

APPENDICES

Appendix One

**Written Response by the Ministry of Women, Children
and Poverty Alleviation**



Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation

Responses to Issues – Annual Reports of the Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation

- 2014 Annual Report
- 2015 Annual Report
- 2016 Annual Report for the Period 1st January 2016 to 31st July 2016
- 2016/2017 Annual Report for the Period 1st August 2016 to 31st July 2017

Thursday 28th March, 2019

Parliament Committee Room (West Wing)

Questions and Responses

1. Brief the Committee on the functions of the Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation.

The functions of the Ministry include the following:

- ↪ Care and protection of Children;
- ↪ Provision of income support to families to address poverty;
- ↪ Provision of policy intervention for Older Persons;
- ↪ Provision of policy intervention for Persons with Disabilities;
- ↪ Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of Women and;
- ↪ Monitor, evaluate and report on the progress and impact of the Integrated National Poverty Eradication Programme (INPEP)

2. Inform the committee on the key challenges the Ministry faces whilst trying to achieve its strategic objectives and how it is planning to overcome these challenges.

Some of the Key challenges of the Ministry include the following:

- ↪ Resources – Funding for Human Capital and Office space. The geographic dispersion of the executive unit offices and departments around the city is challenging for human resource management. All teams lack space not only for staff, but also for storage and archiving of documents.
- ↪ Technology – Currently the Ministry is seeking options for technological assistance to review and consolidate our data. We currently do not have such support internally within our Ministry for high level ITC.
- ↪ Unexpected Program Requests: Each year, the MWCPA are asked to take on new programs. For example, the Help for Home (2016-2017), Home Care (2018), Bundle Insurance (2018), Bus Fare Top Up – 2018, which requires the

rapid deployment of resources and funds and the Ministry must adjust internal budgets and internal resources. Such unplanned programs can disrupt normal activities and place additional stress on our Human Resources and can impact some department outputs.

3. How does the Ministry ensure that both male and female employees are treated equally in recruitment, training, hiring and promotion?

Through the introduction of Open Merit Recruitment Selection (OMRS) where everyone is given an equal opportunity to apply for positions advertised. Our job advertisements are open and the ministry does not discriminate by any gender. The Ministry complies with the OMRS Guideline. This also applies to hiring and promotions and training opportunities.

All officers are encouraged to apply or send in their expression of interest when there are opportunities for local and overseas training.

4. Does the Ministry align itself to any of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? If so, can you further enlighten the Committee on this?

Yes, some of the main focus areas include:

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Although our Ministry objectives cross cut and link to a number of the SDGs.

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

5. Update the Committee on the Ministry's future plans and initiatives.

STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Promote Sustainable and Inclusive Growth (*Source of Priority: National Development Plan (NDP) Priority P2*)
2. Inclusive Socio-Economic Development (*Source of Priority: NDP Priority P2*)
3. Ensure Good governance and best practice In PFM (*Source of Priority: NDP Priority P14 &15*)
4. Enhance integration of climate action into economic growth, environmental protection and Social development (*Source of Priority: NDP Priority P16*)
5. Empowering Women so that they reach their full development potential (*Source of Priority: NDP Priority P12*)

NEW PROJECTS (Proposed/Planned or Pending) 2019-2020

- REACH Project Phase 2 – (legal literacy, human rights, empowerment and referrals).
- Care Givers Trainings
- NCDP Shelter- Western Division (planned)
- Barefoot college – Northern Division (planned)
- Upgrading State Homes for Older Persons (planned)
- Research and engaging women and girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)
- Research on needs of Older Persons and those PLWD's.

- Women in climate change (new)
- Decentralizing services through NGO Grants for expanded service delivery (e.g. Domestic Violence Helpline 1560, Child Helpline 1325, Shelter – Homes of Hope, grants to Disabled Persons Organizations for PLWD's)

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6. What is the current situation of beggars in Fiji? How many beggars has the Ministry managed to graduate and what plans are in place to graduate more of them?

Currently, the Ministry has profiled 266 cases on the streets of our cities and towns. However, not all of them are permanent beggars. Some beggars yet are very mobile and have homes and they move from one town/city to another when there are opportunities such as festivals and national events. Others spend their day in the streets but return home in the evenings while some have homes and family but prefer to live on the streets and there were those that are homeless and call the streets their home. Working with such individuals is challenging and the success rate is very low. However, there are success stories where some individuals have been given bean carts and are still selling while others have been issued with Hawker's license and some have been assisted in finding work. The Ministry has established a Unit within the Department of Social Welfare to look at the challenges faced by beggars. The Unit works with other stakeholders to assist these beggars to find meaningful work (which suits their abilities) this also includes finding their families and placing them back, finding accommodation and linking them to other service providers that can assist and mentor them.

7. Page 17 of Annual Report (Beggars Rehabilitation Program) – How many street beggars have been rehabilitated in the Rehabilitation Centre for Beggars in Colo-i-Suva?

The Good Samaritan Inn caters only for physical capable male individuals because the intention is to help teach them farming skills using the land that is available. Currently, there are 6 residents but ever since then about 16 of the residents have moved on with one completing his education at the Fiji Vocational Training Center at Brown Street, 3 returning to their villages and becoming farmers, two have their own roadside stalls, and 9 of them have managed to find some form of employment as cleaners, car wash, carpenters and security officers.

8. What is the progress of the welfare to workfare program?

This program continues to exist, known as the Graduation Program for Welfare Recipients under the Poverty Scheme and Care & Protection Allowance. It has an annual Budget of \$500,000 with the maximum of 250 individuals that can be assisted. The process requires the selection of candidates which is voluntary, and then they are put through SMI training with assistance from NCSMED. After the training the projects are funded and then monitored to ensure that they succeed. Once, it is observed that the projects are doing well and viable, the recipients then exit the system.

9. Child welfare cases:

- a. **What is the current status of child welfare cases in Fiji? Provide a breakdown of the number of child welfare cases by Division.**

The Ministry has seen the increasing number of child welfare cases reported through the Child Welfare Act (2010), which can be the result of the child

protection awareness programs that have been conducted nationwide which has made people more confident to come out and report such cases. Our statistics reveal that child neglect, physical and emotional abuse and sexual abuse are the most common cases that are reported. Unfortunately, most of these abuses happened in the confines of the home and the perpetrators are often the significant adults in the child's life or someone they know. This means that change needs to begin at home and education programs need to be delivered in community level, which is why REACH is so important.

<i>Division</i>	<i>No. of Reported Cases (2014 Annual report)</i>
<i>Northern</i>	<i>126</i>
<i>North West</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>South west</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>South East</i>	<i>162</i>
<i>Nasinu</i>	<i>115</i>
<i>Central</i>	<i>108</i>
<i>Rotuma</i>	<i>5</i>

a. What strategies does the Ministry have in place to reduce such cases?

The Ministry through the Department of Social Welfare has established the National Coordinating Committee for Children (NCCC) as the national body to oversee all issues pertaining to the safety and protection of children in Fiji. This national body is chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation and is made up of major stakeholders working with children, including Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, other Government Entities

and also members of Civil Society and Faith Based Organizations. Under the umbrella of the NCCC are the Inter-Agency Committees based in the districts who work in the communities to raise awareness on child protection issues. Apart from the establishment of these forums, the Ministry is working with the Churches and traditional communities to include in their by-laws child protection issues. The Ministry is also working with the Solicitor General’s office to review and amend the current child protection laws that will assist in the handling and prosecution of child abuse cases. A lot of awareness has been conducted in the communities on positive discipline and protection of children.

The Child Helpline (24/7 counselling and referral service) provides an avenue for reporting children at risk and obtaining information on child protection matters. This free number 1325 has been included in educational materials and is widely promoted to ensure children can access help and assistance.

10. Inform the committee on the types of child abuse cases reported to the Ministry and What are the most common forms of child abuse?

Type of Cases Reported	Common Cases of Child Abuse
Physical Abuse	Physical Abuse
Teenage Pregnancy	Sexual Abuse/Incest
Sexual Abuse	Child Neglect
Neglect	Emotional Abuse
Emotional Abuse	Verbal Abuse
Attempted Suicide	Child Labor
Verbal Abuse	Child Begging
Child Labor	Drug Abuse

Child Begging
Abandoned
Beyond Control
Absenteeism/Loitering
Drunk & Disorderly
Child Prostitution
Drug Abuse
Truancy
Incest
Theft
Missing/Runaway

11. How is the Department of Social Welfare working in collaboration the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in regard to the prevention of teenage pregnancy?

The Department works with MOHMS through NCCC, the District Advisory Committees which include all the relevant Government and NGOs in the Districts to conduct awareness in their communities on issues relating to sexual reproductive health as well as including activities such as 'respectful relationships). These awareness programs are taken to the villages and communities through our partnerships under programs like the Child Helpline Services, the REACH Program and other civil society outreach programs which visit schools and communities.

Ministry Teams go out to the schools (on invitation) during Drug and Substance Abuse week to provide training and awareness to staff and students on these subjects. On the same note counselling services is offered through referral to partner agencies such as Empower Pacific and Medical Services Pacific (which is

a dedicated sexual and reproductive Health and family planning agency). Both agencies have agreements with the Ministries.

12. How effective has the Child Helpline service been in terms of providing advice and assistance to children and concerned adults and community members on child related issues and enquiries?

With the inception of the Child Helpline in 2015, the Department has continued to receive an increasing number of cases which have been reported and found to be genuine. The CHL recorded over 5,571 genuine calls to date, with the majority of the cases being referred to the MWCPA for action or the Fiji Police Force. This service has enabled the Department to address cases at their respective locations through the welfare officers in those areas. Otherwise, there are counsellors available on the CHL to conduct telephone counselling at any hour of the day and night if needed. Through funding support to the Child Helpline service, we have enabled a service which the public can use to report cases of child abuse. We have observed the increased confidence of children and even adults to report on cases and situations affecting them. Thus, we see an increasing number of reported cases, which could also be an indication of this confidence in the public. Where children and youth now know there is a place to call if they are abused or neglected.

13. Has any monitoring and evaluation been carried out to gauge the effectiveness of the Child Protection programs and activities offered by the Department of Social Welfare?

In 2015 with technical assistance from UNICEF, the Ministry conducted an impact assessment on its Child Protection Program whereby some of the recommendations have now being implemented while many are still pending. However, there is still a need for impact assessment on programs that have

been carried out in the communities and with this recognition of the need the Ministry has entered into partnership (MOU) with the Fiji National University (FNU) and the University of the South Pacific (USP) for such studies.

The Ministry receives quarterly monitoring reports from the Child Helpline (CHL) inclusive of customer satisfaction surveys. In 2019-2020, the PMU will monitor the DV Line and the CHL line to assess impact. In 2019-2020, the PMU will also undertake quality assurance and customer service monitoring of key projects.

14. Page 15 of Annual Report - What kind of assistance is provided to children living in the nine registered Residential Homes?

Government provides a monthly grant (\$120) from the Care & Protection Allowance for each child residing in these Homes. Apart from this, there is provision from Government for the Homes under the NGO Grant and this is to assist in the administration of the Homes to ensure the safety and protections of children are maintained.

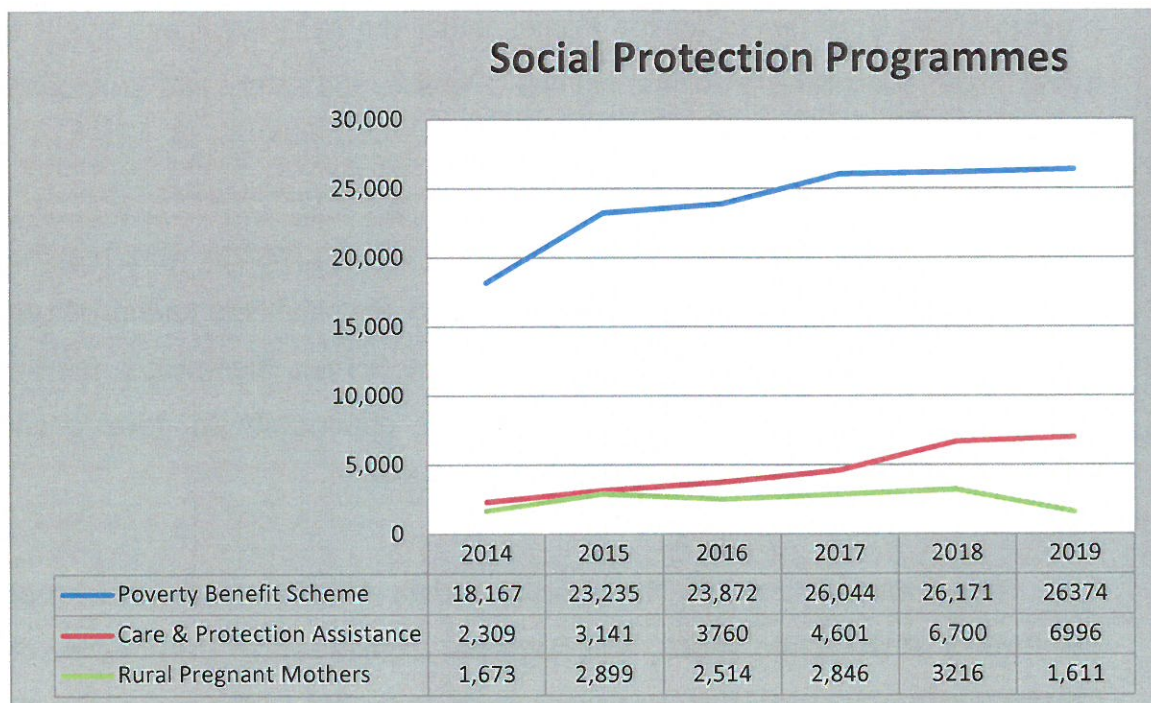
Under the Minimum Standards, Welfare Officers are required to work together with the Homes and children in the formulation and implementation of care plans, which includes working with the staff of the Homes, the schools, families and friends so that children can be given the opportunity to develop and become contributing members of society in the future.

15. The committee notes that under Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (NRC) the National Coordination Committee on Children submits periodical progress reports to the CRC Committee. Is there any Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that prepares Shadow Reports to these periodical progress reports?

The NGOs, Faith Based Organization and Civil Society were asked if they would like to provide a "Shadow Report" on the State of Children in Fiji, however, because they were part of the National Coordinating Committee for Children in Fiji (NCCC) they had agreed that there should be one Report and that their contribution will be through the NCCC.

16. Provide a breakdown of the number of recipients under the following programs who have benefitted from the Food Voucher Program from 2014 to date:

- Poverty Benefit Scheme;
- Care and Protection Allowance; and
- Food Voucher Programme for Rural Pregnant Mothers.



17. Page 19 of Annual Report - How have the grants given to the 20 NGO's been monitored in regard to their performance in the overall achievement of the Ministry's targets and goals?

As per Government's Fiscal procedures, recipient organizations must provide acquittals for every government grants issued, thus, if organizations fail to provide the relevant acquittals they are not given any more funding assistance from Government. However, if acquittals are provided, internal audits are carried out by the Program Managers and Finance Unit to ensure that funds given are used for the very purpose it was requested for.

18. The committee notes that a total of 86 projects were funded through the Income Generating Program in 2014. What is the current status of these projects and how are they monitored by the Ministry? Provide a breakdown of the number of projects funded through this program from 2015 to date.

The projects funded in 2014 have been graduated of the system. In the 2017 Monitoring exercise, 56 out of 133 projects for 2014 were still successfully operating. The Ministry has a working agreement with the National Center of Small Microenterprise Development that entails the training, implementing and monitoring of projects for a two year period.

Year	Male	%	Female	%	Total
2015	9	16	49	84	58
2016	8	10	45	90	53
2017	27	33	54	67	81
2018	15	60	10	40	25
Total	59	27	158	73	217

19. This question relates to the various projects that women and NGO's were assisted with by the Ministry in 2014 as outlined on pages 22 and 24 of the Annual Report. The committee notes from Activity 2 (Livelihood Projects) that 49 women's groups were assisted with various income generating projects and from Activity 6 (Grants to NGOs) that several women's groups and NGOs were assisted through 13 projects. How have these projects been monitored and evaluated by the Ministry and how many women have graduated or been assisted to an advanced level?

How have these projects been monitored and evaluated by the Ministry

Most of the projects are monitored and evaluated by our District and Divisional Offices throughout the Divisions with the given M&E forms that is currently in place at the Divisional Levels. Now with the establishment of the M&E Unit within the Department, it has provided prominence in focusing on evaluating and monitoring the implementation of the programmes and projects as such. Divisional Officers consult relevant agencies throughout the divisions for technical advice support for projects sustainability purposes.

How many women have graduated or been assisted to an advanced level?

Approximately 10 women's groups whom have expanded their canteen projects to Cooperatives with the technical advice support of the Department of Cooperatives and through the IHRDP Programme. Through the Financial Literacy Trainings, it has improved the savings-culture for more women's groups around the Divisions and has created more commitment to the projects in their respective communities.

20. Are the following activities as listed on pages 22 – 24 of the Annual Report still in operation:

- **Equal Employment Opportunity and Employment Relation Promulgation Training**
- **Livelihood Projects**
- **Financial Literacy Training**
- **Grants to NGOs**
- **Sewing Machines Distribution and Sewing Training**

Provide a breakdown of how many women have benefitted through the above trainings and livelihood projects from 2014 to date.

The 5 activities articulated are on-going and this makes up the Formal Sector Employment & Livelihood thematic programme.

Women Participants Benefited (2014 – 2019)

<u>No</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Total Number of Women</u>
1	Equal Employment Opportunity and Employment Relation Promulgation Training	53 trainings - 1060
2	Livelihood Projects	233 women's groups
3	Financial Literacy Training	Approx. 1100 women
4	Grants to NGOs	25 NGOs
5	Sewing Machines Distribution and Sewing Training	1807 women

21. Is there a database to record the high number of cases of violence against women and children?

Yes this is available and this is currently only possible through the updates of the following agencies:

- Fiji Police Force – Reported cases of crime against women and children (Quarterly basis) (*Attached is 2013- March 2018 records so far*) An MOU with the Fiji Police Force has made this possible, however, this is subject for renewal with the Ministry since it ended in 2018.
- Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre – reports cases of gender based violence from the Domestic Violence Helpline (monthly basis)
- The Child Helpline reports on the numbers of callers reporting gender based violence and domestic violence as it impacts the family and children on a monthly basis. A majority of callers are obtaining counselling or referrals, under this category.

The Department is working toward a database management system to go hand in hand with the Service Delivery Protocol on recording cases of Gender-Based Violence.

Table 1: Domestic Violence against Women and Children (2013 – 2017 and Jan-March 2018)

Domestic Violence against Women and Children						
Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan-March)
Domestic Violence against Women (Females, age is 18 years or more)	358	378	368	652	777	124
Domestic Violence against Female Children (Age is less than or equal to 17 years)	55	55	48	84	90	3
Domestic Violence against Male Children (Age is less than or equal to 17 years)	12	14	21	47	41	8
Total	425	447	437	783	908	135

(Source: Crimes Statistics Unit, Fiji Police Force)

The table above shows the Domestic violence cases against Women & Children for the years 2013 to 2017. The **Domestic Violence against Women and Children** has increased in the recent years. The year 2017 recorded 908 cases of which 777 were Women and 131 were Child victims. The year 2017 reported the highest with 908 cases and has **increased by 16%** when compared to the previous year.

Table 2: Domestic Violence against Women and Children by Division (2013 – 2017 and Jan-March 2018)

Division	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan-March)
Southern	135	213	160	283	325	42
Western	96	63	133	304	392	62
Eastern	127	115	86	106	66	13
Northern	67	56	58	90	125	18
Total	425	447	437	783	908	135

(Source: Crimes Statistics Unit, Fiji Police Force)

The table above shows the domestic violence cases against Women & Children by division for the years 2013 to 2017. The Western division recorded the highest in 2017 with 392 cases followed by the Southern division with 325 cases, Northern division with 125 cases and Eastern division with 66 cases.

