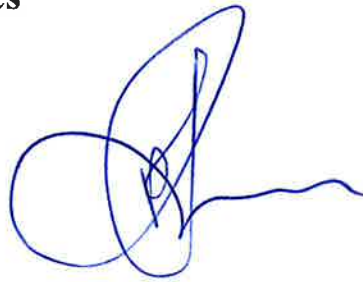
At the same time, the **Ministry of Immigration** has successfully transitioned into a standalone Ministry, giving Fiji greater sovereignty and stronger border management. Achievements include new passenger information systems, online visa and permit processing, decentralised services, and updated laws that improve enforcement powers. Despite ongoing staffing and system challenges, the Ministry's independence has led stronger collaboration with other agencies, and improved national security.

Together, both institutions have advanced Fiji's governance, safeguarded its borders, and contributed to economic resilience and sustainable growth.

7.0 Committee Members' Signatures



Hon. Lenora QEREQERETABUA
Chairperson



Hon. Rinesh SHARMA
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Ratu Isikeli TUIWAILEVU
Member



Hon. Penioni RAVUNAWA
Member



Hon. Virendra LAL
Member



Hon. Taito ROKOMATU
Member

8.0 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-foreign-affairs-and-defence/>