

FIFTH RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY



FIRST REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

On the Reports of the Director of Audit for the

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

For Financial Years

2020/2021, 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024

Chief Commissioner's Office (Commission for Environment and Others);

Commission for Agriculture, Fisheries and Others;

Commission for Health, Social Security and Others.

27 October, 2025

FOREWORD

I am pleased to submit this First Report of the Public Accounts Committee to be laid before the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The observations and findings contained herein relate primarily to asset management, compliance with financial and procurement laws, and project management practices within the public sector.

This Report has been prepared by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) following its examination of matters arising from the Reports of the Director of Audit, as well as from hearings and site visits conducted by the Committee. It is submitted to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) with a view to informing Members of the Committee's factual findings and to present integrated recommendations aimed at securing adherence to existing rules and legislation, and to safeguard public funds and assets.

The Committee has identified a number of lapses and weaknesses which adversely impact the sound management of public finances, the effective use of public resources, and the quality of service delivery to citizens. Such deficiencies, if left unaddressed, may also affect the reputation of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in the eyes of international donors and development partners.

During the period under review, the Committee met on several occasions to deepen its understanding of the workings of the various Departments and Commissions of the RRA through the examination of the Director of Audit's Reports. The Committee also took cognisance of the practices adopted by the Public Accounts Committee of Mauritius to strengthen its own working procedures.

The Committee, however, faced a number of constraints and challenges in the conduct of its work. Chief among these were the lack of timely replies to queries addressed to Departments, the absence of technical and research support from the National Audit Office, and the inadequate follow-up from certain entities, even in response to specific queries raised by the Director of Audit. A notable illustration of administrative shortcoming was observed in the case of the Commission for Agriculture and Others and the Commission for Health and Others, which persistently failed to submit the requested

information within the prescribed timeframe. In one instance, the Committee was compelled to refer a privilege complaint to the Chairperson of the Assembly following the failure of the Departmental Head of the Commission for Agriculture to attend a duly convened hearing.

Despite these limitations, the Committee remained steadfast in its mission to uphold the principles of transparency, accountability, and good governance. It is my earnest hope that the findings and recommendations contained in this Report will contribute to strengthening institutional performance and ensuring greater value for money in the management of public resources.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all who have supported the work of the PAC - its Members for their commitment, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk for their administrative assistance, and all officers who provided information and cooperation. The preparation of this Report has been an opportunity for collective reflection and learning, reinforcing our shared responsibility in promoting sound public financial management in Rodrigues.

Jean Rex RAMDALLY
Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee
Fifth Rodrigues Regional Assembly

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1.0 OVERVIEW

- 1.1 This Report is submitted to the Chairperson of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to be laid before the Assembly, in accordance with established parliamentary practice. It presents the outcome of the Public Accounts Committee's examination of matters raised in the Director of Audit's Reports, together with issues arising from hearings and site visits conducted during the period under review.
- 1.2 The Report focuses on three Commissions — the Chief Commissioner's Office: the Commission for Environment and Others, the Commission for Agriculture, Fisheries and Others, and the Commission for Health, Social Security and Others — and sets out the Committee's key observations, findings, and recommendations aimed at strengthening compliance with laws and regulations, improving project and asset management, and enhancing transparency, accountability, and good governance within the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.
- 1.3 Your Committee on Public Accounts is constituted by the Regional Assembly for examination of accounts showing the appropriation of sums granted for expenditure of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, the annual Finance Accounts of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, and such other accounts laid before Parliament as the Committee may deem fit.
- 1.4 The Public Accounts Committee derives its powers under Standing Order 63 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly which is reproduced in full in Annex A to this report.
- 1.5 This is the first report of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Fifth Rodrigues Regional Assembly and covers matters raised by the Director of Audit in his reports on the Regional Assembly for the period under review and considered by the Committee during sittings, hearings and site visits in preparation of this report.