Table 3: Domestic Violence against Women and Children by Ethnicity (2013 – 2017 and Jan-March 2018)

Domestic Violence	Ethnicity	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Jan-March 2018
Women Victims	I-Taukei	248	282	253	439	533	84
	Fijian of Indian Descent	106	93	115	185	233	38

Domestic Violence	Ethnicity	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Jan-March 2018
	Others	4	3	0	28	11	2
	Total	358	378	368	652	777	124
Children Victims	I-Taukei	51	48	51	88	78	8
	Fijian of Indian Descent	13	20	18	25	50	3
	Others	3	1	0	18	3	0
	Total	67	69	69	131	131	11

(Source: Crimes Statistics Unit, Fiji Police Force)

The table above shows the domestic violence cases against Women & Children by Ethnicity for the years 2013 to 2017. The year 2017 recorded 69% I-Taukei, 30% Fijians of Indian Descent and 1% other women victims. For the Children victims, there were 60% I-Taukei, 38% Fijian of Indian Descent and 2% other children victims.

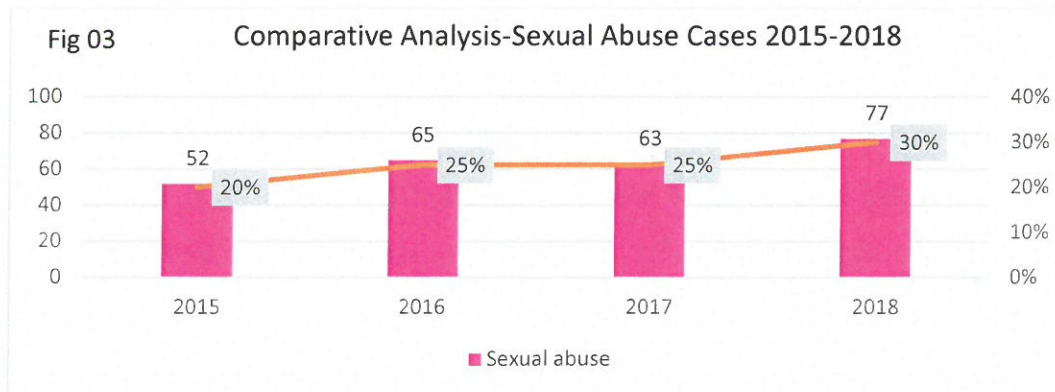
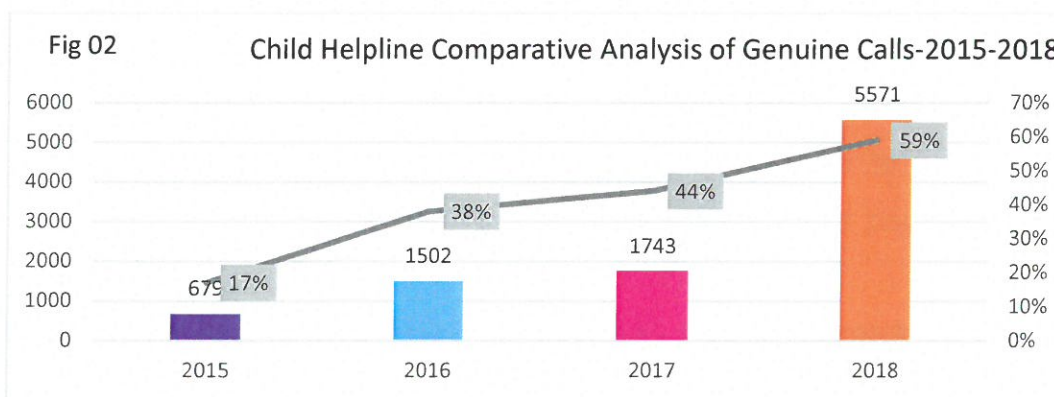
Table 4: Domestic Violence against Women and Children by Age Group (2013 – 2017 and Jan-March 2018)

Domestic Violence	Age Group	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Jan-March 2018
Women Victims	18 - 24 years	85	99	82	141	170	29
	25 - 31 years	100	99	119	206	228	42
	32 - 38 years	81	87	71	149	186	28
	39 - 45 years	50	43	47	93	111	12
	46 - 52 years	27	29	31	44	49	5
	53 - 59 years	7	13	16	13	22	5
	60 years and Over	8	8	2	6	11	3
	Total	358	378	368	652	777	124
Children Victims	0 - 5 years	6	8	10	11	13	3
	6 - 12 years	22	23	26	50	31	4
	13 - 17 years	39	38	33	70	87	4
	Total	67	69	69	131	131	11

(Source: Crimes Statistics Unit, Fiji Police Force)

The table above shows the domestic violence cases against Women & Children by Age group for the years 2013 to 2017. For the Women victims, the age group 25 to 31 year olds are mostly victims of domestic violence related cases. For the Children, the age group 13 to 17 year olds are mostly victims of domestic violence related cases.

Comparative Analysis of Child Helpline Call Types and Cases - Annual 2015-2018



The Child Helpline is receiving a gradual increase in genuine callers. Over the 4 years, the line has received over 45,000 calls.

22. Has the Zero Tolerance Violence Free Community program been evaluated?

The Ministry had just embarked this March with the Evaluation of Zero Tolerance Violence Free Community Programme. Through the technical assistance and support of the UN Women, this made this possible, hence a 6 member Evaluation Team are currently engaged for this exercise throughout the Divisions. The exercise is quite intense as it will involve visitations and discussions with communities and stakeholders whom have been involved in the ZTVFC programme in the Divisions. A total of 27 communities that will be evaluated out of the 88 and the Evaluation Team is expected to submit its Evaluation Report to the Ministry by the end of June 2019.

23. Page 26 of Annual Report (Activity 2: Solar Grandmothers) - What was the outcome of the training and how have our communities benefitted following the return of the participants from the solar engineering technology training in India?

The Ministry have established a link with Barefoot College in India last in 2012 in sending ten women from Fiji to attend a six months training as solar engineers. They have been referred to in Fiji as "solar grandmothers". Fiji joined the developed countries of the world to be assisted and trained in the area of women empowerment in terms of making life easier for women in the rural and maritime areas. This is in the provision of sustainable power which can now be utilized in communities as a source of both light and energy.

The women returned to Fiji the same year in which the training was conducted for the use of solar equipment sent from India. This solar equipment were taken to the communities where these women reside and to be used as tools for assembling and electrification in their villages. All the communities are now

using solar lanterns. A Solar Grandmother's village was relocated and upon her return from India, she electrified the village with assistance from the Ministry.

This program can be and will be expanded to train youth in partnership with Ministry of Youth and Sports.

24. Explain why the number of households assisted through the Poverty Benefit Scheme has increased to 23,235 in 2015 from 18,093 in 2014, however, the budget allocation for the program has remained at \$22 million.

In 2013, a comprehensive review was carried out with the Social Protection Programs; as a result of the then Family Assistance (FA) cases were either transferred to Care & Protection Allowance or the Social Pension Scheme. On the same note, cases under the Care & Protection Allowance were also transferred to the new Poverty Benefit Scheme. This was implemented in 2014 and 2015, at the same time cases that were discovered to have deceased were removed and those that have had their home situations improved were also exited from the system enabling new cases to be accommodated within the next year with no significant change in the program budget.

25. Why was there a reduction in Budget allocation for the Care and Protection Allowance program from \$5.9 million in 2014 to \$2 million in 2015?

The Ministry had conducted a major review of the Care & Protection Allowance Program in 2013 which resulted in termination of allowance for cases where children were over 18 years old and/or change in living standard. Also the review resulted in cases that no longer qualify for C&P but still living in poverty were transferred to the Poverty Benefit Scheme.

Financial Statement (2014)

26. Provide clarification on the \$113,548.42 which was written-off by the Ministry of Finance from the Ministry's Drawings account.

The stated amount was caused by the unclear and incomplete processes in the Accounts payable module in the FMIS system which then was recommended by Ministry of Finance to be written off by the Ministry.

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27. How many Fijian Women Artisans have been trained by the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation in partnership with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism and how has this helped meet the market demand for Fijian Made Products? Provide further information on the domestic and international demand for Fijian Made products.

None. However, the Ministry works very closely with the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MITT) through one of its statutory body, the Fiji Arts Council in raising awareness with women and women's groups during craft shows held at various divisions regarding the emblem. Fiji Arts Council also provides one to one sessions mentoring with women whose products are of high quality, so they can be labelled a Fijian Made product. Most of the trainings that are undertaken were specifically for the up-skilling of women artisans to ensure the quality.

28. Are there plans to review the Juveniles Act (Cap 56) 1973?

In 2012 with the help of UNICEF, the Ministry reviewed the current Juvenile Act because it was not in compliance to some of the CRC statements, though Fiji had ratified the Convention in 1993. The outcome of this review has resulted in the draft Child Justice Bill and the Draft Child Care and Protection Bill which is currently with the SG's Office.

29. Rights, Empowerment and Cohesion (REACH) for Rural and Urban Fijians Project:

a. Elaborate on the Rights, Empowerment and Cohesion (REACH) program and how it has benefitted rural and urban Fijians.

The REACH project was funded by the Government of Japan from 2015 – 2018 with total funding support of USD\$2.65 million. The funding was administered by UNDP and the core partners in this Project are the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, the Legal Aid Commission and the Ministry of Justice.

It aims to promote peace building, social cohesion and inclusiveness. The project conducts awareness raising of the social, economic and legal rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji. It provides access to the services associated with these rights, and also strengthens institutional capacity to these services. A mobile services delivery approach is undertaken to reach communities throughout all of Fiji with the focus to reach the furthest behind first.

Through REACH, the Fijian Government can confidently say that they have not left anyone behind, and have reached those in remote areas and in marginalized communities and enabled access to services for those who are bedridden, those who do not have the financial means to access essential Government services and those that find it difficult to travel. The REACH project also visited the maritime islands, to assist those who have difficulty access services due to bad weather and the cost involved in ocean travel. The elderly and disabled and women are able to obtain legal information, have documents certified and action necessary legal process which also assist's them to access broader MWCPA social protection services.

REACH is the means to inform the people about their social and economic rights under the Constitution and lets them know that the Government is leaving no-one behind. It's a commitment made real for the people as the Government puts actions to their promises. It is an important modality for Fiji because it allows Government officials to reach the furthest.

The REACH project creates networks, builds trust and empowers individuals through service delivery. Since its inception in July 2015, REACH has seen a remarkable achievement with an accumulative result of visiting 956 communities, including 139 districts out of the 196 districts in Fiji and all the 14 provinces including Rotuma.

A total of 22,223 people attended the awareness session including 9,306 women, 9,050 men and 3,877 children] and 37,807 people benefitted from the services delivery including 21,587 women and 16,220 men. This project allows individuals to have their documents prepared so they can better access available government services and facilitates better record keeping. The REACH project funding comes to an end in June 2019 and we believe these critical activities should continue.

b. As part of the REACH program, what means are used to create awareness in maritime Communities on the social, economic and legal rights of individuals as well as to enhance access to legal services?

Fijian citizens, of whom many reside in rural, maritime and urban informal settlements and villages, usually cover long distances to reach government offices typically situated in urban and semi-urban areas. This result in citizens facing delays and challenges in addition to lost in income as they bear additional costs of transportation, accommodation and so on, to be able to access basic public services. The project also maximized service delivery by including civil society partners who provided health and social services.

1. Mobile Reach Buses: REACH is designed to be driven in a mobile approach. In terms of providing awareness in the communities, 3 custom designed (Fijian Made – by PA Lal) buses which has inbuilt WIFI, Solar Panels

and confined office spaces conceptualizes the model of an office & perfectly designed to take services on wheels. They are stationed in the Central, Northern and Western Division. In places where the Buses cannot be go, officials travel by foot, shipping vessels or fibre glass boats with their working equipment's to conduct the REACH.

2. Village to Village Approach: Government officials have to go through draconian conditions to reach people who are physically and geographically disadvantaged, whether it is on foot, boat, or difficult road access areas. However, the key to REACH is that the services to others matters the most. Differing from the Government Road Shows, REACH is the means to take services using the village to village approach.

Justification: Numerous REACH mission we've received commendations about the initiative because most of the issues that are not addressed during the Tikina and Provincial Council meeting, villagers are able to voice their concerns and there are immediate responses to all their queries.

3. Multi- Sectorial Partnership: The demonstration of an integrated approach by the respective agencies immensely boosted the recognition of the programme with not only its mobile service approach but bridging the gap to reach out to those who are challenged physically and geographically. Agencies such as Legal Aid Commission, Birth, Death & Marriage Registry (Ministry of Justice), Fiji Human Rights And Anti-Discrimination Commission, Fiji Consumer Council Commission, Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development (Divisional Commissioners), Ministry of I-Taukei Affairs – Provincial Council Roko Tui and the NGO, Medical Service Pacific to name a few who have played a key role in delivering REACH and community services.

4. Partnership with Legal Aid Commission (LAC): The partnership under the umbrella of the project enable communities to be made aware of their constitutional rights and off course boots access to justice from the services provided by Legal Aid Commission such as Legal Advice on Civil, Family and Criminal Laws, Drafting of the Wills, attestation & witnessing of documents. The role of the LAC has proven a clear demarcation of role, complementing agencies and more importantly providing more access to Justice for all Fijians.

c. What plans are in place to increase awareness of the abovementioned constitutional rights and improve access to legal services in urban, rural and maritime communities?

Given the resounding success of the REACH project in reaching Fijians in remote and rural locations, it is essential for the Fijian Government to ensure the continuity of the REACH project beyond the donor-funded period of 3 years which is set to expire on 30 June 2019. This program not only supports the strategic aims of the Fijian Government it links all the MWCPA activities and is a cohesive platform from which to consolidate knowledge, learning and data. It aids the effectiveness of the MWCPA to deliver on our commitments. REACH is critical to our aims to consolidate and streamline service delivery.

1. Establishing REACH Unit in the Ministry of Women (MWCPA) with Approved Human Resource: This is part of the sustainability of the project and given that MWCPA is a very important partner to the project and also considering its cohorts of service delivery, it is crucial that MWCPA take lead and establish this Unit. We recommend that this should be fully funded by the Government and it is now in the budget process for the Financial Year 2019 – 2020.

2. Decentralizing the Governance for REACH: The governance structure for REACH will be decentralized placing the Outreach Divisional Officers in the 4 Divisions. These officers will solely manage their Divisional Outreach Programmes and provide cohesive trainings such as legal literacy, governance and rights to the communities and the Ministry.

3. Memorandum of Understanding with Core Agencies: We have consulted with Legal Aid Commission, Birth Death and Marriages Office to pursue an understanding so that we continue the good work for REACH. The ideology behind REACH is to strengthen collaboration between Government Agencies, enabling better planning through access to information and increasing efficiency. This integrated mechanism is crucial to improve data management and to our beneficiaries can better access their social, economic and legal rights.

The REACH model is so successful that it is now being replicated in other Pacific Islands such as Samoa and Tonga and Fiji is taking the lead to advice on this program model.

30. Provide reasons for the increase in Teenage Pregnancy, Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, and Child Neglect cases by 12.8% in 2015 relative to 2014. What strategies does the Ministry have in place to address these issues?

There are many reasons contributing to the increase in child abuse cases; however, one common factor that has appeared over and over again in our programs and services, is the deterioration of the family Unit. The majority of cases appear to have some link to family issues or family dysfunction or family breakdown. Either, due to divorce or separation, or there is no family time spent nurturing or parenting children. Reports note that some families may face

challenges with parenting skills and lack coping strategies to handle high stress situations such as unemployment or substance abuse. Such issues are being recorded by those using the Child Helpline services. However, further research is required to better understand this pattern and we are entering a partnership with the universities to further this research.

However, the increase number of reported cases can also be the result of on-going education and awareness on child abuse that has been highlighted by the relevant Agencies and Civil Society in rights education programs. Also, the discussion of rights and services in the media can increase usage and reporting of government services. Awareness on rights, also empowers the public to have the confidence to report a case of Sexual or Gender Based Violence or Child Abuse.

The Ministry is working in partnership with other stakeholders such Save the Children, Fiji, Medical Services Pacific, Empower Pacific and other Government Agencies to create awareness on child protection and to take into the communities the training package on positive discipline and parenting. The Ministry is also engaging the Faith Based Organizations to use their platforms and networks to drive the message of 'transformed communities with empowered women, children, older persons and the disadvantaged'. Working together to strengthen families and better protect our children.

With the REACH Program, the Ministry is making inroads to our rural communities with this message as part of its package of empowering our communities.

31. Can the Ministry inform whether the State Homes for children are still in operation?

Yes, both State Homes are still operative, with the Juvenile Rehabilitation and Development Center for boys currently situated at Samabula and the Girls Home is at Domain Road known as the Pearly Gates Home. The Juvenile Center is administered by the Department because it is also a holding Center for Juvenile offenders who are remanded awaiting trial, while the Pearly Gates Home is outsourced to the Christian Mission Fellowship with an annual grant of \$150,000 to assist in its administration.

32. Elaborate on the Fire Victims Relief Assistance programme and the eligibility requirements to qualify for assistance?

This assistance is given to households who have had their property and belongings destroyed in the cause of an accidental fire (not when a person deliberately sets fire to his/her own house). Such a disaster is unforeseen and considered as a crisis, thus, the aftermath of such an incident can be traumatic physically and psychologically to the household members. The assistance is therefore given to the family to help provide for their immediate basic necessities that have been lost in the fire and not to rebuild their home. Assistance for the rebuilding of the homes can be sourced from the Department of Housing.

33. Page 20 of Annual Report (Table 17) – The committee notes that a total of 236 recipients graduated under the welfare to workfare programme between 2010 and 2015. Please inform us on what happens to those individuals who are unable to graduate. Does the Ministry continue to assist these recipients?

The intention of the graduation program is to assist recipients move out of the system with some form of income generating program to empower them to become self-reliant. Unfortunately, in some few cases projects may not turn out as we would expect, and this can be due to market competition, lack of business acumen, traditional obligations, cost of goods and transport, natural disaster or abuse of funds. When projects fail, the recipients do not get assisted automatically, procedures will require them to lodge an application stating the reason for failure and an assessment will be conducted by the Ministry to validate their application and the project before a decision is made to reinstate their welfare assistance depending on their circumstances.

34. Update the committee on the Ministry's bilateral arrangement with the Indonesian Government in regard to providing training opportunities to Fijian women in Indonesia. Is this arrangement still in place?

This is a continuous partnership with the Government of Indonesia and this year Fiji will host the meeting with the Joint Technical Working Group in June 2019. This will further develop the areas of cooperation as noted in the Memorandum of Agreement on Programmes in relation to Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and the Social Protections Programmes with Indonesia. Through this MOA, Gender Responsive Budgeting Trainings have been delivered with the engagement of other Government ministries such as Economy, Local

Government, Ministry of Health & Medical Services, to name the few whom have benefited from this training.

35. In addition to the 21 Poverty Alleviation Programmes monitored by the Poverty Monitoring Unit in 2015, what other programmes are monitored by the Unit across other Ministries and Departments?

The Poverty Monitoring Unit (PMU) which was part of the establishment of the Office of the Prime Minister moved to the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) in 2015. During this Financial Year, the Permanent Secretary for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation advised the Unit to monitor the Programmes implemented by MWCPA during this period noting the subsequent transfer of the Unit to MWCPA.

For the information of the Honourable Members, the Poverty Monitoring Unit was established in 2003 at the then Ministry of Social Welfare. Then in 2010, the Unit was moved to the Office of the Prime Minister. Subsequently, in 2015 the Unit was moved back to the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. Furthermore, the Role of the Unit is to Monitor, Evaluate, Report on the Impact of Governments Poverty Alleviation Programme on the beneficiaries of the respective programs.

Unit monitored Programs under the Government's Priority Areas for Fiscal Year 2014 as follows:

Ministry of Education

1.0 Bus –fare Subsidy Programme

2.0 Tuition Fee Grant

Ministry of Health

3.0 Rural Health Centre

4.0 Pharmaceutical Services

Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation

- 5.0 Income Generation Project
- 6.0 NGO Grants
- 7.0 Women Plan of Action
- 8.0 Women Resource Centres
- 9.0 Care & Protection Allowance
- 10.0 Poverty Benefit Scheme
- 11.0 Social Pension Scheme
- 12.0 Rural Roads
- 13.0 Jetties

In **2015** the following Programs within MWCPA were monitored:

- 1.0 Bus Fare Subsidy (Elderly/Disability)
- 2.0 Community Work Programme
- 3.0 Child Protection Allowance
- 4.0 Child Protection Programme (UNICEF)
- 5.0 Fiji Women's Federation
- 6.0 Fire Victims Relief
- 7.0 Fiji National Council of Disabled Persons (FNCDP)
- 8.0 Food Voucher Programme
- 9.0 Grants to Girls Home
- 10.0 Capital Grants to Voluntary Organization
- 11.0 NGO Grant
- 12.0 Gender Equality & Reproductive Rights (UNFPA)
- 13.0 Poverty Benefit Scheme
- 14.0 Social Pension Scheme
- 15.0 Voluntary Contribution to UN Women
- 16.0 Volunteer Marriage Counselling Allowance
- 17.0 Welfare Graduation Programme
- 18.0 Women Plan of Action

19.0 Fiji National Women's Expo

20.0 National Council for Older Persons

21.0 Child Protection Program

2016 ANNUAL REPORT – 1 JANUARY 2016 TO 31 JULY 2016 RELATED QUESTIONS

36. The questions below relate to the Ministry’s role in the Government rehabilitation programme following Tropical Cyclone Winston:

- a. Provide a breakdown of the cash top up given to the Welfare recipients under the Poverty Benefit Scheme, Care and Protection Allowance and Social Pension Scheme.**

<i>Program</i>	<i>No. of Recipients</i>	<i>Amount paid out</i>
<i>PBS</i>	22,773	\$ 13,663,800.00
<i>C&P</i>	3,334	\$ 2,000,400.00
<i>SPS</i>	18,235	\$ 5,470,500.00
<i>Total</i>	44,342	\$ 21,134,700.00

- b. Provide a breakdown of the Food Voucher Top-Up given to the 12 priority areas affected. Which areas were these?**

<i>Program</i>	<i>No. of recipients</i>	<i>Amount paid out</i>
<i>SPS</i>	8026	\$ 802,600.00
<i>CP</i>	1757	\$ 527,100.00
<i>PBS</i>	10705	\$ 3,211,500.00
<i>Total</i>	20488	\$ 4,541,200.00

The 12 priority areas were Vanuabalavu, Lomaiviti Group, Taveuni, Yacata, Savusavu, Bua – Nabouwalu, Naitasiri, Tailevu, Rakiraki, Tavua, Ba, and Lautoka to Yasawa.

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37. The committee notes that as part of the Tropical Cyclone Winston Rehabilitation Programs, The Ministry distributed a total of \$19.9 million to all social protection program recipients. Were all of these recipients affected by TC Winston?

Yes all recipients of the social protection program were affected directly or indirectly. The directly affected were those in the 12 priority affected areas where families had lost their homes and belongings. The cyclone caused temporary food insecurity and changes in the market supply which impacted the whole country and caused price increases and shocks. Many families were relocated (children had to change schools) and many suffered from the psychological impact over the longer term.

38. Provide details on the number of Hardware cash (m-paisa) cards distributed to grant Recipients under the Help for Home Initiative for the purchase of building materials for repair or construction of homes damaged by TC Winston.

List of Hardware Suppliers

- ↵ Dayal Sawmillers Limited,
- ↵ Carpenters Hardware,
- ↵ CBS Power Solutions (Fiji) Limited,
- ↵ Vinod Patel and Company Limited,
- ↵ R.C. Manubhai & Co. Ltd.,
- ↵ Rakiraki Hardware,
- ↵ Local Woods and Hardware Limited,
- ↵ Kasabias Limited,
- ↵ Refrigeration Electrical Services Limited
- ↵ Haroons Hardware

The role of the Ministry was to register the applicants, however, the issue of the M-Paisa cards was the responsibility of Vodafone and their reporting was to the Ministry of Economy who coordinates between the Hardware Companies for the delivery of the building material. The Ministry do not have the breakdown per Hardware Company and costing as requested, only the total amount of Cards issued as extracted from the Vodafone system which was provided to MOE (39,617).

39. The committee notes from the auditor's report that internal control weaknesses were noted In the implementation of the above two programs which need to be strengthened by the Ministry. Clarify what these control issues were and whether the Ministry has strengthened its internal control to prevent the recurrence of such issues in times of natural disasters in the future.

This was the first time that the Ministry had engaged in such a program of this magnitude which required the deployment of most of its staff to the affected areas around the country. The project had different stakeholders including Ministry of Economy, Solicitor General's Office, Vodafone Fiji and the Hardware Companies, who had specific responsibilities. When the program started and because it was totally new and due of the urgency to implement, there were no written guidelines (SOP) so the Ministry while implementing the project was developing the guidelines along the way, and this resulted in some of the discrepancies identified. On the same note, as the project progressed, directives kept on changing from the decision makers because of the demand. It was also a novel experience for most of the officers who were given a crash course on what to expect and then they were on the road around the country implementing the program.

This was a learning experience not only for the Ministry but for Government as a whole because it was the first time that we had used the social protection platform for disaster response.

As an outcome, the Ministry has developed guidelines which were used in the Home Care exercise in 2017 after Cyclone Keni and Josey. This exercise also caught the interest of the International Community with the World Bank and World Food Program coming in to help with training and assisting in the development of the National Disaster Framework where the Social Protection platform will be featuring prominently in future natural disaster responses.

The Ministry was true to the 5 Years National Development Plan 2017-2021 and responded to support the multi-sectorial approach noted therein, and aimed to enable rapid and sustainable recovery and to promote better access to social services.

The success of this approach and the use of the Ministries Social Protection platform in disasters have been recognized by International partners such as UN and the World Bank and is being considered a 'best practice model' worthy of replication in other countries in times of disaster.

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40. Can the Ministry explain how the National Domestic Violence Helpline has helped to increase the level of reporting on Gender Based Violence?

The Domestic Violence Helpline provides a platform where:

- ↪ Anyone can report incidences of gender based violence. This is when one is near an accessible communications network.
- ↪ Those they are not able to visit service providers physically can access the service from wherever they. This is through referral of services to specific agency – such Fiji Police Force, Department of Social Welfare etc. These cases are followed up by FWCC to ensure callers/survivors are dealt with accordingly-accessing the services.
- ↪ The Helpline has provided a platform where incidences of gender based violence are reported.
- ↪ The helpline as also provide platform for referrals, allowing clients to access other services apart from gender based violence. This includes services provided by other agencies.
- ↪ The line has recorded over 1043 calls reporting or requesting information about DV with over 2049 calls for information and 6 calls from PLWD's.

41. Child Placements in Residential Facilities:

a. How are children who attain the age of 18 years prepared to exit from the Residential Care Homes and are there children above the age of 18 who are still looked after in the residential facilities?

When children come into the Homes, part of the work welfare officers and the Homes do is to develop care plans which will include their exit from the Home.

This involves inculcating life skills such as how to live independently, budgeting,

cooking skills etc. to prepare them to be independent. The Department in working with the Homes will try and find relatives and family who are willing to take these children on, however, if this does not eventuate, arrangements will be made with the friends of the Homes or families who are willing to look after these children. Government then provides assistance through its social protection programs to support these families. In cases where children cannot be placed outside of the Home, even though they have turned 18 because there are no families or relatives to help them, or because they are disabled or mentally challenged, the Homes will continue to support them and the Government will continue to provide funding assistance (so no one is left behind). Sadly, there are children under this category who are still living in the Homes because they have been abandoned early in their childhood and because they have some mental or physical disability.

b. Who monitors these children after they exit the residential facilities?

In many occasions the Homes and likewise the Welfare officers will continue to follow up and assist these children in arranging scholarships, schools and sometimes working with the churches to support them.

42. How are the Residential Homes for children monitored to ensure that the Minimum Standards of the Homes are met? Have Audits of the 10 Residential Homes been carried out?

It is a requirement that all Homes are compliant or are working towards compliance to the Minimum Standards; thus, audits are conducted annually to ensure that Homes are safe and protective of the children under its care. This audit is conducted by a Team lead by the Assistant Director Child Services and this is to be done bi-annually. However, apart from this external audit Homes were encouraged to conduct their own internal audits as a way of improving

their own care and safety measures for their institution. External Audit for the Homes for this year is scheduled to be held in this quarter (April).

43. Page 21 of Annual Report – Clarify whether the children under foster placement are Available for adoption. Have there been any cases of adoption of foster children over the years?

When children are referred to the Department, especially those that have been abandoned, the first option that the Department will do it is to check its list of adoption applications and try and match the child with the applications. Placing children in the institutions is the last option, and once possible candidates for adoption are identified the child is then placed under foster care with the possible adoptive parents for 3 months after which the foster parents can lodge their application for adoption. The Department has a Register that records all the adoption cases that have taken place in the past years.

44. Page 27 of Annual Report - Identify which seven NGO’s were assisted with grants by the Ministry and provide a breakdown of the programmes which were funded together with the grant allocation for each programme.

No.	NGO	\$
1.	Dilkusha Home	27,000
2.	Methodist Veilomani	24,000
3	Homes Of Hope	24,000
4	Empower Pacific	25,000
5	Salvation Army	20,000
6	Treasure House	15,000
7	St. Christopher	30,000

45. Provide more information on the Loloma Beggars Project and how many recipients have been assisted through this project.

The Loloma Beggars Project is the Unit set within the Department of Social Welfare to address the issues of Beggars. It is made up of welfare officers and police with other stakeholders such as municipal officials and health workers. The term "Loloma" is used to give a more humanitarian and compassionate approach to the work carried out with beggars and this include profiling them, helping them return to their families, providing accommodation and shelter, helping them with employment and assisting with small income generating projects. Sixteen beggars were assisted with Income Generation Projects across Fiji. They were trained as cleaners, dalo farmers, technicians and carpenters. This project is resourced at approximately 100,000 FJD per year.

46. We note that the Ministry assisted the HART Nursing Home in Nasinu with an NCOP Grant of \$22,126 to facilitate services for older persons accommodated in the Home. What type of assistance is given to other HART Homes around Fiji given that they house single mothers and older persons?

HART has funding from Government through Ministry of Housing for its HART Villages around the country. This funding through NCOP is specifically for the administration and operation of the Nursing Home which was based on a rising need within their villages. HART had discovered that many of its old residents were living by themselves which is a risk considering their age and frailties such as dementia, arthritis; thus, it was decided that they have the Nursing Home so that all these old persons can be looked after under one roof with care givers looking after them full time. This minimizes the risk at the same time free up some of the flats that can be occupied by a mother and her children rather than

one person as was before. Most of the families living in HART villages are beneficiaries of Government's social protection programs.

47. Is there a high demand for the three State Homes for Older Persons in Labasa, Lautoka and Samabula and how is the Ministry assisting those who are not able to get placement in the Homes?

Yes. The Ministry is now seeing a trend where old people have now been abandoned by their relatives and there is a growing waiting list of applicants who have been referred or applied to be accommodated in one of these Homes. More challenging is the fact that some of these cases do not fall under the category of old persons but also include those with some form of disability whether physical or mental. As currently, there are no dedicated Homes for disabled persons. Thus, in trying to address this issue, the Ministry is working with the other Homes for older persons for referrals if possible, at the same time encouraging the communities through its awareness programs for families to fulfil their duty to look after their elderly family members, and to access the Government Social Pension Scheme or the Disability Allowance. In order to achieve this, the Ministry is also conducting care giving trainings with the communities in trying to build their capacity to care for their old people.

Further research is required to understand the trend and to provide a baseline on the need for respite care and training and resources for carers.

48. Provide further information on the type of trainings offered at the Barefoot College in Nadogo, Macuata.

At this juncture, the Ministry is in its initial stages towards the construction of the Barefoot College in Nadogo, Macuata. The Fiji Barefoot College will be the first of its kind in the Pacific and it is expected to be a Regional Center. It will

be life changing project for our rural women and it greatly complements the government's poverty alleviation strategies to empower women through solar engineering as well as supporting the Green Growth Framework. In 2012, a total of 10 rural women were trained at Barefoot College in India and the Ministry envisages that these pioneers will be able to champion this initiative with the upcoming students who are to be trained in the new College. We expect the number of students to increase once the facility is completed. This program is still in progress.

49. What type of advice has been given to the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation by the Fiji Women's Federation Committee on Public Service Policy, Programs, Legislation and other emerging issues that impact women and gender?

The Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation holds a bi-annual forum called the Ministerial Forum and it consists of Women NGOs, CSOs and FBOs whereby it consults with experienced agencies and recognizes the expertise and resources. This strengthens and builds networks, which informs the ministry so it can effectively address women's issues nationally. It assists the Ministry to understand the challenges faced by members, in achieving gender equality. Given that the Ministry/Government leads in guiding and developing policies related to women's' issues and concerns, this forum is critical and provides an opportunity for members to advise the Minister on what is the actual situation and challenges they face and to propose solutions.

So far, there have been two Ministerial Forum meetings held. The first forum agenda was focused on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its implementation, the second forum meeting held this year was on the existence of the Beijing Platform of

Action(BPA) and its framework and how Fiji's participation at the BPA is important especially in the pursuit to advance women.

50. Page 36 of Annual Report - Elaborate on the policy briefs which were presented to the Permanent Secretary-WCPA and the Minister for Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation as the outcome of the monitoring and evaluation reporting on the implementation of the Integrated National Poverty Eradication Programme (INPEP).

In 2016-2017 the Unit monitored the following Programmes and focused on how the Program has impacted the livelihood of the beneficiaries.

The Program/Projects identified and monitored are basically targeted towards individuals, groups and community based projects depending on the Programme objective and the target group it aims to assist. From the results of the survey carried out, majority of the findings for those projects that were in the partially active to active stages were found to be in favor of the programme being implemented. Challenges identified are also highlighted to Programme Implementers for programme improvement. Views of Programme Implementers are also noted for Programs to be administered effectively and efficiently.

It was also noted that not all projects visited were viable/ active, some were partially active and others were non-active. Findings, challenges and recommendations have been provided to the respective agencies for further improvement and viability of the programs

1.0 Ministry of Agriculture

1.1 Agriculture Extension Services:

The Agriculture Extension Division as per its Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) role is to:

- extend and transfer appropriate, proven and relevant information and technology from Research and other reliable sources to the farmers.
- work closely with the private sectors and agriculture stakeholders with the sole purpose of boosting the production of crops for local consumption and targeting export market opportunities.

The Programme has impacted the livelihood of interviewed beneficiaries as well as their income status. Some are able to find markets to sell their produce; some farmers have moved from subsistence level to semi-commercial status and more so are able to sustain their family daily needs with income they receive from selling their farm produce.

Some of the Challenges identified which were opportunities for improvements are: Agricultural Officer is to Farmer ratio: lack of resource (human and capital); lack of support advice from Programme Implementer and lack of ownership from program beneficiaries and Ministry of Agriculture has taken note of this and are working towards addressing this.

1.2 Agriculture Marketing Authority

The Agriculture Marketing Authority (AMA) Act No.2 of 2004 established the Agriculture Marketing Authority to facilitate the purchase, sale and exportation of Agro-produce and or related matters. The Authority will provide the following services as covered in the AMA Act:

- To assist the producers of Agro-producers in marketing of their products;
- To identify markets for and to facilitate and develop marketing of agro-produce;
- To purchase, sell and export and import agro-produce or import agro-input; and

- To do any other thing necessary to properly carry its functions and powers under this AMA Act.

Across the Divisions, the Programme has impacted the lives of interviewed beneficiaries. Some challenges were prices given by AMA were below the Market Price and farmers do not want to sell their produce to AMA and prefer to sell to other buyers whose price is more than AMA.

The challenges faced were opportunities as well for improvement and recommended to Programme Implementer for further improvement of administering of Programs.

1.3 Land Drainage & Flood Protection Programme

The Land Drainage and Flood Protection programme is managed by the Land and Water resource Management Department (LWRM) of Ministry of Agriculture. The following are the major objectives of the programmes as per their Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP);

- To reduce the threat of flooding, and flood damages to agricultural crops, livestock, properties, infrastructure developments, industrial, and business sectors including human lives,
- Promote sustainable development in all sectors of economy, land and water resource management, through reduced flood risks,
- Improve socio-economic status of the country's population of which approximately 54% are living in the rural areas.
- Different assistance through the Program was: Floodgate; Flap gate and Drainage.

Majority of the interviewed beneficiaries have seen a notable increase in their yield while others who did not have a positive impact were those that have stopped planting.

Challenges analysed by the Unit were: Staffing issues; Importance of maintaining updated and correct data; Beneficiaries to be mentored to take ownership of their projects and Relevant Stakeholders to work in collaboration in the implementation of Projects and respective agencies are working towards addressing this.

1.4 Rural Outer Island Agricultural Development Programme

The Rural and Outer Island Development Programme (ROI) came into effect in 2012 after a cabinet decision.

The long term objective of ROI is to enhance the livelihoods of people in the rural areas and outer islands of Fiji. The immediate purpose is to increase market access opportunities and services that will enable beneficiaries in the rural areas and outer islands for access to services and reaching out to the furthest. Relative isolation of these ROI areas has tended to exclude them from the main stream of Fiji's economic and social development, denying opportunities to those seeking education and material advancement for themselves, their families and their communities.

There were different types of assistance provided under the Program. This assistance ranged from: farm road; vegetable project; pineapple project, vanilla project, floriculture; pawpaw project, maximize land utilization and pig multiplication.

Majority of the interviewed beneficiaries have stated there is improvement in their livelihood and income. Challenges faced were also highlighted for further improvement of the Programme such as: Cost Benefit Analysis should be carried out; Contributions to project failures; Connecting farmers to potential markets; Proper monitoring of Projects to ensure sustainability; Availability of resources (capital/human); Regulating a market price to protect interest of farmers and relevant training to be provided.

2.0 Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and National Disaster Management

2.1 Divisional Development Programme

The Divisional Development Programme or Public Sector Investment Programmes implemented by the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and National Disaster Management. Under the programme, there are different Projects implemented by other Line Agencies and the assistance is directed towards medium size fully funded infrastructural projects at a minimum cost per project of \$100,000.00

Projects implemented through the Program ranged from: Health Centers; Nursing Stations; Government Stations; Extension Grid; Irish Crossing; Water Supply Project and Circular Roads.

The projects visited have had a significant impact on the lives of the beneficiaries interviewed. The infrastructural projects that has been fully implemented has assisted rural communities in terms of increased access to health services, education, markets instead of having to travel long distances through rugged terrain and spend hard earned money on paying fares .Furthermore, increased access to clean, safe and affordable drinking water to provide for safe and better living condition. In addition, implementing projects in such communities have created temporary employment for the unemployed.

Some of the challenges highlighted during the survey were: Projects to be monitored from implementation to completion stage and proper documentation to be carried out; Updated and correct data to be maintained; Planning and proper coordination of resources (transport, staffing) to ensure efficient and effective delivery of service; Communities and those that benefits from such assistance/ projects should be empowered and informed to take ownership of such projects; Strengthened collaboration and integration between

Government Ministries and Stakeholders to ensure successful implementation of such projects and proper feasibility study to be carried before implementation of projects. We understand that the respective agencies are working towards this.