- 1.6 Your Committee also effected five (5) site visits which were deemed pertinent in the preparation of its report and various observations were made accordingly.
- 1.7 Your Committee has held five (5) hearings with Departmental Heads and officers and has held 39 meetings to consider the Director of Audit's reports together with evidence obtained from site visits and documentary material presented to the Committee.
- 1.8 It is regrettable to note that, notwithstanding repeated reminders of responsibilities and administrative obligations, Accounting Officers continue in several instances to fall short of the basic principles and requirements established by law, Financial Management Manuals, directives and circulars in the execution of their duties. Earlier PAC reports contain guidance intended to reduce mismanagement, financial irregularities and nugatory expenditure; however, the Committee noted that identified weaknesses persist and are frequently addressed in an ad hoc manner.
- 1.9 The Committee therefore reiterates, by way of summary, the principal governance measures which remain essential to the matters under review:
- a. Proper hand-over procedures during administrative changes;
 - b. The consistent application of liquidated damages where contractual works are completed beyond authorised timeframes;
 - c. The establishment, at Commission level, of monitoring arrangements for budgets and projects and the strengthening of Financial Management Review mechanisms within Central Administration;
 - d. Strict compliance with procurement and financial management rules, including the Public Procurement Act and related directives.

2.0 CHIEF COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE – COMMISSION FOR ENVIRONMENT AND OTHERS

2.1 Observations

- 2.1.1 The Committee undertook an in-depth review of three flagship environmental initiatives — namely the Biodigester Pilot Project at Le Chou, the Wastewater Treatment Plant at Grenade, and the Model Eco-Village at Rivière Coco — with a view to assessing their implementation status, value for money, and sustainability. Across all three cases, recurrent weaknesses were noted in project design, contractual oversight, procurement compliance, performance monitoring and post-handover stewardship.

Le Chou Biodigester Project

- 2.1.2 The Biogas-from-Waste Project, launched in 2017, is a socio-environmental initiative co-financed by the European Union and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly at an estimated cost of Rs20 million. The project aimed to produce energy from household organic waste for cooking purposes while improving sanitation among disadvantaged communities.

The project targeted 153 low-income families across six villages who lacked proper sanitation facilities. It involved the installation of household biodigesters designed to convert organic waste into biogas for cooking and biofertiliser for household gardens. Only 141 biodigesters were completed, and by September 2022, just one unit had been connected to a household kitchen. Although an EU expert recommended corrective funding in 2022, no further action was undertaken.

- 2.1.3 The Committee noted that in relation to the biodigester Project, although only 141 units were installed, a technical assessment in 2022 confirmed that none were operational.

According to statements and justifications provided by officers during Committee hearings, the project's failure was not due to design flaws but rather resulted from incomplete site preparation, shortages of construction materials (notably cement), delays in paying workers, and refusal by several beneficiaries to grant access for commissioning or repairs.

Some beneficiaries have subsequently withdrawn consent, further complicating remedial work. A departmental inquiry was reportedly conducted; however, no final report has been submitted to the Commission.

Wastewater Treatment Plant at Grenade

- 2.1.4 The Wastewater Treatment Plant at Grenade, awarded in March 2020 for Rs24.6 million to modernise sanitation and address saturated leach fields, was initially reported as non-operational. Key shortcomings included lapsed insurance, failure to enforce liquidated damages, and extended completion dates. Auditors recommended that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly expedite completion and deduct penalties from non-performing contractors, but there was no evidence that these measures were implemented.
- 2.1.5 During the Committee's review, the plant was reported as complete and handed over to the Rodrigues Public Utilities Company (RPUC), though retention monies remain outstanding. The consultant applied the FIDIC contractual framework for liquidated damages and time extensions rather than adhering to Procurement Policy Office requirements. Contractor claims were certified directly by the consultant without internal verification, heightening compliance and recoverability risks. Effluent discharge testing was last conducted in 2023 prior to handover, and a Memorandum of Understanding with RPUC to define ongoing operational responsibilities is still pending approval.

Eco-Village at Rivière Coco

- 2.1.6 The Rivière Coco Eco-Village Project, implemented at a cost of Rs15.7 million and funded by the European Union, the Central Electricity Board, and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, aimed to demonstrate 100% renewable energy coverage for the island by 2030. The project, executed between 9 August 2017 and 31 May 2020, targeted Rivière Coco village as a pilot model to be replicated across Rodrigues.

It comprised three components: (a) six biogas digesters to convert livestock waste into cooking gas (b) photovoltaic panels to charge electric vehicles and bikes and supply electricity to the CEB and (c) solar street lighting.

- 2.1.7 During its review, the Committee noted that at Rivière Coco, the photovoltaic installation remains operational, generating approximately Rs30,000 monthly, with total receipts exceeding Rs2 million. However, several supporting assets have deteriorated: the electric vehicle is non-operational due to battery and charger defects; nearly half of the streetlights are corroded and non-functional due to the coastal environment; one of the two charging bays has been relocated; and six large-capacity biodigesters remain idle.