2.2 Rural Housing Assistance

The Rural Housing Assistance Programme implemented by the Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development & National Disaster Management (MRMD&NDM) was initially established in 1976 to address the housing needs of the country's rural population. The aim of this programme is to eliminate homelessness in rural Fiji through provision of affordable, durable and cyclone resistant structures.

The objective for the scheme is to create better housing opportunities for rural people, alleviate poverty housing standards and homelessness and motivate and increase people's participation in decision making and or implementation of their own development to improve their general living conditions whether social, economic. *(Source: MRD&NDM)*

According to the analysis carried out on the beneficiaries of the Programme it was noted that:

- Respondents are able to live in a decent home for village life and call it their own home;
- It has brought sense of responsibility for their lives, able to extend their houses from the normal plan by adding washroom, toilets and so forth;
- Able to provide their family with a decent home and has taken a great burden off them and
- Women are greatly positively affected as they have their own home.
- Majority of the respondents are able to extend their house by building flush toilets which is an indication of the impact of the assistance.

After carefully analyzing the results of the survey, the Unit noted that the programme should be supported with an increase allocation to cater for the increase demand in application for housing assistance; carpenter fees to be included in the RHA Budgetary allocation to assist those recipients who cannot meet professional to semi- professional carpenters cost; Importance of maintaining an updated and reliable data and Proper and correct monitoring to be carried out from implementation to completion stage of project. We understand the agency is working towards this.

3.0 Ministry Sugar

3.1 Upgrade of Cane Access Road

The Upgrading of Cane Access Road Programme was administered by the then Ministry of Provincial Development and National Disaster Management. In 2012, the programme was moved to the Ministry of Sugar at the Office of the Prime Minister.

The objective of the programme is to bring to motor able condition all cane access roads in the cane belt and link them to the main roads to ease cartage and ensure smoother and consistent supply of sugarcane to the mills at the start and throughout the crushing season. At the end of the crush there should be no stand-over cane owing to poor cane access roads.

There were different forms of assistance provided through the programme as: culvert, drainage, grading, gravelling.

From the views of the interviewed beneficiaries, there was a notable positive response which is an indication that the livelihood of the beneficiaries has improved following the program implementation.

Challenges identified which are opportunities for improvement includes: assistance through the programme should be fully provided; continuously monitoring of contractors; provision of mechanical harvester to assist labor shortage problems; Strengthened collaboration and integration between relevant stakeholders.

4.0 Ministry of Land and Mineral Resources

4.1 Groundwater Assessment & Development Project

The Mineral Resources Department (MRD) is responsible for groundwater resources of the nation; including its monitoring and protection from abuse and contamination. The objective of the above program is to provide groundwater resources as a source of water or to alleviate water supply problems in rural areas and small islands. It benefits communities, villages and the nation for irrigation in agriculture, water source for dairy farms and commercial bottled mineral water industry. Groundwater is used by large number of people in the main and smaller islands who obtain their water from springs, hand-dug wells and bore-holes.

The program is divided into two parts which are:

1. **Groundwater Assessment & Development Small Islands** - the objective is to make available

Groundwater resources where present for human consumption and development through

properly conducted hydrogeological investigation and assessment to provide quality borehole.

2. **Groundwater Assessment & Development Large Islands-** to make available groundwater

resources where present for human consumption to alleviate water problems in Viti Levu and Vanua Levu through properly conducted hydrogeological investigation and assessment to provide quality borehole. Projects undertaken

through the Programme were drilling of wells in Viti Levi, Vanua Levu and Small Islands.

The following were some of the challenges emphasized during the survey and the Unit has recommended as way forward which will be opportunities for improvement:

- Maintenance of the Project Structures (power source, pump and reservoirs)
- Feasibility study to be carried out before project implementation to ensure sustainability of project
- Strengthen project monitoring
- Mapping for Water Project Sites and
- Site Assessments

5.0 Ministry of Economy

5.1 Rural Postal Services

The Unit was not able to monitor the Program due to lack of data provided by the Implementer. The data provides the platform for the Unit to carry out its survey. It was also noted that the Programme is a subsidy given by Government for basic postal services to the rural areas where the companies may not find this areas economically viable.

6.0 Ministry of Local Government and Environment

6.1 Housing Assistance Relief Trust (HART)

The Housing Assistance and Relief Trust or HART has been in operation for 46 years, it was founded in 1970 as a project of the Fiji Council of Churches, a Charitable Organization, as a result of the background work done by the Catholic Church in Fiji. HART is registered as a Charitable Trust under the

Charitable Trust Act with the objective of “providing shelter for destitute and the near-destitute families”.

The affected groups that are provided with shelter from HART fall in the following categories:

- Breakup families and households (Single mothers and their children who are often physically and mentally challenged).
- Elderly who are neglected by their families
- Chronically ill and physically challenged families with no healthy male breadwinners and with dependent children whose existing housing is unsatisfactory because of dilapidation, overcrowding or for reasons of rental charges being disproportionate to their financial means.

Works carried out by HART were construction of newly flats and renovation of existing flats. Those that lived in HART Homes feel very secure and it is a good environment to bring up children. However, some challenges identified were that HART was not safe when referring to the structures in HART (fencing and renovation), theft and OHS compliance of some of the HART (Fire exit doors); Need for strong enforcement of the Parental Maintenance scheme (Family Law Act 2003); Strengthen of Nursing Home; Need for Continuously Monitoring of OHS Compliance and Renovation of Flats and Need for Housing Assistance Cover for Low Income Families.

7.0 Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport

7.1 Department of Energy

7.2 Rural Electrification Project

Rural electrification is the process of bringing electrical power to rural and remote areas. Rural electrification has been the cornerstone of rural energy programs in developing countries for many years and has provided a safe and

efficient energy source for residential and public lighting, pumping drinking water, irrigation, refrigeration, rural industries, and many others.

In Fiji, the objective of Rural Electrification Programme is to provide continuous electricity to all potential consumers in Fiji. Extension Grids, Diesel Generators and Solar Systems are the three programs that are provided by the Department of Energy in terms of Rural Electrification.

Projects implemented through the Programme were: Solar Home System Assistance; FEA Schemes; Diesel Schemes and Generator Schemes in identified communities.

In terms of improvement in Education, the findings gathered show majority of the recipients highlighting that there was improvement in their children's education. This improvement is a direct result of having accessibility to lights after hours as students are able to study for longer hours. Some 23 sites were visited by Poverty Monitoring Unit.

It is noted that Rural Electrification Programme is meeting its primary objective of providing continuous electricity to all potential consumers in Fiji through Extension Grids, Diesel Generators and Solar Systems. Some of the challenges highlighted include more investment to be provided towards Grid projects to ensure consistent supply of electricity; Investment in Grid to ensure Government is providing development opportunities to individuals and Businesses in the rural setting and need to create an electrification database for ease of information sharing.

51. Inform us on whether there have been any corruption and fraud cases in the payment of social benefits and if so, how has the Ministry rectified these issues?

The Ministry has come across cases where beneficiaries or their families have tried to defraud the system either by continuing to claim the benefits even when the primary recipient has deceased or falsification of information to obtain the assistance. On such incidents the Ministry has no hesitation in referring the cases to the Police and FICAC which has resulted in the charging of the defrauders who had to pay the amount owing or face imprisonment. On other instances, cases were terminated.

However, in trying to curb this incidence of fraudulence, the Ministry continues to conduct annual reviews on cases, have a working agreement with Registrar General to access its Database and with FNPF to check on those who exist in their system. The Ministry is also going to re-introduce the Life Certificate to ensure that recipients are given the responsibility to inform the Ministry of their current residence and their existence.

52. As noted from previous Annual Reports, there has been a low rate of individuals and families who have graduated from “welfare to workfare”. Explain the impact it would have in regard to creating a culture of dependency.

The Welfare Graduation Program is an initiative to help recipients find means of regular income that will assist their families, however, participation in this program is voluntary and with the minimum allocated budget only a few families can be assisted through this initiative. However, the study on the Care and Protection Allowance (UNICEF, 2015) revealed that the majority of the recipients had used the allowance for food and education; this was again reflected in the World Bank study after Tropical Cyclone Winston (2016) where

beneficiaries of the top up payments had rationally used their allowance on essential items helping cope and recover faster from the shocks. An indication that whatever little money recipients received is put to good use, contrary to the common assumption that most of the beneficiaries are totally dependent on the social welfare assistance. It is possible that there will be the opportunists who will try and take advantage of the system, however, our experience have revealed that with the small amount that they receive monthly from the welfare assistance; recipients are always looking for other means of income to supplement this assistance.

53. Inform us on the Budget allocation for the National Women’s Plan of Action, its highlights, and implementation progress.

The Women Plan of Action is a mechanism wherein the entire program for the department for women is founded. In the Women Plan of Action, the key components are (i) Formal Sector Employment and Livelihoods, (ii) Elimination Violence Against Women, (iii) Women & the Law, (iv) Equal Participation in Decision Making, (v) Access to Services and (vi) Gender and Climate Change.

Under the mentioned thematic desk programs are major events which are classified as sub programs like Joint Technical Working Groups (JTWG), Bilateral and Multilateral Partnerships, Convention on the Elimination Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), International Women’s Day and Rural Women’s Day. The department for women funds the commitments for these sub activities annually, under the WPA budget.

The above mentioned programs are resourced under the Women’s Plan of Action budget. This budget also covers field activities that are planned at divisional level and district level which are designed to support women’s

economic empowerment, the elimination of violence, and increase women's participation in decision making and awareness on rights and responsibilities. This budget ensures that the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (Department for Women) can meet its key outputs and commitments under the National Development Plan of the Fiji Government 2017-2021 with no woman is left behind.

The resources provided under this line item, meet the demands from women in the community for training and knowledge to improve livelihoods. Including, creating opportunities for markets, increase capacity for knowledge enhancement; many women would be confidently report violence in their homes, confidence in leadership roles and participatory in decision making.

The Women Plan of Action is our commitment to fulfilling international obligations and the Governments vision of "Transforming Fiji" under the strategic framework which was set out for the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (Department for Women) to strengthen its coordination and is supporting the empowerment of women to reach their full development potential. Key projects include Business training, income generation, legal literacy, women's Expo and gender and climate change.

The program is aligned to support the Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women). In support of women's participation in leadership and decision making at all levels. Linked to strategies aimed to generate greater economic participation, recognition of domestic workers, and elimination of discrimination due the importance of the biological reproductive role of women.

Financial Statements (2016/2017)

54. The committee notes the following issues raised during the audit of the Ministry's 2017 accounts:

The Ministry did not carry out a board of survey to verify the existence and condition of the assets under its authority contrary to Section 49 of the Finance Instructions 2010.

Internal controls over procurement and account reconciliations were generally found to be weak and if not addressed promptly may result material misstatements and possible financial losses in the near future. – Monthly expenditure reports

Provide confirmation on whether the audit issues above have been addressed by the Ministry and state how.

The Ministry had conducted and registered all our assets on a Fixed Asset Register which was submitted to Ministry of Economy in 2018.

55. Page 10 of Annual Report (Revenue) - Provide a breakdown of the Operating Revenue as at 31 July 2017.

Operating Revenue worth of \$3,405 was mainly a cumulative sum derived from the weekly wages deduction as commission paid out weekly to the vendor such as Insurance and Finance institution.

56. The questions below relate to the notes to and forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2017:

a. Note 4 - Details of Appropriation Changes:

- **What was the reason for the Cabinet approval for re-deployment of Funds from Head 43 (Fiji Roads Authority) to SEG 05, SEG 06, and SEG 13?**

Redeployment of funds was carried out by MOE due to meet the shortfall in expenditure commitment for the Ministry at the end of financial year.

- **Provide reasons for the virement of funds in 2017 as shown on pages 14 and 15 of the Annual Report.**

The virement of funds was also carried out for the purpose of regularizing expenditures in allocation that has shortfall or overspent identified at the end of financial year. The Permanent Secretary for Economy and the Ministry Permanent secretary approves virement under their approval limit.

b. Note 6 – Revolving Fund Account:

- **We note that the Ministry’s RFA had an outstanding balance of \$19,049 as at 31 July 2017. Provide a breakdown of how this amount was accrued. What measures has the Ministry taken to ensure that the outstanding accountable advances are reconciled and recovery procedures instigated against officers who do not retire advances?**

The amount was showing in the system due to system errors. Currently all those outstanding advances pending against any officer is subject to salary deduction at the rate of 12% as stipulated in the General Orders.

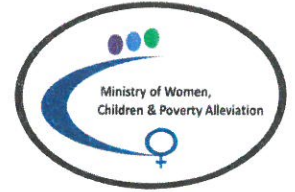
Appendix Two

Supplementary Response



MINISTRY OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

5th Floor Civic Towers, Victoria Parade, PO Box 14068, Suva, Fiji Island
72 Suva Street, Abacus Building, PO Box 2127, Government Buildings, Suva.



Honorable Viam Pillay
The Chairman
Social Affairs Committee

Dear Sir,

RE: Responses to Supplementary Questions: Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation 2014-2017 Annual Reports

On behalf of the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, I wish to thank the Fiji Parliament Social Affairs Committee for the Supplementary Questions that were sent to the Ministry on the 29th of April, 2019 pertaining to the 2014-2017 Annual Reports.

We also thank the Committee for allowing us the opportunity to clarify, update and explain the status of the issues mentioned in the Supplementary Questions. Please refer to the attachment for the responses to the three questions that were asked of us.

Should you require any further information, please do contact me through my Executive Support Unit on phone 9905137 or my Secretary on 9904430 and email anushka.artika@govnet.gov.fj or asenaca.qiolevu@govnet.gov.fj.

Yours sincerely

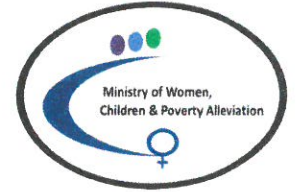
Ms. Jennifer Poole
Permanent Secretary for Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation

All correspondence to be addressed to Permanent Secretary for Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation



MINISTRY OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

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Responses to Supplementary Questions

- 1. The Committee notes that the Ministry is facing challenges in terms of the shortage of funding for human capital and office space. Please inform us on whether additional budget has been requested from the Ministry of Economy to address these issues**

1.1 Human Capital

The Ministry has over the years requested for additional budget for staffing. This has been provided to the Ministry and with the increasing responsibilities that we had taken on, the Ministry of Economy have provided the required budget. These responsibilities includes the following;

i.	i.	Poverty Monitoring Unit	-	2015
ii.	ii.	Golden Age Homes	-	2016
iii.	iii.	REACH Programme	-	2017-18
iv.	iv.	Disability Unit	-	2018-19
v.	v.	Community Based Corrections Unit	-	2018 – 19

All these responsibilities came with the required HR and budget. Furthermore, with the increasing budget, the Ministry has also acquired the HR in both the Women and Social Welfare Department.

1.2 Office Space

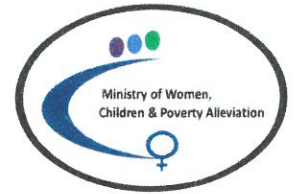
This has been a challenge. Although we have requested over the years to be housed under one building; identifying a building with conducive office space taking into consideration the clients we serve, this has been futile for the Ministry.

In the meantime we have requested for the refurbishment of the Juvenile Centre and the State Homes; for which there is budgetary provisions. We were able to secure Office space in this financial year at the Naibati House and this was done in consultation with the Ministry of Economy.



MINISTRY OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

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2. Inform us on current staffing complement of the Ministry and any existing vacancies that needs to be filled

The Ministry currently have a staff establishment of 383; 289 of which are established and 94 are Government Wage Earners.

The current staff establishment for Established staff is 289. There are twenty (20) vacant positions that are not filled by the officers as well as no one is temporary appointed or acting on those positions. However, we will need to factor in our project positions to take on these positions. Furthermore, since the Ministry is not getting all the positions it is requesting in the next financial, we have been advised to source from within and we will do this looking at the priority areas.

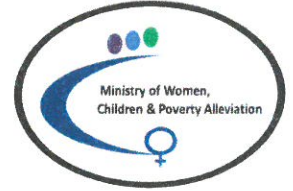
The current staff establishment for GWE is 94; therefore, there are no vacancies. The Ministry has a total of fifty nine (56) vehicles including the 3 REACH buses and a coaster bus. Our staff establishment has 35 drivers however there is a need for 17 additional driver positions to address the shortage. Note that the 94 positions are filled through permanent and temporary appointments.

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3. Provide further information on the Bundle Insurance Program and Bus Fare top up program which were introduced in 2018.

3.1 Brief Report on Fiji Care Bundled Insurance

3.1.1 Background

The Fiji Care Bundled Insurance Package provides life insurance coverage for all Social Protection Program recipients receiving under the Ministry's Social Protection Programs; the Poverty Benefit Scheme, Care and Protection Allowance, Social Pension Scheme and the Disability Allowance Scheme. This coverage commenced from 1st August, 2018. The Agreement was facilitated between the Fiji Care Insurance Ltd and the Solicitor General's Office.

3.1.2 Coverage

The Fiji Care Bundled Insurance Package provided life insurance coverage to over 80,000 recipients. The coverage includes:

- Life term benefit for persons under 70 years of age
- Funeral Benefit for all persons including those over the age of 70yrs to 75 years of age
- Accident or Injury (partial/complete) for all persons
- Fire

Table of: Social Protection Recipients under the Fiji Care Bundled Insurance 2018-19

Programs	Person covered	Number
Social Pension Scheme	Recipient	42,720
Poverty Benefit Scheme	Principal recipient	26,593
Care and Protection Allowance	Caregiver	7,220
Disability Allowance Scheme	Recipient	5451
Total		81,954

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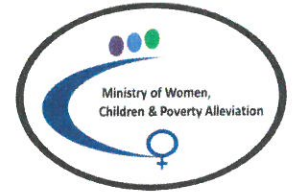


Table of: Social Protection Recipients Registered for Insurance 2018-19

Programs	Number	Registered
Social Pension Scheme	42,720	16,794
Poverty Benefit Scheme	26,593	6,640
Care and Protection Allowance	7,220	561
Disability Allowance Scheme	5,451	865
Total	81,954	24,860

3.1.3 Roles of the Ministry

In the implementation of this program the Ministry is required to do carry out the following:

- I. Registration of insured persons- this process entails the filling out of Insurance Nomination forms. To ensure that each recipient fills out the nomination form the recipients are requested to visit their Field Office or the insurance forms are taken out in Field tours and visits and facilitated by the Field Officer.
- II. To date the Ministry has recorded the 31% registration of recipients in terms of receiving and submitting their Nomination forms.
- III. **Verification of Recipient Information on Nominations** - the Field Welfare Staff are required to assist with the filling out of forms where necessary forward the form to the Fiji Care Office. However recipients are encouraged to submit their own forms.
- IV. To ensure that the information related to the program in relation to the nominations and package is understood by recipients.
- V. Provision of updates on new recipients to the programs.

3.1.4 Challenges

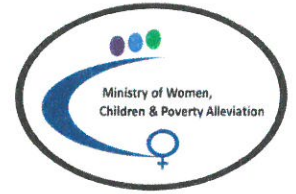
In the course of facilitating this program the Ministry initially did not anticipate the overwhelming demands this program would make on the current field resources both human resource and physical resources. The major challenges faced are:

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- I. The demand for Field Welfare Staff to assist in the filling of forms. The recipients were heavily reliant on Welfare Officers to fill out their forms and submit to Fiji Care. The repercussions are reflected in the crowded offices and also impacts other programs service delivery. The current registration for all recipients stands at 30% leaving a 70% of recipients.
- II. The printing of forms in for Nomination and Claims have been met by Field Offices, there need to be some clarity on the provision of forms so that funds can be proposed. Ideally to ensure that all recipients do fill out their nominations the form should be given to the client from the date of approval to facilitate and return.
- III. The verification requirements have expanded from the initial agreement of verifying recipient status with our Programs to investigations in dispute over payout.
- IV. Despite all its efforts to take out information in community outreach and from District Field Offices these efforts need to extend to Media advertisements, Visual advertisements, IEC materials in vernacular to make a larger impact. There needs to be some clarity in who will be responsible for these costs given that there is no current allocation for this program.

3.1.5 Way Forward

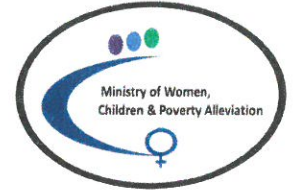
- I. To address the challenges faced the Ministry has requested for a meeting with the Fiji Care Insurance team, however it is pending the availability of their Managing Director - Mr Peter Mcpherson who is out of the country.
- II. The Ministry will be seeking clarifications on the following issues:
 - the verification role of welfare officers in Nominations and Claims
 - the provision of forms
 - modes of disseminating information- extending to Media advertisements and IECs

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- III. We anticipate that the resolutions from this meeting will enable us to provide clarity for Field Services in its service delivery and provide necessary information for proposal for funds.

3.1.2 Brief Report on the Bus fare Concession Program

As per the 2018/2019 Budget, the Fijian Government had announced 100% fare subsidies for older persons aged sixty years and above and for persons with disability. The Government provides fare subsidy to eligible card holders for a maximum of \$40 per month. Vodafone Fiji Ltd had agreed to provide the facilitation of the bus fare subsidy for eligible card holders service free of charge. They had agreed on terms and conditions as per MOU signed between Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation and Vodafone Fiji Ltd. The \$40 etransport card top up commenced on the 1st of October, 2018.

The Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation team provides the eligible applicants with a Busfare Concession ID card (yellow & red) which is used by the Vodafone Fiji Ltd team to generate eticketing card (purple & green) with \$40 top up. Every month, an existing etransport card is topped up on the usage only. If a concession/exempt card holder is not able to utilize the funds within a month then the remaining balance is forwarded to the following month. However, if the \$40 subsidy fare allocation is fully utilized before the end of the month, the concession/exemption card holder will need to top up their cards at their own expenses to travel for the remainder of the month.

\$8.6m has been utilized to top up maximum of 55,947 etransport cards. Following table shows the breakdown on number of cards topped up per month from the October 2018 to 19th April, 2019. In almost 7 months, a total of 314,718 records have been topped up with varying amounts depending on the usage.

Table 1.0 Commitment for eticketing - \$40 top up for Bus fare Recipients for the months of October - 19th April, 2019

All correspondence to be addressed to Permanent Secretary for Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation



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Month	Count - loaded	Card Loaded	Card Redeemed	Card Usage
October	55947	\$ 2,237,880.00	\$ 1,846,800.00	\$ 989,644.24
November	38759	\$ 922,734.88	\$ 881,774.12	\$ 1,158,568.24
December	38260	\$ 975,240.17	\$ 931,934.39	\$ 1,214,795.73
January	39930	\$ 1,028,206.92	\$ 957,030.45	\$ 1,270,123.82
February	46780	\$ 1,157,967.99	\$ 1,159,676.42	\$ 1,062,010.21
March	44943	\$ 1,096,616.14	\$ 1,041,383.01	\$ 1,333,863.73
As At 19 th April	50099	\$ 1,234,474.45	\$ 688,757.99	\$ 1,075,552.65
Total	314718	\$ 8,653,120.55	\$ 7,507,356.38	\$ 8,104,558.62

There is no separate budget allocation for etransport card top up. The Ministry has been paying for the etransport card top up from the Social Protection program allocations. This is expected to be reimbursed by Ministry of Economy since diversion of funds would result in shortfall and have an impact on the implementation of the Social Protection Programs. In the next budget submission, Ministry team has proposed for \$18m to be allocated towards the busfare concession program.

The Poverty Monitoring Unit and IT Unit of Ministry of WCPA has begun with the monitoring and evaluation of the bus fare concession program. Since the introduction of the \$40 top in October, 2018, an increase in bus fare applications was noted at the Ministry of WCPA. Following table shows the trend from August 2018 to March 2019.

Table 2.0 In house busfare card production from Aug 2018 to March 2019

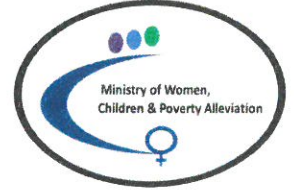
Month	No. of card for Older Persons	No. of cards for Persons with Disability	Total

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Aug	738	74	812
Sep	491	58	549
Oct	1134	49	1183
Nov	1650	109	1759
Dec	1329	91	1420
Jan	977	80	1057
Feb	1138	106	1244
Mar	919	113	1032
Total	8376	680	9056

All correspondence to be addressed to Permanent Secretary for Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation

Appendix Three

Verbatim Report

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

[Verbatim Report of Meeting]

HELD IN THE

COMMITTEE ROOM (WEST WING)

ON

THURSDAY, 28TH MARCH, 2019

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD IN THE SMALL COMMITTEE ROOM (WEST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ON THURSDAY, 28TH MARCH, 2019 AT 1.30 P.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation

In Attendance:

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. | Ms. Jennifer Poole | - | Permanent Secretary |
| 2. | Mr. Rupeni Fatiaki | - | Director, Social Welfare |
| 3. | Ms. Venina Duvuduvukula | - | Acting Principal Accounts Officer |
| 4. | Mr. Semisi Siga | - | Senior Administration Officer |
| 5. | Ms. Saleshni Naidu | - | Director, Poverty Monitoring Unit |

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Members, welcome back.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I would like to welcome the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Madam Jennifer Poole, welcome, Madam; also the Director, Social Welfare, Mr. Rupeni Fatiaki, welcome, Sir; Madam Saleshni Naidu, Director, Poverty Monitoring Unit, welcome; and Ms. Venina, the Manager, Finance, welcome, Madam; as well as Mr. Siga, Senior Administration Officer from the Department of Women.

Honourable Members, we are very fortunate to have a Team from the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, and they are here to present to the Committee in regards to the Annual Reports for Years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017. As we all know, we have sent some questions to them and they have already responded.

During their presentation, I will request them also to go through the questions and also read through the answers or some other explanations. For our Honourable Members, I will allow them for some supplementary questions after your presentations.

So thank you very much, welcome once again, the time is yours, Madam, for the presentation. Thank you.

MS. J. POOLE.- Thank you very much, Honourable Chairman and Honourable Members. We are very pleased to be here today to present the Annual Reports for the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, and to respond to your inquiries on our Annual Reports from 2014 to 2017. With me here today are some very experienced representatives from the various departments and I will now ask them to introduce themselves. Thank you.

(Introduction – Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation)

MS. J. POOLE.- Thank you, we will commence. Honourable Members, our Ministry has a vision to transform communities through the empowerment of women, children, older persons and the disabled.

Q. 1 Brief the Committee on the functions of the Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation; and the functions laid to this new vision.

The functions of the Ministry include the following:

- We have a Care and Protection Department, so our focus is the care and protection of children;
- Provision of income support to families to address poverty;
- Provision of policy intervention for older persons;
- Provision of policy intervention for those with disabilities;
- Promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women; and
- A Monitoring and Evaluation Unit which is assessing the progress and the impact of the Integrated National Poverty Eradication Programme (INPEP)

Q. 2: Inform the Committee on the key challenges the Ministry faces whilst trying to achieve its strategic objectives and how it is planning to overcome these challenges

Some of our key challenges include:

- Resourcing and funding for adequate human staff and office space. At the moment, we are geographically dispersed, our Executive Unit has offices all over the City and this can be challenging for management, and all teams lack space, not only for their staff but also for storing and archiving of documents;
- Our other challenges include Technology. Currently, the Ministry is seeking solutions to consolidate our data. We are seeking technical expertise. Currently, we do not have such support in-house but we are liaising with the Ministry of Economy, the ITC Unit and the Reform Unit so that we can progress one of our reforms which was to review and consolidate our data;
- We also get some challenges for unexpected programme requests which I believe our team has reasoned well to respond. Each year, we are asked to take on new programmes: the Help for the Home Programme (2016 and 2017); the Home Care Programme (2018); Bundle Insurance (2018); and the Bus Fare Top-Up (which is a very large programme in 2018).

This requires the rapid deployment of resources and funds within the Ministry. We have to adjust internal budgets and plans. So, unplanned programmes can disrupt normal activities and place additional stress on our human resources and it can impact some department outputs.

Would you like me to go through all the questions?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes.

Q. 3: How does the Ministry ensure that both male and female employees are treated equally in recruitment, training, hiring and promotion?

MS. J. POOLE.- We do this through the Open Merit Recruitment Selection Process where everyone is given equal and fair opportunity to apply for the positions advertised. Our advertisements are open and the Ministry does not discriminate by any gender. We comply with this OMRS Guidelines and this applies to hiring, promotion and training opportunities. All officers, regardless

of gender, are encouraged to apply and send in their expressions of interest when there are opportunities for both, local and overseas training.

Q. 4 Does the Ministry align itself to any of the Sustainable Development Goals? If so, can you further enlighten the Committee on this?

Indeed, these are key strategic guide for us. Our programmes support a number of key goals:

- Goal 1 : End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
- Goal 5 : Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
- Goal 6 : Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation;
- Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

A lot of our work also is cross-cutting and links to a number of SDGs, including:

- Goal 3 : Ensuring healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all ages; and
- Goal 4 : Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.

Question No. 5: Update the Committee on the Ministry's future plans and initiatives?

All our plans contribute to the strategic goals:

1. Promote sustainable inclusive growth, which is from the National Development Plan (NDP) (Priority, Page 2);
2. Inclusive Socio-Economic Development (NDP Priority, Page 2);
3. Ensure good governance and best practice in Public Financial Management (PFM) (NDP Priority, Pages 14 and 15);
4. Enhance integration of climate action into economic growth, environmental protection and social development (NDP Priority, Page 16);
5. Empowering women so that they reach their full development potential (NDP Priority, Page 12).

Under these Strategic Goals, we have Proposed Projects, plans (Planned or Pending) for 2019 and 2020. We wish to enter into REACH Project - Phase 2. This is a very successful project which I will talk about as we go through the questions.

- REACH Project Phase 2: It provides legal literacy, human rights, empowerment and referrals between stakeholders including the Government and non-government partners;
- Care Givers Trainings: We need to give Care Giver's Training and resources. The role of care givers is increasingly critical in our programme;
- NCDP Shelter - Western Division (planned): The construction of shelters for disabled persons in the Western Division;
- Barefoot College, Northern Division (planned): Continuation of support for the development of the Barefoot College which provides livelihood skills training and vocational skills for those in the Northern Division;

- Upgrading State Homes for Older Persons (planned);
- Research and engaging women and girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics);
- Research on needs of Older Persons and those People Living With Disabilities (PLWD);
- Women in Climate Change (new): We are also engaging women in climate change;
- Decentralizing services through NGO Grants for expanded service delivery (e.g. Domestic Violence Helpline, 1560; Child Helpline, 1325; Shelter, Homes of Hope; Grants to Disabled Persons Organizations for PLWD's)

Now, I handover the rest of the questions to my Director for Social Services.

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members of the Committee, I will be answering the questions on issues relating to the Department of Social Welfare, likewise we will be going back and forth amongst our team members. But any questions that relate to women will be answered by the Director, Poverty and Monitoring Unit, Ms. Salesni Naidu. Any clarifications regarding finance will be answered by Ms. Venina Duvuduvukula, so we will be going back and forth as the questions are put forth.

2014 Annual Report

Q. 6: What is the current situation of beggars in Fiji? How many beggars has the Ministry managed to graduate and what plans are in place to graduate more of them?

Currently, the Ministry has profiled 266 cases on the streets of our cities and towns. However, not all of them are permanent beggars. Some beggars are very mobile and have homes and they move from one town or city to another when there are opportunities such as festivals and national events. Others spend their day in the streets but return home in the evenings while some have homes and family but prefer to live on the streets, and there are those that are homeless but call the streets their home.

Working with such individuals is challenging and the success rate is very low. However, there are success stories where some individuals have been given bean carts and are still selling while others have been issued with Hawker's licence and some have been assisted in finding work.

The Ministry has established a Unit within the Department of Social Welfare to look at the challenges faced by beggars. The Unit works with other stakeholders to assist these beggars to find meaningful work which suits their abilities. This also includes finding their families and placing them back, finding accommodation and linking them to other service providers that can assist and mentor them.

Q. 7: Page 17 of the 2014 Annual Report (Beggars Rehabilitation Program): How many street beggars have been rehabilitated in the Rehabilitation Centre for Beggars in Colo-i-Suva?

The Good Samaritan Inn which is administered by the Church of Nazarene caters only for physical, capable male individuals because the intention is to help teach them farming skills, using the land that is available.

Currently, there are six residents but ever since then, about 16 of the residents have moved on with one completing his education at the Fiji Vocational Training Center at Brown Street, three are returning to their villages and becoming farmers, two have their own roadside stalls, and nine of them have managed to find some form of employment as cleaners, car wash attendants, carpenters and security officers.

Q. 8: What is the progress of the welfare to workforce programme?

This program continues to exist, known as the Graduation Program for Welfare Recipients under the Poverty Scheme and Care & Protection Allowance. It has an annual Budget of \$500,000 with the maximum of 250 individuals that can be assisted. The process requires the selection of candidates which is voluntary, and then they are put through SMI Training with assistance from NCSMED.

After the training, the projects are funded and then monitored to ensure that they succeed. Once they are observed that the projects are doing well and viable, the recipients then exit the system.

Q. 9: What is the current status of child welfare cases in Fiji? Provide a breakdown of the number of child welfare cases by Division.

The Ministry has seen the increasing number of child welfare cases reported through the Child Welfare Act (2010), which can be the result of the Child Protection Awareness Programmes that have been conducted nationwide which has made people more confident to come out and report such cases. Our statistics reveal that child neglect, physical and emotional abuse and sexual abuse are the most common cases that are reported.

Unfortunately, most of these abuses happened in the confines of the home and the perpetrators are often the significant adults in the child's life or someone they know. This means that change needs to begin at home and education programs need to be delivered at community level, which is why REACH is so important.

The breakdown of the welfare cases as per report in 2014:

<i>Division</i>	<i>No. of Reported Cases (2014 Annual report)</i>
Northern	126
North West	95
South west	83
South East	162
Nasinu	115
Central	108
Rotuma	5

a. What strategies does the Ministry have in place to reduce such cases?

The Ministry, through the Department of Social Welfare, has established the National Coordinating Committee for Children (NCCC) as the national body to oversee all issues pertaining to the safety and protection of children in Fiji. This national body is chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation and is made up of major stakeholders working with children, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, other Government Entities and also members of Civil Society and Faith Based Organizations.

Under the umbrella of the NCCC are the Inter-Agency Committees based in the districts who work in the communities to raise awareness on child protection issues. Apart from the establishment of these forums, the Ministry is working with the Churches and traditional communities to include in their by-laws child protection issues. The Ministry is also working with the Solicitor General's office to review and amend the current child protection laws that will assist in the handling and prosecution of child abuse cases. A lot of awareness has been conducted in the communities on positive discipline and protection of children.

The Child Helpline (24/7, counselling and referral service) provides an avenue for reporting children at risk and obtaining information on child protection matters. This free number, 1325, has been included in educational materials and is widely promoted to ensure children can access help and assistance.

Q. 10: Inform the Committee on the types of child abuse cases reported to the Ministry and what are the most common forms of child abuse?

Type of Cases Reported	Common Cases of Child Abuse
Physical Abuse	Physical Abuse
Teenage Pregnancy	Sexual Abuse/Incest
Sexual Abuse	Child Neglect
Neglect	Emotional Abuse
Emotional Abuse	Verbal Abuse
Attempted Suicide	Child Labor
Verbal Abuse	Child Begging
Child Labor	Drug Abuse
Child Begging	
Abandoned	
Beyond Control	
Absenteeism/Loitering	

Q.11: How is the Department of Social Welfare working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, in regard to the prevention of teenage pregnancy?

The Department works with MOHMS through NCCC, the District Advisory Committees which include all the relevant Government and NGOs in the Districts to conduct awareness in their communities on issues relating to sexual reproductive health as well as

including activities such as 'respectful relationships. These awareness programs are taken to the villages and communities through our partnerships under programs like the Child Helpline Services, the REACH Program and other civil society outreach programs which visit schools and communities.

Ministry Teams go out to the schools (on invitation) during Drug and Substance Abuse week to provide training and awareness to staff and students on these subjects. On the same note, counselling services are offered through referral to partner agencies such as Empower Pacific and Medical Services Pacific (which is a dedicated sexual and reproductive Health and family planning agency). Both agencies have agreements with the Ministries.

Q.12: How effective has the Child Helpline service been in terms of providing advice and assistance to children and concerned adults and community members on child-related issues and enquiries?

With the inception of the Child Helpline in 2015, the Department has continued to receive an increasing number of cases which have been reported and found to be genuine. The CHL recorded over 5,571 genuine calls to date, with the majority of the cases being referred to the MWCPA for action or the Fiji Police Force. This service has enabled the Department to address cases at their respective locations through the welfare officers in those areas. Otherwise, there are counsellors available on the CHL to conduct telephone counselling at any hour of the day and night if needed. Through funding support to the Child Helpline service, we have enabled a service which the public can use to report cases of child abuse. We have observed the increased confidence of children and even adults to report on cases and situations affecting them. Thus, we see an increasing number of reported cases, which could also be an indication of this confidence in the public where children and youth now know there is a place to call if they are abused or neglected.

Q. 13: Has any monitoring and evaluation been carried out to gauge the effectiveness of the Child Protection programs and activities offered by the Department of Social Welfare?

In 2015, with the technical assistance from UNICEF, the Ministry conducted an impact assessment on its Child Protection Program whereby some of the recommendations have now being implemented while many are still pending. However, there is still a need for impact assessment on programs that have been carried out in the communities and with this recognition of the need, the Ministry has entered into partnership (MOU) with the Fiji National University (FNU) and the University of the South Pacific (USP) for such studies.

The Ministry receives quarterly monitoring reports from the Child Help Line (CHL), inclusive of customer satisfaction surveys.

In 2019-2020, the Poverty Monitoring Unit (PMU) will monitor the Domestic Violence (DV) line and the Child Help (CH) Line to assess impact.

In 2019-2020, the PMU will also undertake quality assurance and customer service monitoring of key projects.

Q. 14: What kind of assistance is provided to children living in the nine registered Residential Homes?

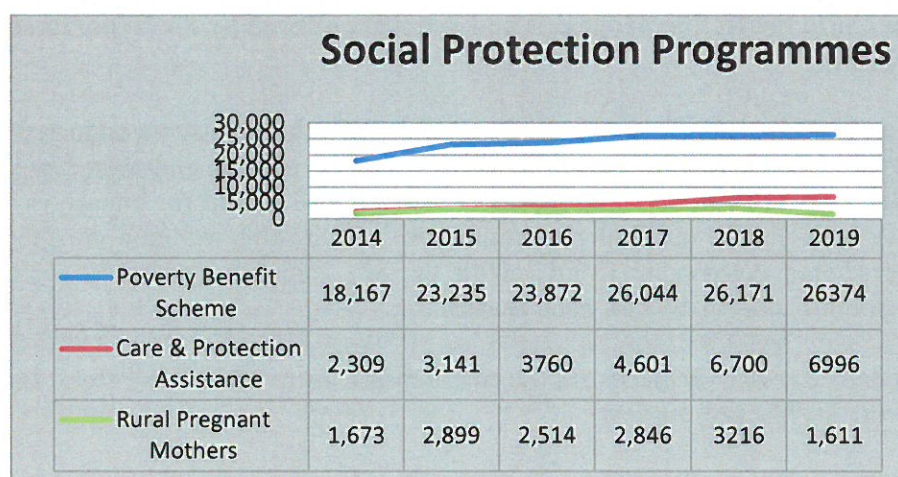
Government provides a monthly grant (\$120) from the Care & Protection Allowance for each child residing in these Homes. Apart from this, there is provision from Government for the Homes under the NGO Grant and this is to assist in the administration of the Homes to ensure the safety and protection of children are maintained.