The prior pilot collaboration with the University of Mauritius was terminated, and consultancy services were subsequently procured. Auditors reported that these services were engaged outside standard tender procedures, although officers explained during the Committee hearings that this was to meet donor-imposed deadlines.

- 2.1.8 The Committee further noted incomplete or missing procurement files, including Expressions of Interest and tender committee records. It was alleged that files had been shared between Commissions and could no longer be located. In most cases, no designated project manager assumed formal accountability for supervising consultants, and projects were implemented without maintenance frameworks or lifecycle plans, leading to rapid asset degradation.

2.2 Findings

- 2.2.1 The Committee is of the view that project failures stem from inadequate project readiness including technical design, weak internal verification capacity, and the absence of clear operational accountability.

- 2.2.2 The delegation of full certification authority to external consultants without internal counter-verification undermines control over extensions of time, liquidated damages, and performance guarantees.
- 2.2.3 Inconsistent beneficiary engagement, absence of access agreements, and lack of post-installation follow-up contribute to early abandonment of installations in community settings.
- 2.2.4 The systematic absence of documented maintenance strategies results in capital investments losing functionality shortly after commissioning.

2.3 Recommendations

- 2.3.1 The Committee recommends that the Island Chief Executive takes cognisance of the foregoing findings and determines whether administrative or disciplinary action should be pursued under existing legal provisions in respect of procurement non-compliance or lack of stewardship of public assets.
- 2.3.2 The Committee recommends that the Accounting Officer of the Commission for Environment be instructed to prepare a structured remediation and completion plan covering all non-operational or partially completed installations, and that such plan specify cost implications, technical options and assets deemed no longer recoverable.
- 2.3.3 The Committee recommends that a dedicated technical officer be formally assigned as Project Manager for all future capital engagements within the Commission, with defined responsibility for verification of deliverables, supervision of consultants and lifecycle maintenance planning.

- 2.3.4 The Committee recommends that no project be approved unless procurement compliance has been demonstrated through documentary evidence, certification of works is conducted independently of payment authorisation, and enforceable operational agreements with third-party operators are executed at the point of handover.
- 2.3.5 The Committee recommends that beneficiary participation in community-based projects be secured through written access and responsibility agreements, including consent for maintenance visits, refusal protocols and defined escalation procedures.
- 2.3.6 The Committee recommends that any pending Memorandum of Understanding —be finalised within six (6) months, incorporating measurable obligations for performance monitoring and testing.

3.0 COMMISSION FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND OTHERS

3.1 Observations

3.1.1 Repossession and disposal of fishing boats:

Five fibreglass boats acquired in December 2011 for Rs54.2 million to support Rodrigues' off-lagoon fishery were allocated to Cooperative Societies. Partly financed by a Rs14.8 million Government loan, only Rs153,000 had been repaid by 30 June 2021. Repossessed in April 2021, the vessels were found in poor condition and remained at Pointe Monier as of April 2022. The Rs14.7 million principals plus Rs13.1 million interest/penalties remained unpaid by 29 December 2021.

The Committee noted that Five IFAD/DCP fishing boats were repossessed; refunds total approximately Rs153,000. Tendering to repurpose these vessels has yielded no viable projects. A consultant's survey was commissioned and recommendations from the 'Assises de la Pêche' are under consideration.

The repossession of the fifth boat was completed in July 2025, and a further survey is planned to determine the way forward. Budgetary constraints have delayed strategic planning; discussions with international donors and a planned Donors' Meeting are ongoing to explore funding and public-private partnership options.

3.1.2 Research vessels and research operations:

The research vessels Diego Rodriguez and François Leguat have been non-operational since 2018 and 2022, respectively, due to mechanical failures and lack of maintenance. Both vessels are very old, with at least one dating back to the 1980s, contributing to the high repair costs, which are considered prohibitive. The Commission is assessing repair versus replacement. In the interim, private boats have been hired for FAD deployment; ten new FADs have been installed since 2024, and the last maintenance outing occurred in October 2024. The DH committed to provide costs and status reports for hired vessels and FAD

operations; however, the Committee had not received this information at the time of reporting.

3.1.3 **Honey Research Centre and Crop Gene Bank:**

The contract for the Honey Research Centre and Crop Gene Bank at Oyster Bay, awarded in June 2020 for Rs5.5 million, was handed over to the contractor on 7 July 2020. The original completion date of 14 December 2020 was extended by 140 days to 3 May 2021.