Under the Minimum Standards, Welfare Officers are required to work together with the Homes and children in the formulation and implementation of care plans, which includes working with the staff of the Homes, the schools, families and friends so that children can be given the opportunity to develop and become contributing members of society in the future.

Q. 15: The committee notes that under Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (NRC) the National Coordination Committee on Children submits periodical progress reports to the CRC Committee. Is there any Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that prepares Shadow Reports to these periodical progress reports?

The NGOs, Faith-Based organisation and civil society were asked if they would like to provide a “Shadow Report”, this was in 2014 before the team went to Geneva on the State of Children in Fiji, however, because they were part of the National Coordinating Committee for Children in Fiji (NCCC), they had agreed that there should be one Report and that their contribution will be through the NCCC. The breakdown of the number of recipients under the following programmes who have benefitted from the Food Voucher Program from 2014 to date. Below is the graph that shows the trend of the 3 Programmes, which are:

- Poverty Benefit Scheme;
- Care and Protection Allowance; and
- Food Voucher Programme for Rural Pregnant Mothers.



There is a gradual increase in the Poverty Benefit Scheme with the Rural Pregnant Mothers, there is also a slight decline but that is in the middle of this financial year. Hopefully by the end of the financial year, that graph will change.

Q. 17: Page 19 of Annual Report - How have the grants given to the 20 NGO’s been monitored in regard to their performance in the overall achievement of the Ministry’s targets and goals?

As per Government's Fiscal procedures, recipient organizations must provide acquittals for every government grants issued, thus, if organizations fail to provide the relevant acquittals, they are not given any more funding assistance from Government come the following year. However, if acquittals are provided, internal audits are carried out by the Program Managers and Finance Unit to ensure that funds that are given are used for the very purpose it was requested for.

Q. 18: The committee notes that a total of 86 projects were funded through the Income-Generating Program in 2014. What is the current status of these projects and how are they monitored by the Ministry? Provide a breakdown of the number of projects funded through this program from 2015 to date.

The projects funded in 2014 have been graduated of the system. In the 2017 Monitoring exercise, 56 out of 133 projects for 2014 were still successfully operating. The Ministry has a working agreement with the National Center of Small Micro Enterprise Development that entails the training, implementing and monitoring of projects for a two-year period. The table below shows the breakdown from those years from 2014 to last year as per gender, altogether 217 cases.

Year	Male	%	Female	%	Total
2015	9	16	49	84	58
2016	8	10	45	90	53
2017	27	33	54	67	81
2018	15	60	10	40	25
Total	59	27	158	73	217

For Question 19, I will hand over to my colleague from the Women's Department to answer that for the Committee.

MR. S. SIGA.- Thank you, Honourable Chairman and Honourable Members.

Q. 19: This question relates to the various projects that women and NGOs were assisted with by the Ministry in 2014, as outlined on Pages 22 and 24 of the Annual Report. The Committee notes from Activity 2 (Livelihood Projects) that 49 women's groups were assisted with various income-generating projects and from Activity 6 (Grants to NGOs) that several women's groups and NGOs were assisted through 13 projects. How have these projects been monitored and evaluated by the Ministry and how many women have graduated or been assisted to an advanced level?

To respond to how it is monitored, most of these projects are monitored and evaluated by our District and Divisional Offices throughout the Divisions with the given M&E forms that is currently in place at the Divisional Levels. Now with the establishment of the M&E Unit within the Department, it has provided prominence in focusing on evaluating and monitoring the implementation of the programmes and projects as such. Divisional Officers consult relevant agencies throughout the divisions for technical advice, support for projects sustainability purposes.

For the numbers, I can refer you to Page 15 where we have the breakdown of the programme activities that run under this question. But, how many women have graduated or been assisted to an advanced level? We can refer that to Page 15..

Q. 20: On Page 15; Provide a breakdown of how many women have benefitted through the above training and livelihood projects from 2014 to date?

The five activities articulated are ongoing and this makes up the Formal Sector Employment and Livelihood Thematic Programmes.

Women Participants Benefited (2014 – 2019). The activities are:

<u>No</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Total Number of Women</u>
1	Equal Employment Opportunity and Employment Relations Promulgation Training	53 trainings - 1060
2	Livelihood Projects	233 womens groups
3	Financial Literacy Training	More than 1100 women
4	Grants to NGOs	25 NGOs
5	Sewing Machines Distribution and Sewing Training	1807 (women benefited from this training and some with the machine received)

Q21: Is there a database to record the high number of cases of violence against women and children?

Yes, this is consolidated data and is compiled at our Elimination Violence Against Women (EVAW) Desk Programme, and this data is only possibly through the updates of the following agencies:

- Fiji Police Force – Reported cases of crime against women and children on quarterly basis (Attached is 2013- March 2018 records so far), and an MOU with the Fiji Police Force has made this possible, however, this is subject for renewal with the Ministry since it ended in 2018;
- Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre – reports cases of gender-based violence from the Domestic Violence Helpline which we received on monthly basis;
- The Child Helpline reports on the numbers of callers reporting gender-based violence and domestic violence as it impacts the family and children on a monthly basis. A majority of callers are obtaining counselling or referrals under this category.
- The Department is working towards a database management system to go hand-in-hand with the Service Delivery Protocol on recording cases of Gender-Based Violence.

In front of you is a table of Domestic Violence Against Women from 2013 to 2017 in January to March 2018.

Domestic Violence against Women and Children						
Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 (JanMarch)
Domestic Violence against Women (Females, age is 18 years or more)	358	378	368	652	777	124
Domestic Violence against Female Children (Age is less than or equal to 17 years)	55	55	48	84	90	3
Domestic Violence against Male Children (Age is less than or equal to 17 years)	12	14	21	47	41	8
Total	425	447	437	783	908	135

Table 2: Domestic Violence against Women and Children by Division (2013 – 2017 and Jan-March 2018)

Division	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan-March)
Southern	135	213	160	283	325	42
Western	96	63	133	304	392	62
Eastern	127	115	86	106	66	13
Northern	67	56	58	90	125	18
Total	425	447	437	783	908	135

(Source: Crimes Statistics Unit, Fiji Police Force)

Table 3: Domestic Violence against Women and Children by Ethnicity (2013 – 2017 and Jan-March 2018)

Domestic Violence	Ethnicity	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Jan-March 2018
Women Victims	I-Taukei	248	282	253	439	533	84
	Fijian of India Descent	106	93	115	185	233	38
	Others	4	3	0	28	11	2
	Total	358	378	368	652	777	124
Children Victims	I-Taukei	51	48	51	88	78	8
	Fijian of India Descent	13	20	18	25	50	3
	Others	3	1	0	18	3	0
	Total	67	69	69	131	131	11

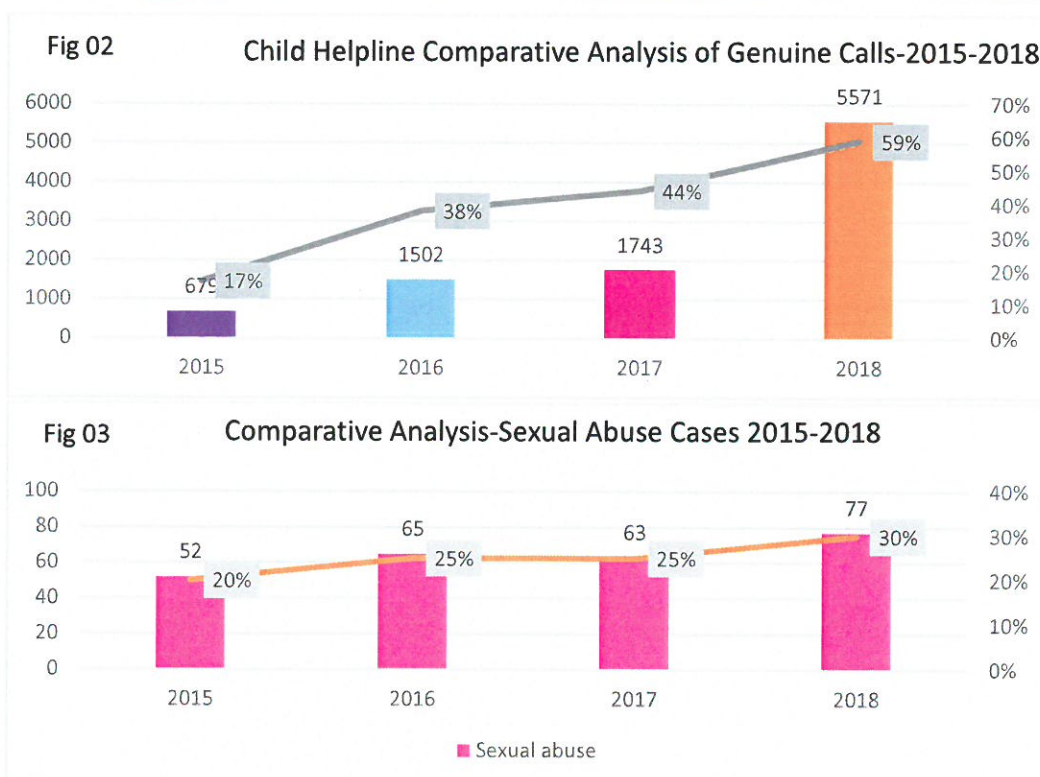
(Source: Crimes Statistics Unit, Fiji Police Force)

Table 4: Domestic Violence against Women and Children by Age Group (2013 – 2017 and Jan-March 2018)

Domestic Violence Age Group		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Jan-March 2018
Women Victims	18 - 24 years	85	99	82	141	170	29
	25 - 31 years	100	99	119	206	228	42
	32 - 38 years	81	87	71	149	186	28
	39 - 45 years	50	43	47	93	111	12
	46 - 52 years	27	29	31	44	49	5
	53 - 59 years	7	13	16	13	22	5
	60 years and Over	8	8	2	6	11	3
	Total	358	378	368	652	777	124
Children Victims	0 - 5 years	6	8	10	11	13	3
	6 - 12 years	22	23	26	50	31	4
	13 - 17 years	39	38	33	70	87	4
	Total	67	69	69	131	131	11

(Source: Crimes Statistics Unit, Fiji Police Force)

The Comparative Analysis of Child Helpline Call Types and Cases - Annual 2015-2018



The Child Helpline is receiving a gradual increase in genuine callers. Over the 4 years, the line has received over 45,000 calls.

Q. 22: Has the Zero Tolerance Violence Free Community (ZTVFC) Programme been evaluated?

The Ministry had just embarked this March with the Evaluation of Zero Tolerance Violence Free Community Programme through the technical assistance and support of the UN Women. This made this possible, hence a six-member Evaluation Team is currently engaged for this exercise throughout the Divisions. The exercise is quite intense as it will involve visitations and discussions with communities and stakeholders, who have been involved in the ZTVFC programme in the Divisions. A total of 27 communities that will be evaluated out of the 88, and the Evaluation Team is expected to submit its Evaluation Report to the Ministry by the end of June 2019.

Q. 23: Page 26 of Annual Report (Activity 2: Solar Grandmothers) - What was the outcome of the training and how have our communities benefitted following the return of the participants from the Solar Engineering Technology Training in India?

The Ministry has established a link with Barefoot College in India last in 2012, in sending ten women from Fiji to attend a six-months training as solar engineers. They have been referred to in Fiji as “solar grandmothers”. Fiji joined the developed countries of the world to be assisted and trained in the area of women empowerment with Barefoot College in India in 2012 in sending 10 women from Fiji to attend a six-months training as solar engineers. They have been referred to in Fiji as “solar grandmothers”.

Fiji joined the developed countries of the world to be assisted and trained in the area of women empowerment in terms of making life easier for women in the rural and maritime areas. This is in the provision of sustainable power which can now be utilised in communities as a source of both light and energy.

The women returned to Fiji in the same year in which the training was conducted for the use of solar equipment sent from India. These solar equipment were taken to the communities where these women reside to be used as tools for assembling and electrification in their villages. All the communities are now using solar lanterns. A “Solar Grandmother’s” village was relocated and upon her return from India, she electrified the village with the assistance from the Ministry. This programme can be and will be expanded to train youth in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

I will give this time now back to Director, Social Welfare to respond to the next question.

Q. 24: Explain why the number of households assisted through the Poverty Benefit Scheme has increased to 23,235 in 2015 and from 18,093 in 2014, however, the budget allocation for the programme has remained at \$22 million.

MR. R. FATIAKI.- In 2013, a comprehensive review was carried out with the Social Protection Programmes and as a result of the then Family Assistance Scheme where cases were either transferred to Care & Protection Allowance or the Social Pension Scheme. On the same note, cases under the Care & Protection Allowance were also transferred to the new Poverty Benefit Scheme. This was implemented in 2014 and 2015, at the same time cases that were discovered to have deceased, were removed and those that have had their home situations improved were also exited from the system enabling new cases to be accommodated within the next financial year with no significant changes in the programmed budget.

Q. 25: Why was there a reduction in Budget allocation for the Care and Protection Allowance programme from \$5.9 million in 2014 to \$2 million in 2015?

Again, the Ministry, in the same year in 2015, conducted a major review on the Care & Protection Allowance which resulted in the termination of allowance for cases where children were over 18 years old or change in living standard, meaning that it has improved. Also the review resulted in cases that no longer qualify for Care & Protection Allowance, but are still living in poverty, were transferred to the Poverty Benefit Scheme.

Financial Statement of 2014:

Q. 26: Provide clarification on the \$113,548.42 which was written-off by the Ministry of Finance from the Ministry's Drawings account.

The stated amount was caused by the unclear and incomplete processes in the Accounts payable module in the FMI System which was then recommended by the Ministry of Finance to be written off by the Ministry.

2015 Annual Report: It is to do with Fijian Women Artisans, I hand it back to my colleague from the Department of Women to bring forth the response to this question.

MR. S. SIGA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the Honourable Members.

Q.27: How many Fijian Women Artisans have been trained by the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation in partnership with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism and how has this helped meet the market demand for Fijian Made Products? Provide further information on the domestic and international demand for Fijian-made products.

None; however, the Ministry works very closely with the Ministry of Industry and Trade through one of its statutory body, the Fiji Arts Council, in raising awareness with women and women's groups during the craft shows held at various divisions regarding the emblem. Fiji Arts Council also provides one to one sessions mentoring with women whose products are of high quality, so they can be labelled a "Fijian Made" product. Most of the trainings that are undertaken were specifically for the up-skilling of women artisans to ensure the quality.

I shall now give the next question to Director, Welfare.

Q. 28: Are there plans to review the Juveniles Act (Cap 56) 1973?

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members, in 2012, with the help of UNICEF, the Ministry reviewed the current Juvenile Act because it was not in compliance to some of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) statements, though Fiji had ratified the Convention in 1993. The outcome of this review has resulted in the Draft Child Justice Bill and the Draft Child Care and Protection Bill, which are currently with the Solicitor-General's Office.

On Question No. 29, I will hand it over to Director, Poverty and Monitoring Unit to brief you on the response to the question on REACH.

MS. S. NAIDU.- Thank you, Director, Social Welfare. Mr. Chairman and the Honourable Committee Members, REACH stands for Rights, Empowerment and Cohesion for Rural and Urban Fijians Project.

The question that the Committee needed clarification on is:

Q. 29: Elaborate on the Rights, Empowerment and Cohesion (REACH) program and how it has benefitted rural and urban Fijians.

The REACH project was funded by the Government of Japan from 2015 to 2018 with total funding support of US\$2.65 million. The funding was administered by UNDP and the core partners in this Project are the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; the Legal Aid Commission; and the Ministry of Justice.

It aims to promote peace-building, social cohesion and inclusiveness. The project conducts awareness raising of the social, economic and legal rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji. It provides access to the services associated with these rights, and also strengthens institutional capacity to these services. A mobile services delivery approach is undertaken to reach communities throughout all of Fiji with the focus to reach the furthest behind first.

Through REACH, the Fijian Government can confidently say that they have not left anyone behind, and have reached those in remote areas and in marginalised communities and enabled access to services for those who are bedridden, those who do not have the financial means to access essential Government services and those that find it difficult to travel. The REACH project also visited the maritime islands, to assist those who have difficulty in accessing services due to bad weather and the cost involved in ocean travel. The elderly, the disabled and women are able to obtain legal information, have documents certified and necessary legal action process which also assist them to access broader Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation's social protection services.

Mr. Chairman and Honourable Committee Members, REACH is the means to inform the people about their social and economic rights under the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji and lets them know that the Government is leaving no one behind as per this Sustainable Development Goals Agenda. It is a commitment made real for the people as the Government puts actions into priorities. It is an important modality for Fiji because it allows Government officials to reach the furthest.

The REACH project creates networks, builds trust and empowers individuals through service delivery. Since its inception in July 2015, REACH has seen a remarkable achievement with an accumulative result of visiting 956 communities, including 139 Districts out of the 196 Districts in Fiji and all the 14 Provinces, including Rotuma.

A total of 22,223 people attended the awareness session, including 9,306 women; 9,050 men; and 3,877 children; where 37,807 people benefitted from the services delivery, including 21,587 women and 16,220 men. This project allows individuals to have their documents prepared so that they can better access available Government services and facilitates better record-keeping. The REACH project funding comes to an end in June 2019 and we believe these critical activities should continue.

Mr. Chairman and Honourable Committee Members, Part B of the question is:

b) As part of the REACH programme, what means are used to create awareness in maritime Communities on the social, economic and legal rights of individuals as well as to enhance access to legal services?

Fijian citizens, of whom many reside in rural, maritime and urban informal settlements and villages, usually cover long distances to reach Government offices typically situated in urban and semi-urban areas. This results in citizens facing delays and challenges in addition to loss and income as they bear additional costs of transportation, accommodation and so on, to be able to access basic public services. This project has maximized service delivery by including civil society partners who have provided health and social services as well.

- 1. Mobile Reach Buses:** REACH is designed to be driven in a mobile approach. It is designed to be office on wheels with renewable energy, solar panels to provide this service.
- 2. Village to Village Approach:** Government officials go through conditions to reach people who are physically and geographically disadvantaged, and basically the REACH service is there providing the service to others because everyone matters to us. REACH is the means to take services using the village to village approach.
- 3. Multi-Sectoral Partnership:** The demonstration of an integrated approach by the respective agencies has immensely boosted the recognition of the programme with not only its mobile service approach but bridging the gap to reach out to those who are challenged physically and geographically. Agencies such as Legal Aid Commission, Birth, Death & Marriage Registry (Ministry of Justice), Fiji Human Rights And Anti-Discrimination Commission, Fiji Consumer Council Commission, Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development (Divisional Commissioners), Ministry of iTaukei Affairs – Provincial Council *Roko Tui* and the NGOs, Medical Service Pacific to name a few who have played a key role in delivering REACH and community services.
- 4. Partnership with Legal Aid Commission (LAC):** The partnership under the umbrella of the project enables communities to be made aware of their constitutional rights and off course boost access to justice from the services provided by Legal Aid Commission such as Legal Advice on Civil, Family and Criminal Laws, Drafting of Wills and Witnessing of Documents. The role of the LAC has proven a clear demarcation of role, complementing agencies and more importantly providing more access to Justice for all Fijians.

c. What plans are in place to increase awareness of the abovementioned constitutional rights and improve access to legal services in urban, rural and maritime communities?