Procurement delays and limited supplier engagement via the current e-Procurement system have caused operational setbacks; in urgent cases direct procurement has been used. Shared cold-storage facilities raise concerns about suitability and security for sensitive genetic material, posing risks to research continuity and food-security objectives.

3.1.4 **Fisheries Protection Service (FPS) assets and administration:**

Since 2017, the FPS reported 106 illegal activities at three posts, yet only five cases were prosecuted despite training in 2020 and 2022. Two fast inflatable boats (Rs2.9 million) have been awaiting repairs since 2019, and three drones (Rs 510,000) acquired in 2017 remain out of use. These lapses in enforcement, asset management, and operational readiness continue to limit FPS effectiveness in protecting fisheries and marine resources.

Several high-value FPS assets (notably drones) are non-operational and beyond economical repair. Allowance administration (including the Bad Weather Allowance) is maintained on spreadsheets, increasing error risk and weakening audit trails; the DOA noted cost inflation for the BWA exceeding **100%** and insufficient beneficiary follow-up. The FPS Prosecution Unit is operating under acting arrangements with constrained staffing, which officers of the Commission confirmed is affecting service delivery. 28 registered fishers had no recorded attendance at designated fish landing stations; and at Bengelique Fish Landing Station, attendance records over three consecutive months showed no presence, while for many others, participation was consistently below 50%.

3.1.5 **Alternative Livelihood Scheme and socio-environmental programmes:**

Participants who earn their livelihood from the fishing or processing of octopus are enrolled in alternative livelihood activities for which they receive a daily stipend. Approximately **1,500** beneficiaries (including **417** fishers) participated in 2023–2024 under a budget of **Rs41 million**. Daily payments rose from Rs250 to Rs500 in **2022**. Activities include reforestation and community works; monitoring occurs fortnightly. The Committee requested demographic and activity data to assess impact.

During the fishing closure, fortnightly monitoring meetings were held with partner institutions, and the Committee received a detailed report on beneficiary categories, age, gender, attendance, and work volumes to ensure transparency and proper oversight of the Scheme. The Committee noted concerns regarding eligibility and participation, including beneficiaries over 60 years and as old as 68 years.

3.1.6 **Agricultural sector:**

Cultivated land in Rodrigues is declining due to climatic pressures, an ageing planter population, labour shortages, and limited mechanisation. Extension services are thinly resourced, with only 10 officers for approximately 3,000 planters, and no significant recruitment has taken place for over 17 years. Plans are being considered to rehabilitate 60 hectares of land annually and to implement rainwater harvesting systems to enhance agricultural resilience.

On invasive species, notably *Acacia nilotica* (Pikan Loulou), rehabilitation works are underway at Cascade Pigeon and Pointe aux Sels, with support from the donor partners. Efforts are also being made to promote fodder production through the restoration of 13 silvo-pastoral zones covering 1,063 hectares.

3.1.7 **Coffee processing project:**

The Committee took note of the Coffee Processing Plant project, which has faced multiple challenges since the 2019 cyclones led most planters to abandon their fields. The consultant engaged for the project left without submitting a final report, despite partial payment.

A document was submitted, described as a feasibility study, but the Committee noted that it did not constitute a true feasibility study: it primarily provided provisional plans for equipment acquisition and setup rather than assessing the economic potential, projected revenues, or financial viability of the project.

Your Committee was informed that a new Cooperative Board for coffee production has been recently constituted, and policy decisions are under review regarding the coffee roaster, which remains unused.

3.2 **Findings**

- 3.2.1 **Asset management and preventive maintenance regimes inadequate.** Poor custodianship, inadequate preventive maintenance and weak disposal planning are eroding the value of public investments and generating avoidable storage and administrative costs
- 3.2.2 Acting arrangements and understaffing in key posts (including FPS leadership) have materially weakened oversight and service delivery; recruitment is constrained by parallel budget allocations and PSC approval processes.
- 3.2.3 The e-Procurement system, as presently configured, appears to disadvantage small local suppliers for low-value procurements, contributing to delays and the use of direct procurement in urgent cases.

- 3.2.4 Spreadsheet-based allowance administration increases the risk of error, reduces traceability and weakens audit trails — undermining accountability for public funds.
- 3.2.5 The Commission's current maintenance planning and budgetary allocation for vessels and high-value equipment is insufficient, producing avoidable operational gaps.
- 3.2.6 Community programmes (e.g., Alternative Livelihood Scheme) demonstrate value but lack the detailed demographic and performance reporting necessary to demonstrate value for money and inform programme adjustments.

3.3 Recommendations

- 3.3.1 The Committee notes deficiencies in asset custody and maintenance and recommends administrative action where stewardship is proven deficient.
- 3.3.2 **Asset register** — The Departmental Head, Commission for Agriculture and Fisheries, should ensure the upkeep of an up-to-date asset register of all high value assets with clear custodian arrangements and documented maintenance protocols. The register must include unique identifiers, current condition, maintenance logs, named custodians, last service date, and a disposal plan for unserviceable items.
- 3.3.3 **Cold-storage remediation** — Remedial actions to address cold-storage suitability and security at the Honey Research Centre and the Crop Gene Bank should commence forthwith, with interim safeguards for sensitive genetic material until permanent solutions are implemented.

- 3.3.4 **e-Procurement review** — The Island Chief Executive should commission an evidence-based review of the e-Procurement system to identify adaptations (thresholds, simplified procedures, supplier engagement measures) to facilitate participation by small local suppliers for low-value procurements.
- 3.3.5 **Allowance management system** — Prioritise development and deployment of an information system to manage allowances (including the Bad Weather Allowance) and beneficiary records to ensure reconciliation, audit trails and access controls. Until deployment, strengthen interim verification controls and documentation.
- 3.3.6 **Strategic plan for vessels and repossessed boats (costed)** — Finalise and cost a strategic plan for repossessed fishing boats and idle research vessels. The plan should contain: (a) market appraisal and repurposing options; (b) a cost-benefit analysis of repair versus replacement; (c) funding options (donors, PPPs); and (d) timelines for disposal, repair or recommissioning.
- 3.3.7 **FPS capacity and equipment plan** — Review FPS staffing and ensure core leadership posts are filled subject to budgetary and PSC processes. Prepare a preventive maintenance schedule for FPS equipment and costed options to replace or repair irreparable drones and other high-value assets.
- 3.3.8 **FAD management plan** — Provide a schedule of FAD deployment, maintenance outings and associated costs, and present costed long-term management options.

4.0 COMMISSION FOR HEALTH, SOCIAL SECURITY AND OTHERS

4.1 Interactions with the Commission for Health

Over the course of its inquiry, the Committee engaged extensively with the Commission for Health through two site visits and two formal hearings, supported by multiple written requests for clarification. Despite these efforts, the Committee's work was frequently impeded by delays in correspondence and the failure to provide timely or adequate responses to official queries. Several submissions were received well after the prescribed deadlines, often without any explanation or acknowledgment of the delay, thereby affecting the Committee's ability to progress smoothly with its review.

4.2 Observations

4.2.1 The Dual Reverse Osmosis system

The Committee noted that a Dual Reverse Osmosis (RO) System, valued at Rs4.3 million and procured in May 2020 for the Haemodialysis Unit, remained uninstalled and uncommissioned as of April 2022. Despite three extensions of the delivery deadline up to January 2021 and the waiver of Rs427,000 in liquidated damages, the equipment was still not in use.

During an audit visit on 16 April 2022, the system was found stored in a shed with reagents, exposed to weather conditions, while the existing equipment—over ten years old—continued to be used. A subsequent site visit by Your Committee on 13 September 2022 confirmed the same situation.

During hearing, the Committee was informed that the equipment had since been commissioned and was operational as from May 2025, serving the kitchen and paediatric ward. Staff had also received appropriate training for its operation.

The Committee further learnt that a second RO system, originally intended for the Second Dialysis Unit La Ferme Area Health Centre (LFAHC), was transferred to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) at Crève Cœur, where the facility now operates two RO units in full

compliance with operational standards. The transfer was effected following arrangements between the former Departmental Head and the supplier to ensure that the previously idle system was fully utilised and that its intended purpose was achieved.

4.2.2 **Setting up of a Second Dialysis Unit at La Ferme Area Health Centre**

The Committee noted that the project for the establishment of a second dialysis unit at LFAHC, approved by the Executive Council in January 2020, was intended to decentralise dialysis services and provide a backup to the existing unit at QEH.

Construction works amounting to Rs3.62 million commenced in May 2020 and were completed by September 2020. In July 2021, dialysis machines and related medical equipment were procured for Rs5.72 million, bringing the total project cost to approximately Rs10.5 million, of which Rs3.3 million had been disbursed as at September 2022.