Given the resounding success of the REACH project in reaching Fijians in remote and rural locations, it is essential for the Fijian Government to ensure the continuity of the REACH project beyond the donor-funded period of 3 years which is set to expire on 30 June, 2019. This programme not only supports the strategic aims of the Fijian Government, it also links the Ministry's activities and it is a cohesive platform from which to consolidate knowledge, learning and data. It aids the effectiveness of the Ministry to deliver on our commitments. REACH is critical to our aims to consolidate and streamline service delivery.

In terms of Establishing REACH Unit in the Ministry with Approved Human Resource: This is part of the sustainability of the project and given that the Ministry is a very important partner to the project and also considering its cohorts of service delivery, it is crucial that the Ministry takes the lead and establishes this Unit. We recommend that this should be fully funded by the Government and it is now in the budget process for the Financial Year 2019 – 2020, which is due this Friday.

Decentralizing the governance for REACH: The governance structure for REACH will be decentralized placing the Outreach Divisional Officers in the 4 Divisions. These officers will solely manage their Divisional Outreach Programmes and provide cohesive trainings such as legal literacy, governance and rights to the communities and the Ministry.

Memorandum of Understanding with Core Agencies: We have consulted with the Legal Aid Commission, Birth, Death and Marriages Office to pursue an understanding so that we continue the good work for REACH. The ideology behind REACH is to strengthen collaboration between Government agencies, enabling better planning through access to information and increasing efficiency. This integrated mechanism is crucial to improve data management and to our beneficiaries for better access to their social, economic and legal rights as enshrined in the Fijian Constitution.

The REACH model is so successful that it is now being replicated in other Pacific Islands such as Samoa and Tonga and Fiji is taking the lead to advice on this programme model. As we speak, the Programme Co-ordinator for REACH model is in Tonga to deliver this programme.

Question No. 30: May I request Director Social Welfare to continue from here please.

MR. R. FATIAKI.- (Inaudible)

... is the deterioration of the family Unit. The majority of cases appear to have some link to family issues or family dysfunction or family breakdown either due to divorce, separation, or there is no family time spent nurturing or parenting children. Reports noted that some families may face challenges with parenting skills and lack coping strategies to handle the high stress situations such as unemployment or substance abuse. Such issues are being recorded by those using the Child Helpline services. However, further research is required to better understand this pattern and we are entering a partnership with the universities to further this research.

However, the increase number of reported cases can also be the result of on-going education and awareness on child abuse that has been highlighted by the relevant agencies and civil societies in Rights Education Programmes. Also, the discussion of rights and services in the media can increase usage and reporting of Government services. Awareness on rights also empowers the public to have the confidence to report a case of sexual or gender-based violence or child abuse.

The Ministry is working in partnership with other stakeholders such Save the Children, Fiji Medical Services Pacific, Empower Pacific and other Government agencies to create awareness on child protection and to take into the communities the training package on positive discipline and parenting. The Ministry is also engaging the Faith Based Organisations to use their platforms and networks to drive the message of transformed communities with empowered women, children, older persons and the disadvantaged working together to strengthen families and better protect our children.

With the REACH Programme, (as mentioned earlier), the Ministry is making inroads to our rural communities with this message as part of its package of empowering our communities.

Q. 31: Can the Ministry inform whether the State Homes for children are still in

operation?

Yes, both State Homes are still operative, with the Juvenile Rehabilitation and Development Centre used to be known as the “Boys Centre” for boys currently situated at Samabula and the Girls’ Home at Domain Road known as the Pearly Gates Home. The Juvenile Center is administered by the Department because it is also a holding Centre for juvenile offenders who are remanded awaiting trial while the Pearly Gates Home is outsourced to the Christian Mission Fellowship with an annual grant of \$150,000 to assist in its administration.

Q. 32: Elaborate on the Fire Victims Relief Assistance programme and the eligibility requirements to qualify for assistance?

This assistance for fire victims is given to households who have had their property and belongings destroyed in the cause of an accidental fire (not when a person deliberately sets fire to his/her own house). Such a disaster is unforeseen and considered as a crisis, thus, the aftermath of such an incident can be traumatic physically and psychologically to the household members. The assistance is therefore given to the family to help provide for their immediate basic necessities that have been lost in the fire and not to rebuild their home. Assistance for the rebuilding of the homes can be sourced from the Department of Housing.

Q. 33: Page 20 of Annual Report 2015 (Table 17) – The Committee notes that a total of 236 recipients graduated under the welfare to workfare programme between 2010 and 2015. Please inform us on what happens to those individuals who are unable to graduate. Does the Ministry continue to assist these recipients?

The intention of the graduation programme is to assist recipients move out of the system with some form of income generating programme to empower them to become self-reliant. Unfortunately, in some cases projects may not turn out as we would expect, and this can be due to market competition, lack of business acumen, traditional obligations, cost of goods and transport, natural disaster or abuse of funds. When projects fail, the recipients do not get assisted automatically, procedures will require them to lodge an application stating the reason for failure and an assessment will be conducted by the Ministry to validate their application and the project before a decision is made to reinstate their welfare assistance depending on their circumstances.

Q. 34: To update you on the Ministry’s bilateral arrangement with the Indonesian Government in regard to providing training opportunities to Fijian women in Indonesia. Is this arrangement still in place?

I will hand this over to my colleague from the Department of Women to bring forth the response.

MR. S. SIGA.- Thank you, Honourable Chairman and Members.

This is a continuous partnership with the Government of Indonesia and this year Fiji will host the meeting with the Joint Technical Working Group in June 2019. This will further develop the areas of cooperation as noted in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on Programmes in relation to Gender Equality, Women’s Empowerment and the Social Protection Programmes with Indonesia. Through this MOA, Gender Responsive Budgeting Trainings have been delivered with the engagement of other Government ministries such as the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Health & Medical Services, to name a few that have benefited from this training.

Thank you. I shall give the next question to the Director PMU.

MS. S. NAIDU.- Thank you Mr. Siga. Honourable Chairman and Honourable Committee Members. The next question is related to the Poverty Monitoring Unit.

Q. 35: In addition to the 21 Poverty Alleviation Programmes monitored by the Poverty Monitoring Unit in 2015, what other programmes are monitored by the Unit across other Ministries and Departments?

The Poverty Monitoring Unit (PMU) which was part of the establishment of the Office of the Prime Minister moved to the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation in 2015. During this financial year, the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry advised the Unit to monitor the programmes implemented by the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation during this period noting the subsequent transfer of this Unit to the Ministry from the Office of the Prime Minister.

For the information of the Honourable Members, the Poverty Monitoring Unit was established in 2003 at the then Ministry of Social Welfare. Then in 2010, the Unit was moved to the Office of the Prime Minister. Subsequently, in 2015 the Unit was moved back to the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. Furthermore, the role of the Unit is to monitor, evaluate, report on the impact of Governments Poverty Alleviation Programmes on the beneficiaries of the respective programmes.

Honourable Chairman and Honourable Committee Members, the Unit monitored Programmes under the Government's Priority Areas for Fiscal Year 2014 which is listed in Pages 32 and 33.

Ministry of Education

- Bus-fare Subsidy Programme
- Tuition Fee Grant

Ministry of Health

- Rural Health Centre
- Pharmaceutical Services

Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation

- Income Generation Projects
- NGO Grants
- Women's Plan of Action
- Women Resource Centres
- Care & Protection Allowance
- Poverty Benefit Scheme
- Social Pension Scheme, to name a few.

Honourable and Chairman and Honourable Committee Members, along with the Monitoring and Evaluation, the Unit also provides awareness on Government's various poverty alleviation programmes and we have brought our Information Education Communication materials along which we provide to the Communities as we go to monitor as well, so that they also get the benefit to know about the Government's various poverty alleviation programmes and we have brought copies for the Honourable Members of the Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you Director. Permanent Secretary and Director, I would suggest, while going through your questions and answers, can you be just brief because the rest of the graphs and other things can be read by the Honourable Minister and the locations and other things we can see for ourselves. Can we be brief with the answers?

MS. S. NAIDU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now I hand over to the Director of Social Welfare to take us through the 2016 Annual Report, please.

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Honourable Chairman and Honourable Members, in response Question 36. This is asking about the *TC Winston Rehabilitation Programme*.

The tables highlight the different programmes, total number of recipients who were assisted and the amount of money that was paid accordingly to those numbers.

Part B is the list again of the Food Voucher Programme that was in partnership with the World Food Programme and so again, 20,488 recipients benefitted and the amount that was paid was \$4,541,200.

The question asked about the priority areas and listed therein are the areas:

- Vanuabalavu;
- Lomaiviti Group;
- Taveuni;
- Yacata;
- Savusavu;
- Bua – Nabouwalu;
- Naitasiri;
- Tailevu;
- Rakiraki; and
- All the Western side.

Question No. 37: The Financial Statement in 2016, again the question was asked about the *TC Winston Rehabilitation Programme* of \$19.9 million was paid out and the question asked whether all these recipients were affected by *TC Winston*?

Our responses is, yes, all recipients of the programme were affected. Some were affected directly, these were the ones where their homes were destroyed because they were in the path of the cyclone. And the ones that were not in the path were affected indirectly because it happened, our markets were affected. Food insecurity was also there and changes in market supply was also affected. So, yes, all of that, though some of them were not staying in priority areas because of the changes that are happening in the country at the time, they were also affected.

Question No. 38 was asking about the M-PAISA cards, the list of the hardware suppliers and the construction of building and repairing of homes.

I have listed the number of the Hardware Suppliers that were part of the programme and the role of the Ministry was to register the applicants. There were (Inaudible)

... the Home Care, we are able to do it better because of that.

Apart from that, this exercise also caught the interest of the international community with the World Bank and World Food Programme coming in to help with training and assisting in the development of the National Disaster Framework. With the Social Protection platform, I believe in future disasters, will be featuring prominently, because we have used it two times now in our disaster response.

This is, I would say, a great achievement not only for us as the Ministry but also for Government as a whole, because this has been recognised by the World Bank, World Food Programme and likewise other UN organisations and has been used in international forums.

The question on Domestic Violence, I will hand it over again to my colleague to bring to us that response.

MR. S. SIGA.- Thank you Honourable Chairman and Honourable Members.

Question No. 40: Can the Ministry explain how the National Domestic Violence Helpline has helped to increase the level of reporting on Gender Based Violence?

I had alluded to earlier in Question No. 21 the numbers and the sources were captured from the Fiji Police Force Report and Fiji Women Crisis Centre, but if I have to take you to the last bullet point, the line has recorded over 1,043 calls. This is to respond to the increased level of reporting on gender based violence. The line has recorded over 1,043 calls reporting or requesting information about domestic violence with over 2,049 calls for information and six calls from people living with disability. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Question No. 41, Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members is to do with placement of children in facilities and these are the institutions for Homes, like Dilkusha, St. Christopher's, so the question asks about what happens to those children who turn 18?

The answer is that, when children come to us, we prepare them for exit, meaning that while they are with us, we work together with the Homes, schools and families by preparing and giving them life skills so that they will be able to one time become independent.

Unfortunately, in many cases where children come to us, if they are abandoned at an early stage, this is where children are either mentally challenged or physically disabled. These children do not have the possibility that they can be adopted by adoptive applicants or parents. These children remain in the Homes and we have children at who have already turned 18, some are them 19 and 20 year olds but do remain in the Homes because there is no family and there is no one to take them back. Normally we work with the Homes and we help support them with our social protection programmes.

Part (b) of that question asks about whether they are monitored in the Homes. Yes, there is a minimum standard that is passed by Government in 2007 where every Homes of the State and all the children who live in these nine Homes are "Walls of the State", meaning that they come under the Director of Social Welfare who is the legal guardian under the Juveniles Act.

That standard requires us that we will monitor them every year bi-annually. There are nine standards, we ensure that they are in compliance or seen to be in compliance these are about safety, education and recruitment of staff. Yes, it is monitored annually. That sums up Question Nos. 41 and 42.

Q. 43: Is the question on adoption and foster, whether we have children or cases where we have adopted.

The answer is yes. In the last six years we had adopted 25 children locally and internationally. But, like I said, these cases are fostered for three months first and then when parents are ready for adoption, then we prepare the paper works for the adoption. Yes, we have cases, they are registered which is also a requirement under the Juveniles Act.

Q. 44: Asks us about the NGO grants.

We have listed that, so those are the seven NGOs that have been listed and the amount that was asked by the Committee, the funds that were given to these NGOs.

Q. 45: Asks us more information on the Loloma Beggars Project and how many recipients have been assisted through this project?

The Loloma Beggars Project is a name that we came out with because we wanted to give a humanitarian and a compassionate approach to beggars because in the past it was like, "Police come in, take them without any humanitarian approach." So, we used the word "*loloma*" to give that compassionate approach. We have profiled 266 cases as I had mentioned and in the profiling, we have a database. The Unit is made up of our staff, members of the Fiji Police Force, municipality officials and other stakeholders, even the faith-based organisations.

We have managed to work with at least, as I said earlier it is very challenging to work with such individuals but we have managed to work with at least 16 beggars who we have assisted them through this programme. Some of them are doing well. A very good example, if you go past Grantham Road in Raiwaqa you will notice that there is bean cart opposite the Raiwaqa Bus Depot, which is one of our projects.

Q. 46: Asks about HART Nursing Home, in Nasinu because we receive a grant from the National Council of Older Persons of \$22,126, do we give assistance is to the other HART Homes, residents or villages around Fiji?

Yes, they receive funding from Government under housing for all their homes around the village. But this specific fund of \$22,126 is a need that was identified by the HART organisation because they discovered that old people are occupying flats by themselves and not only that, but they also identified that some of them are at risk because of their physical situation. Some of them are mental, they have dementia and some of them have arthritis. So in order to help them, they bring them under one roof for carers to look after them and then free those flats so that a mother and her children can occupy those flats. So that was the reason why we had come under the National Council for Older Persons with this funding to help assist with these homes. But I would say that 99 percent of all the recipients of all the tenants in HART all over Fiji are recipients of our social protection programmes.

Q. 47: Is there a high demand for the three State Homes for Older Persons, and these are Old People's Homes that we normally refer to. We have changed the name, again giving a more humanitarian approach. It is no longer Old People's Home, it is now referred to as the Golden Age Home; Labasa Golden Age Home, Samabula Golden Age Home, and Lautoka Golden Age.

Yes, we have seen a trend where families are pushing their old people to the Homes. We have a waiting list of applicants wanting to come into the Homes. What do we do with that? At the moment to inform the Committee, our Homes are full to capacity and we still have a waiting list. What we normally do is, we work with other Homes. There are other Homes that also look after elderly people. So we work with them as part of the Committee and we do referrals.

But in case there is no space in those Homes as most of these Homes are also full to capacity, what we are doing now is, we conduct caregiving training with the communities to help the communities to have those basic skills to look after their own old people and disabled persons. So we have done a thorough training in Ovalau and we have a team in *Tikina o Nacula* in Yasawa as a request from the community when we went there last year. So that is what we are doing to try and address this issue because of the trend we are seeing of pushing old people to the Homes. So that answer the question that was put forth by the Committee.

Now, I will hand over to the Department of Women to bring the next responses for the following questions.

MR. S. SIGA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members, just to respond to the Barefoot College and the types of training offered, at this juncture, the Ministry is still in its initial stage towards the construction of the Barefoot College and this still sits with the Construction Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Economy.

In 2012 a total of 10 rural women were trained at Barefoot College in India and the Ministry envisages that these pioneers will be able to champion this initiative with the upcoming students who are to be trained in the new College. But the whole idea of having this is to train 12 women in every six months and a total of 24 women in a year and being provided with 50 solar equipment to take back to their various communities and become solar engineers in their various communities. Thank you.

Q. 49: What type of advice has been given to the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation by the Fiji Women's Federation Committee on Public Service Policy, Programmes, legislations and other emerging issues that impact women and gender?

The Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation holds a bi-annual forum called the "Ministerial Forum" and it consists of Women Non-Government Organisations, Civil Society Organisations and Faith-Based Organisations. This is where they consult and recognise the expertise and resources. This strengthens and builds networks, which informs the Ministry so it can effectively address women's issues nationally. It assists the Ministry to understand the challenges faced by members in achieving gender equality. Given that the Ministry/Government leads in guiding and developing policies related to women's issues and concerns, this forum is critical and provides an opportunity for members to advise the Minister on what is the actual situation and challenges they face and to propose solutions.

So far, there have been two Ministerial Forum meetings held. One was last year in March and the second one was this year in March. The first forum agenda was focused on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its implementation, the second forum meeting held, this was on the existence of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPA) and its framework and how Fiji's participation at the BPA is important especially in the pursuit to advance women.

I will give the next question to Director PMU.

MS. S. NAIDU.- Thank you, Mr. Siga. Honourable Chairman and Honourable Committee Members.

Q. 50: Elaborate on the policy briefs which were presented to the Permanent Secretary and the Minister for Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation as the outcome of the monitoring and evaluation reporting on the implementation of the Integrated National Poverty Eradication Programme (INPEP).

Mr. Chairman and Honourable Committee Members, as we note, poverty is a multi-dimensional issue and we have circulated our national statistical office results from the Fiji Bureau of Statistics in terms of the household income and expenditure survey which was carried out in 2013 and 2014. We understand the next household income and expenditure survey is scheduled for 2019 and 2020. Now, basically the role of the Unit is to monitor and evaluate the Government's Poverty Alleviation Programmes across the line ministries. So in terms of the monitoring carried out by the Unit, pages 45 to 55 of our response lists the various programmes under the various ministries that the Unit has monitored.

In summary, the Unit monitored the programmes and focused on how the programme has impacted the livelihoods of the beneficiaries whom the Government has assisted through various poverty alleviation programmes administered by the various Government ministries.

In summary, the programme identified and monitored are basically targeted towards individual groups and community-based projects depending on the programme objective and the target group it aims to assist. From the results of the survey carried out, we can say that most of the projects had a positive impact on the beneficiaries and this has been covered through our face-to-face discussions, focus study groups and visiting the project sites. It is also noted that not all projects visited were viable or active and some were partially active and others were non-active.

Mr. Chairman and Honourable Committee Members, we take note of the findings, challenges and the recommendations have been provided to the respective line agencies for further improvement for the viability of the programmes in the Government investment that we are doing.

Pages 46 to 55 provides details on the programmes monitored which are carried out through the Ministry of Agriculture, programmes such as:

- Agriculture Extension Services,
- Agriculture Marketing Authority,
- Land Drainage and Flood Protection Programme,
- Rural Outer Island Agriculture Development Programme.

Under the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management, the:

- Divisional Development Programme; and
- Rural Housing Assistance.

Under the Ministry of Sugar, the:

- Upgrade of Cane Access Roads.

Under the Ministry of Land & Mineral Resources, the:

- Ground Water Assessment and Development Project.

And then on Page 53, the Ministry of Local Government and Environment, the:

- Housing Assistant Relief Trust (HART).

On page 54, Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, Department of Energy, Rural Electrification Project, may I draw your attention Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members that through Rural Electrification progress we have reached out to communities and individuals living in rural areas with access to solar energy and electricity and the impact is that, now children have access to light and power to energy during the dark hours of the night which assists them in terms of better performance in school.

This is one of the success stories. We now move onto Page 56 and I kindly request the Director of Social Welfare to take us through that question, please. Thank you.

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members. On Question No. 50... (Inaudible) ...this afternoon. Thank you Honourable Chairman and Honourable Members. Now I will hand over to my other colleagues to answer the rest of the questions.

MR. S. SIGA.- Thank you, Honourable Chairman and Honourable Members. Just to respond on the National Women's Plan of Action. The National Women's Plan of Action, this is the main vehicle for the Department for Women's work where all the programmes is founded or embedded in, like the:

1. Formal Sector Employment and Livelihoods;
2. Elimination Violence Against Women;
3. Women & the Law;
4. Equal Participation in Decision Making;
5. Access to Services; and
6. Gender and Climate Change.