The Committee observed that, although officers reported during hearing that there had been no breach of contract, additional costs were incurred for the transfer and installation of dialysis equipment.

- 4.2.3 The Committee **noted with concern inconsistencies** between oral statements made during hearings and the official records subsequently submitted. For example, during one hearing, the Committee was informed that no installation had taken place for the second dialysis unit at La Ferme, and that only the transfer of equipment had been effected, with payment made to the supplier solely for relocation to the new dialysis unit at QEH.

However, supporting documents submitted after the hearing revealed that the works had in fact included the decommissioning of the old system, its transport from La Ferme, and the full installation and commissioning at QEH, at a total cost of Rs1,069,500 (VAT inclusive).

This inconsistency underscores the need for greater accuracy, transparency, and accountability in the information provided by the Commission, and highlights the administrative shortcomings that continue to hinder effective parliamentary oversight.

4.2.4 Monitoring of on-call and in-attendance allowances

In 2020–21, the DOA reported that some Rs100.6 million were paid as On-Call and In-Attendance allowances to Specialists and Medical Health Officers. As of March 2022, the Electronic Attendance System was not fully operational for monitoring these staff. Allowances totalling Rs2.5 million to 22 Specialists could not be verified due to lack of attendance records, and some claims were processed without prior examination. Discrepancies of about Rs1.2 million were identified between submitted lists and actual claims, and instances of unverified payments dating back to 2018 were noted.

In relation to attendance and allowance monitoring, the Committee learned outdated attendance machines became incompatible following a server upgrade, forcing several health centres—including Mont Lubin Area Health Centre—to rely on manual registers. Visiting specialists were unable to register electronically. While assurances were given that no allowance payments were authorised without register-based verification and random checks were conducted, reliance on manual systems increases error exposure.

4.2.5 Domiciliary medical visits

As of March 2022, the Director of Audit (DOA) noted that 18 Medical Health Officers (MHOs) conducted monthly domiciliary visits to 1,558 patients, with fees of approximately Rs7.4 million paid in 2020–21. The Medical Board, responsible for assessing eligibility for Basic Invalid Pension, comprised only one MHO, and in some cases, MHOs issued medical certificates for applicants they also assessed.

The DOA further highlighted significant operational and data management weaknesses: uneven distribution of visits (ranging from 23 to 142 per MHO), incomplete and inaccurate

patient records, multiple MHOs assigned to the same patient contrary to Ministry policy, absence of a complaints register, duplication of visits within the same month, and cases where pension payments totalling Rs1.5 million continued to a deceased patient.

These findings indicated serious lapses in record-keeping, compliance, and oversight of domiciliary medical services.

During the Committee's review of this matter, it was informed that procedures for domiciliary visits had been computerised and now required patient signatures, with approximately 1,460 visits conducted monthly. However, the Committee expressed concern that no official correspondence explained the earlier suspension of departmental enquiries, the Acting Departmental Head could not account for certain documents he had signed and sent to the Committee, and complaints registers were not systematically maintained.

4.2.6 Conversion of New Administrative Building at Mont Lubin into Health Centre

The Mont Lubin Administrative Building, originally intended as a Social Security House, was repurposed for health services in January 2021. Partitioning works were contracted in May 2022 for Rs6 million, later revised to Rs7.6 million. Delays occurred as the site was handed over late and existing materials were not removed, causing works to start 21 days after contract acceptance. The DOA found that the Accounting Officer failed to ensure proper site preparation and adherence to contract terms.

The Committee found that the deficiencies noted at the Mont Lubin Area Health Centre reflected broader systemic weaknesses in project planning and technical oversight within the Commission for Health. The installation of the hydraulic dentist chair had been undertaken before confirming water and drainage readiness, resulting in prolonged non-commissioning and delayed payment three months after installation. Your Committee was left to wonder as to the reasons why such dependencies had not been anticipated at planning stage, why the "critical path" was not mapped, and how these matters escaped both the consultant and the Commission's scrutiny.