Under these six programmes, there are other sub-activities in these programmes. On top of that, there are key areas or focus with the Department of Women for other programmes like the:

1. Joint Technical Working Groups (JTWG) with Indonesia;
2. Bilateral and Multilateral Partnerships;
3. Convention on the Elimination Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
4. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW); and
5. International Women's Day and Rural Women's Day.

With all these key activities, which would allow the Department for Women to meet its key outputs and commitments under the National Development Plan of the Fiji Government 2017-2021 with no woman left behind.

It is a commitment to fulfilling international obligations and the Governments vision of "Transforming Fiji" under the strategic framework which was set out for the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (Department for Women) to strengthen its coordination in supporting the empowerment of women to reach their full development potential. Key projects

including business training, income generation, legal literacy, Women's Expo and gender and climate change. All these programmes are aligned to Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women). Thank you.

MS. V. DUVUDUVUKULA.- Thank you, Honourable Chairperson and Honourable Committee Members. We now respond to the next question on the Financial Statement 2016 and 2017.

Q. 54: The Committee notes the following issues raised during the audit of the Ministry's 2017 accounts:

The report says that we did not carry out a Board of Survey to verify the existence and condition of the assets under the authority contrary to Section 49 of the Finance Instructions 2010.

Secondly, internal controls over procurement and account reconciliations were generally found to be weak and if not addressed promptly, may result material misstatements and possible financial losses in the near future.

Provide confirmation on whether the audit issues above have been addressed by the Ministry and state how.

The Ministry had conducted and registered all our assets in the Fixed Assets Register which is here with us and that the same was submitted to Ministry of Economy in 2018.

Q. 55: Page 10 of Annual Report (Revenue) - Provide a breakdown of the Operating Revenue as at 31st July 2017.

The amount of \$3,405 was a cumulative sum derived from weekly wages deductions, the commission that was paid out weekly to the vendor such as insurance and the finance institution.

Q. 56: The questions below relate to the notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st July, 2017:

a. Note 4 - Details of Appropriation Changes:

- **What was the reason for the Cabinet approval for re-deployment of Funds from Head 43 (Fiji Roads Authority) to Ministry's SEG 5, SEG 6, and SEG 13?**

Just to elaborate to the Committee Members, that redeployment of funds is normally carried out by the Ministry of Economy. The reason why it is carried out is to meet the shortfall in the expenditure commitment for the Ministry at the end of financial year.

- **Provide reasons for the virement of funds in 2017 as shown on Pages 14 and 15 of the Annual Report.**

The virement of funds was also carried out for the purpose of regularising expenditures in allocations that have shortfalls or overspent identified at the end of financial year and that is normally carried out by the Ministry in which the Permanent Secretary for Economy and the Agency Ministry, Permanent Secretary that approves the virement under their approval limit. The last one on the Report is:

Revolving Fund Account:

Noted that the Ministry's Revolving Fund Account has an outstanding balance of \$19,049 as at 31st July, 2017. The Ministry has mentioned that it was due to the system errors that normally occur while processing on the Financial Management Information System, and to elaborate to the Committee today that the outstanding advances that is pending against any officer is subject to salary deduction at the rate of 12 percent and it is stipulated in the General Orders. Thank you.

MS. J. POOLE.- Thank you, Honourable Chairman and Honourable Members, that is our presentation of the Report today. Thank you very much for your attention and we stand open to your advice and questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Madam, for the presentation and answers to the questions. For your information, for Annual Reports, the Committee Members went page by page and formulated the questions, that is why you see the number of questions, and we are very fortunate to have all those answers from you.

It will really help us report back to Parliament, I believe we have been very clear with all the responses and, Honourable Members, all the responses are there.

To the Manager, Finance, Ms. Venina Duvuduvukula, Madam, in regards to the fixed asset register, you said you have got a copy that you have submitted, can our Committee have a copy of that? Is it there in the Annual Report?

MS. V. DUVUDUVUKULA.- This was just presented today from the HR Unit and it is here for

MR. CHAIRMAN.- So maybe if that can be with our Secretariat, if we can also add it with the Report that you have just submitted to us. Have you got a copy?

MS. V. DUVUDUVUKULA.- Yes, you can have this for the Committee's copy.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Also in regards to the REACH Program, we have seen the benefits of the REACH Program as officials have elaborated, that in 2019 it comes to an end.

As the Honourable Members of the Social Affairs Committee, we would like to know whether there are any discussions on how best it can continue in future also?

MS. J. POOLE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members. We have proposed a Budget allocation in this coming Budget submission on Friday, which has also a Cabinet Paper, I believe, to be presented, to explain the ongoing program.

We proposed to take over this project, it is just so incredibly useful for enabling the public in remote areas to actually access Legal Aid to get their documents certified and it helps them access the services they needed. It is just been incredibly successful and also harnesses resources from across all the Departments in Civil Society, and so it is quite a valuable tool.

We are calling out REACH Officers but they legal literacy educators in each division, so that they can work across all our programs, provide legal literacy training and also continue to work with the Mobile Units and continue to deliver this very important service.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Permanent Secretary, for that information. Also in regards to the Barefoot College, any timeframe, by when will it be completed?

MR. S. SIGA.- Right now, the Ministry is still awaiting the vetting process from the Construction Implementation Unit (CIU) from the Ministry of Economy to get that and to settle the next stage of progress.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- So it is already half-way done and some work is still left or?

MR. S. SIGA.- A lot of work is still left, we are still in the consultation stage with the Barefoot College.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- All right. So there is no timeframe but you are working closely with Ministry of Economy?

MR. S. SIGA.- Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The Construction Unit team?

MR. S. SIGA.- Yes, we are still working closely with them.

MS. J. POOLE.- I believe they do it in two phases so they do design and tendering phase and then they do a construction phase, so it would not surprise me if it was staged over to the budget periods.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Permanent Secretary. Also one area you have highlighted is in regards to our old people, senior citizens, the Golden Age Homes and the increasing number of people still in the list, is there any discussions with our people or the families of how they can take care of their elderly at home, because as you have mentioned, there is an increasing number, the waiting list is increasing. How are you going to address that?

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Thank you, Honourable Chairman. We are currently again working with the CIU for the renovation of these Homes. So we are looking at increasing the capacity but also one of the things that we are looking at is (and I have just consulted with the Solicitor-General's Office because at the moment), we do not have a legislation where we can take families to court to provide maintenance for their elderly parents like they do to children. That is something that we are looking at.

I know there is a section in the Family Law Act, but that has not been used where parents can take their children to court for maintenance. We have used that in one case and the sad thing is that, the parents do not want to take their children to court, that is one example, but we are looking at working with the Solicitor-General's Office to have a legislation where all these things can be in it so that if they are not going to, then there is some kind of penalty or something like that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, Director, it is like those parents have really worked hard, educated their children and they must be doing well and now the parents are in the hopes. There should be some legislations in place, if the parents are not really putting that to get that money out, may be there should be some authority or for the agency to look into who is taking care of them. So, hopefully if you can look into all those things, otherwise this list will continue to increase.

MR. R. FATIAKI.- I totally agree with you, Honourable Chairman, and something that we are working on.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Permanent Secretary, and the team. Honourable Members, Honourable Leawere?

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Just a clarification on the submissions that were raised as alluded to by the Honourable Chairman earlier regarding the Barefoot College. This is another item on Page 3 on NCDP Shelter in the Western Division. Have you got a time as to when will it be completed?

MR. R. FATIAKI.- It is something like the Centre that we have in Brown Street for the disabled persons, so that is the same concept that we want for the Western side. At the current stage, we are at the consultation level, we are looking for the land, one of these is to find a land and a property. It is also with the CIU and we are in touch with them as to what is the cost or how much will it cost us. This is where we are at the moment, but we are looking at maybe next year or the following year to try and complete that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Director. Yes, Honourable Leawere?

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Yes, Honourable Chairman, I just forgot to mention that their Report is very comprehensive in terms of their responses to the questions, and I would like to thank the team (I forgot about that) but on page 7, the last two lines, I just need some clarification on those, if I may seek your indulgence and if I could read it for you, "Apart from the establishment of this forum, the Ministry is working with the churches and traditional communities to include in their by-laws child protection issues." Can you just further explain on that, please? Thank you.

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Honourable Member, yes, we are working with the Ministry for iTaukei Affairs, in fact, they are already working with the villages in introducing this child protection policies in their by-laws. I think, if I am correct, in one of the places in Nadroga that has already been introduced with the child protection policies but with the church or faith-based organisations, I have met with the Methodist Church hierarchy using their by-laws because of the issue as we have mentioned; the family. The family unit is the one that will instil moral values, holds the family unit together.

The strategy we have now is to work with the faith-based organisations and I have mentioned this in my meeting with them because first, they have an existing platform, because for us, when we go to the communities, we will have to invite them to come, and if we do not provide food, they will not come. But for the church, every Sunday, Wednesday, they have their normal services so that is one thing we are looking at, using the existing platform.

The other thing is that, they have an existing clientele which are their members. If we can convince them to preach this child protection in their pulpits because most of their members usually accept what is disseminated in their pulpits, so that is one of the strategies that we are using, to work with the churches and faith-based organisations and use that platform because that is one of the ways I believe can cover most of the areas and reach out to most of the communities.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Director. Yes, Honourable Alipate Nagata?

HON. A.T. NAGATA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Permanent Secretary. This is regarding the beggars. How do you deal with beggars who return to the urban centres?

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Thank you, Honourable Member, like I said, this is a very challenging task because our Unit have identified them, profiled them, take them and some of them have families. You do not believe it because when we did a profile for a beggar, he has a farm, a good house in the village and hire people to work for his farm while he comes to town. There is one that has property on rent, he comes to town, begs but he has property on rent. These are the kind of scenarios, and there are people who have their homes and families, and when we have approached their families, they are willing to look after them, but they do not want to stay in the Home. They prefer to be in the city and then there are those that have no place.

We profile them, we take them to their homes, the next thing, we find some of them are back on the streets. I believe there is a lot of work that needs to be done. It is not going to be a one approach but a multi-faceted approach from every stakeholders because, yes, you will see most of them or all of them on the streets, we have placed them in homes and the next thing, they stay for a week or a couple of days then they are back on the streets and you cannot force them to stay in the homes.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Director. Honourable Simone Rasova, anything.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, congratulations, Madam Permanent Secretary on your appointment. I hope that your tenure will be very fruitful and also resolve all the problems that the Director is saying over into this thing here. Also thank you, Semisi; also Ms. Saleshni Naidu; and Venina Duvuduvukula.

On my question, I take it that on Page 13, you talked about NGOs. You have 43 NGOs and, Director, you said that most of the NGOs that give, you do not give back any money to them or the next year when they do not provide you with acquittals. What happens to them? How legal do you deal with them when they do not give acquittals, they run away overseas or what?

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Honourable Member, to answer your question, yes. There is a procedure that is adhered to, which means that I have to provide their registration, et cetera, we know that things do not just happen overnight, they establish themselves and then the next thing they disappear. So these are the ones that we have worked with consistently and so we give them a timeframe to provide acquittals and we tell them, "If you are not going to provide the acquittals on time then you will not receive the funding." Most often they provide the acquittals even in the last minute they do provide the acquittals because they do not want to miss out on the funds but we tell them that. But I have not come across a case where people just did not bother and when you come to look for them they have disappeared.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- It should be the case, they need to provide the acquittals otherwise our questions will increase here on the Committee table.

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Yes, and again those are the Government's fiscal policies, any fund that is given must be

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The acquittals must come back to the Ministry.

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Yes, we sign a contract also before we give them the funds, all these things are included in the contract.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, thank you very much, that should be in place. Honourable George Vegnathan.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, congratulations to you, Madam Permanent Secretary, on your appointment and the team. I will present two different scenarios, probably different from what we are going through.

The first scenario is, I worked with a religious organisation and some elderly people were coming to us, asking the organisation to set up homes where they could stay on their own, so that they have a place to stay for free and we provide medical, et cetera, and they are ready to pay. The organisation was looking for assistance in terms of getting advice or where they could get funding to cater for these elderly people because their children have migrated and they have funds but they do not have a secure place to stay. So, the organisation was looking at maybe if you have anything in place to assist in that?

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Thank you, Honourable Member. I think that is where we are heading now. I have mentioned in my talks with some of the stakeholders that our Homes for the elderly is going to be a big business in the future, in the sense that those of us who are working will be retiring with money and it is something like in overseas where you have money to spend and you prefer to be with your colleagues at the same age and you are willing to spend your money for your care provided if there is a place like that.

I think, yes, we can work and a lot of people have shown interest. We can work with such organisations like setting up some homes like that. Those are some of the things that you can look at in trying to accommodate for those elderlies because there are a lot of people who are going to retire and prefer to live on their own rather than staying with their family members.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Thank you very much for that and, yes, I will pass on the information to the respective organisation to be in touch with you.

The second one was, some weeks back I was in Labasa and fortunately the Assistant Minister Honourable Veena Bhatagar was there so we went down to see a family of five or six staying in a house; they are mentally challenged. The old lady in the house is all right but she has difficulty in walking around. There is one boy in the house who should be about 14 years old who does cooking for the whole family and everyone else is mentally challenged.

That is a scenario where they are living on their own, they have got land, they are staying there and what came to my mind is that, they are living on their own and they need health support, advice which we have not been able to give. I was kind of lost thinking about how we can help those people. The Department of Social Welfare is helping them, the assistance is there, the officers went and the money is given but some form of looking after them, to actually go and see them, et cetera. Maybe there are more cases like that out there and I am just bringing this to your attention.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I believe the Ministry of Health should also be in touch with them, they must be having regular visits but, PS, can you elaborate?

MS. J. POOLE.- Thank you, Honourable Members. The Honourable Chairman, I think they need to be registered with the National Council for Disabled Persons but there is a huge gap here in terms of the support for elderly and disabled, and we need to do a bit of research and restructure and come up with solutions that suit our changing times because we are seeing a different type of family, we are seeing single families, we are seeing families where the children are studying overseas and things are changing.

We have got a growing number of elderly persons that need assistance but there are also ways of dealing with disabled people that allow them to stay in their homes and communities. We have

got some plans in place to roll out training for carers and increase surveillance and support for carers but it is on our planned list of things to do, so thank you for raising it. Maybe, you could give us the address for the organisation and we will put it in contact with the National Council. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Permanent Secretary. Honourable Leawere, anything?

HON. M. LEAWERE.- Maybe, just two questions at the same time.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have plenty questions all the time.

(Laughter)

HON. M. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Honourable Chairman. Empower Pacific, Medical Services Pacific; how do they conduct these counselling services; and how effective are they in terms of delivering these services to the community?

MS. J. POOLE.- Thank you, Honourable Member. I can speak on the experience working with Civil Society Organisations, so I know that Medical Services Pacific, my former organisation, work under formal arrangements with the Ministry of Health and Administrative Education, as well as the Ministry of Women. Visits to communities are arranged through divisional officers, either educational health to provide a range of agreed services, so medical services will provide reproductive health, human rights, counselling, legal aid in partnership with Government so they have also been working with the REACH Programme and complementing that programme. Empower Pacific has a different range of skillsets. Some overlapping in terms of counselling and support and social services and I believe they work similarly, but I have got a colleague who used to work for them. Did you work for Empower Pacific? You can answer a little bit?

MR. S. SIGA.- For Empower Pacific, their services are located at the four Divisional Hospitals: Suva, Lautoka, so there are hospital-centred counselling services. That is where they provide their services but also they have social workers that also provide their services for welfare, seeing welfare cases working in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare.

MS. J. POOLE.- So, as a Ministry, we have got grants at a range of these organizations and we can harness their particular skillsets to achieve some of the services that are under our strategic objectives.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, Honourable Leawere?

HON. M. LEAWERE.- I do not know whether they want to answer this or not, Mr. Chairman: I would just want to ask this because all these Annual Reports from 2014 to 2017 come at the same time. Do you have a reason for that? Thank you.

MS. S. NAIDU.- Honourable Member, we do take note of the concerns raised. Actually, we do note that the Ministry had not submitted the Annual Reports from 2014. So, myself, I was tasked to complete the Reports, at least one or two, so noting the importance of Annual Reporting, and being responsible to the Parliament and to the Government, more so the taxpayers of the country, we worked very hard and compiled all the four Reports. If you may take note, the latest being for the Fiscal Year 2016 to 2017, to make sure that it is all up to date and currently, we are working on the Annual Report for the fiscal year – 1st August 2017 to August 2018.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Director. Any Social Welfare issues in Kadavu, Honourable Rasova?

HON. S. RASOVA.- Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Permanent Secretary, I challenged the Minister over here in Parliament in the last session in regards to rural. I take note that you have said about people in Samabula, Lautoka and in Labasa, from Honourable Vegnathan.

Kadavu, I take it that in my district, there is a lot of business going on over there, and the old people are left at home. It is for the *Turaga ni Koro* to go around and feed them, et cetera, and I challenge the Honourable Minister, the Honourable Vuniwaqa, if there is some money where I can do a Pilot Project in the rural area, in my *Tikina of Ono*, if I can put in my Village because we have excess of water to do a Project and bring all the old people and put them over there, so we can look after them very well, while the children and all the other people are at work in the hotel. We have a Seven Star Hotel where I come from in *Ono. Vinaka*, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- How can you assist the Kadavu people, Director?

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Mr. Chairman and Honourable Member, I think I had mentioned earlier that what we are doing is because they cannot access the service here. Like I said, we are currently working with the *Tikina* of Nacula in Yawasa.

We are in partnership with APTC, training the caregivers on basic skills on how to look after the disabled persons and the elderly in their communities, so that they can offer that service. I think in this Financial Year, we are also looking at having a registration of all these people trained and then having some kind of allowance for such situation because we have seen that, yes, the need is there in the community, so we need to train these people and give them these skills so that they will be able, instead of them coming to the urban centres, at least they can be looked after in their communities. I mean it is a good idea to have a pilot project within your communities and see how we can work together to improve the lives of the people, and that should be a good example that we can replicate in other communities, if it does workout.

MR. S. RASOVA.- Thank you, I was reading most of the Reports over here and I take it that every elderly person is given an allowance of \$100 per month, so for me in our village we can look after 20, that is about \$2,000 and then we can build this, but the thing is, it has got to be a pilot project.

How successful now that you have mentioned *Nacula*, I am thankful to you for that but convey to the Minister that my challenge is still going. *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Member. The team is already in Kadavu, not to worry.

Director and Permanent Secretary, you have spoken about the thought to amend the current Child Protection Laws, maybe to strengthen the laws which I believe is very important in the future to reduce the cases, can you elaborate on that?

MR. R. FATIAKI.- Mr. Chairman, for your information, we had three Bills. I think, the consultation was completed last month and this is the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption.

The other two Bills that are pending are the ones that I mentioned, the Child Protection Bill and the draft ones. These are the two Bills that are with the DASGs Office. We have been following it up, I think it was developed a couple of years ago and so we have been following that up, but I

think there were issues of concern that they have raised, so I think that is where it is at the moment but, we are following up with them.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Director, because I believe the awareness, the helpline now and you are recording more cases at the same time, these laws should also be strengthened so that we can see a reduction.

Permanent Secretary, would you like to add anything else towards the end of the session?

MS. J. POOLE.- Thank you very much, Honourable Members. I thank you for hearing us, those were a lot of questions, I hope we answered most of your inquiries.

In summarising, I do believe that we really need to take a focus on older persons. I believe that things are changing and we need to be adaptive and we have proposed to do some research and try and plan our services to suit the change in our culture. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, PS and the team. We understand and we also appreciate that the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation has been doing a lot, especially for our women, our children and our elderly in Fiji.

We wish you all the best and we hope that you continue the good work you have been doing, and you have said some of the important things that need to be looked into and a bit of amendments will improve as far as how things are being done.

So, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, thank you very much for your time. *Vinaka*.

The Committee adjourned at 3.31 p.m.