- 4.2.7 The Committee also noted continuing instances where acceptance of delivery without immediate commissioning—such as for the water/foam tender lorry procured at Rs18.8 million for Fire Services, then under the aegis of the Commission for Health and Others—converted procurement into contingent liabilities. Repair approvals were authorised without prior legal advice, in the absence of in-house mechanical expertise or preventive maintenance planning.
- 4.2.8 A recurring pattern emerged in relation to procurement timeliness: late issuance of letters of award- (the Accounting Officer attributed same to heavy workload of the officer acting as Secretary of the Departmental Bid Committee at the time), absence of liquidated damages enforcement and reliance on consultant advice without clear accountability. In some cases, consultants were engaged concurrently despite an existing global consultancy contract, and the terms of reference were not provided when requested. Members considered this indicative of inadequate contract supervision and over-reliance on external parties.
- 4.2.9 Weak follow-up mechanisms were also noted in respect of audit recommendations. Although the Acting Departmental Head reported the establishment of a new Audit Committee with around five members including the Hospital Administrator, Members remained concerned that audit feedback was often transmitted without systematic review or enforcement.

4.3 Findings

- 4.3.1 The Committee is of the view that weaknesses in procurement sequencing, technical validation, audit follow-up and contract supervision materially compromise service delivery and the safeguarding of public funds.

4.3.2 The failure to maintain systematic complaint and enquiry records, combined with reliance on manual attendance registers and intermittent legal engagement, erodes accountability. Excessive dependence on consultants without internal verification capacity increases fiscal and operational risk, particularly with the local remote island conditions where logistical delays are foreseeable.

4.3.3 Dual Reverse Osmosis System

The Committee finds that the Dual Reverse Osmosis (RO) system, procured for Rs4.3 million in May 2020 for the Haemodialysis Unit, remained uninstalled and exposed to weather until April 2022, despite extensions of the delivery deadline and waiver of liquidated damages. Commissioning only occurred in May 2025, after staff training, and a second RO system, originally intended for La Ferme Area Health Centre (LFAHC), was transferred to Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) and brought into full operational compliance.

The Committee notes that delays in commissioning and underutilisation of resources represent material risks to service delivery and patient care.

4.3.4 Second Dialysis Unit at La Ferme AHC

The Committee notes that the project to establish a second dialysis unit at La Ferme AHC, with a total cost of Rs10.5 million, experienced delays and additional costs for the transfer and installation of dialysis equipment. Discrepancies between oral statements during hearings and subsequent documentation highlight weaknesses in project tracking, cost verification, and accountability.

The Committee notes with concern that such gaps hinder oversight and effective use of public funds.

4.3.5 Conversion of New Administrative Building at Mont Lubin into Health Centre

The Committee reviewed the planning and implementation of works at the Mont Lubin Area Health Centre, with particular focus on the installation of the dentist's chair. Significant delays and inefficiencies were observed, primarily due to incomplete in-house water and drainage works, the requirement for the supplier's technician to be present during installation, and poor sequencing of activities. The Committee noted that these issues were not properly communicated to the National Audit Office (NAO), despite references to "laxity" in the DOA report.

Concerns were raised regarding the lack of anticipation of the "critical path" for project completion, inadequate oversight of consultants, and limited in-house technical capacity to assess proposals. Delayed dispatch of letters of award, absence of records on liquidated damages, and overlapping consultancy engagements were also noted. The remote location of Rodrigues further complicated timelines, while consultant remuneration based on project size was seen as a potential driver of inflated costs and weakened accountability.

The deficiencies at Mont Lubin reflect systemic weaknesses in project planning, technical oversight, and contract management within the Commission for Health. Stronger internal project governance, timely communication, and robust monitoring mechanisms are needed to mitigate risks, control costs, and ensure accountability.

4.3.6 Attendance and Allowance Monitoring

The Committee notes that verification mechanisms have been strengthened to control On-Call and In-Attendance allowances. No payments are now effected without proper reconciliation of claims against attendance records, reducing the risk of unverified or erroneous disbursements.

4.3.7 Domiciliary Medical Visits

The Committee positively notes that the management of domiciliary medical visits has improved, with procedures largely systematised and recorded. However, the absence of a

formal complaints register continues to undermine accountability and full compliance with Ministry policy.

4.3.8 Contract and Consultant Management

The Committee notes ongoing deficiencies in contract oversight, including delayed issuance of letters of award, non-application of liquidated damages, overlapping consultancy engagements, and the absence of clear terms of reference. Excessive reliance on external consultants, without sufficient internal verification capacity, increases the risk of inflated project costs, operational delays, and weakened accountability.

4.4 Recommendations

- 4.4.1 The Committee recommends that the Responsible Officer reviews the recurrent instances of tardy commissioning of equipment, weak maintenance practices and lapses in procurement chronology, and determine whether the existing administrative framework provides sufficient enforcement of the duty of care expected of Accounting Officers.
- 4.4.2 The Committee recommends that the Commission compile and maintain an Inventory of High-Value Assets with clearly designated *custodians* and *preventive maintenance schedules*, to be produced within three (3) months and kept under continuous review.
- 4.4.3 The Committee recommends that the Responsible Officer formally invoke existing administrative and legislative powers to pursue departmental enquiries, recoveries and disciplinary measures in all instances where public funds were expended for unrendered services or where internal irregularities were not duly investigated.

- 4.4.4 The Committee recommends that the Audit Committee, recently constituted within the Commission, be required to submit *punctual implementation status reports* to the Responsible Officer, detailing the progress made on addressing audit recommendations.
- 4.4.5 The Committee recommends the establishment of a Consultant Oversight Framework defining *clear lines of responsibility between external consultants and in-house officials*, including the *submission of terms of reference* and *documented validation of consultant proposals* before approval.
- 4.4.6 The Committee observed that deficiencies in project sequencing and commissioning had recurred across several installations. It therefore underscores the need for strengthened technical coordination, timely communication with suppliers, and systematic verification of readiness prior to equipment delivery and installation.

5.0 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Exercise of the Committee's Prerogative to Address Administrative Deficiencies and Contempt

The Committee encountered significant challenges in discharging its oversight responsibilities due to repeated instances of administrative lapses and disregard for its convocations, particularly from the Commission for Agriculture. These occurrences compelled the Committee to exercise its prerogative to set matters right and, in certain cases, to report potential contempt to the Chairperson of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

In one instance, a **privilege complaint** was lodged before the Chairperson of the Assembly following the **failure of the Departmental Head of the Commission for Agriculture to appear at a hearing convened on 16 September 2025**. This incident was viewed as a serious breach of the Committee's authority and its ability to conduct its proceedings effectively. The Chairperson has provided his ruling on the matter, proposing no further action while issuing a strong word of caution to any officer who departs from the established rules governing parliamentary privileges and of the consequences thereof.

In an earlier instance, the Committee sought explanations from the then Accounting Officer of the Commission for Agriculture in relation to possible contempt, following failures to attend duly convened proceedings. On **17 January 2023**, the Commission's officers did not attend scheduled **site visits** to the Pointe Monier Boatyard and the Honey Research Centre and Crop Gene Bank at Oyster Bay, despite having been formally convoked.

During the subsequent hearing, the then Departmental Head explained that the convocation had not been received. However, the Committee referred him to the official correspondence dated **12 January 2023** and to the **acknowledgment email sent by his Confidential Secretary on 13 January 2023 at 14:08 hrs**. The officer stated that he had assumed duties at the Commission only on **16 January 2023**, and that the Confidential Secretary who had acknowledged receipt of the convocation had since been transferred.

The Committee took serious note of the matter, reminded the officers of the offence of contempt of the Committee and therefore of the Assembly, and underscored the

professional standards and respect required in dealings with parliamentary committees. The Departmental Head tendered his unreserved apologies, which the Committee accepted, while issuing a formal caution regarding future conduct.

These incidents illustrate the obstacles faced by the Committee in enforcing accountability and administrative responsiveness, and underscore the need for a strengthened internal communication and compliance framework within the Commissions to ensure that the Committee can properly and diligently discharge its duties.

- 5.2 Across the Commissions examined the Committee identified a recurring pattern of shortcomings: inadequate project scoping and planning; inconsistent procurement practice; insufficient in-house technical capacity to verify and commission specialised assets; weak preventive maintenance and asset custodianship; late engagement of legal advisers; and inconsistent application of contractual remedies such as liquidated damages.
- 5.3 These weaknesses manifest in idle or degraded assets, unresolved contractor claims, unpaid retention sums and potential loss of value for public funds.
- 5.4 The Committee's recommendations aim to strengthen accountability, improve asset and project management, and modernize administrative systems to safeguard public funds and assets.
- 5.5 The PAC calls on the Island Chief Executive to enforce accountability through prompt administrative or disciplinary action in cases of poor stewardship or non-compliance, and to pursue recoveries where public resources were misused. Updated Asset Registers with clear custodianship and maintenance plans must be established, and Project Managers should be formally designated for post-implementation follow-up.

- 5.6 To address weaknesses in project oversight, all future projects should comply with procurement rules, undergo independent certification of works, and be supported by formal operational agreements. The Commission for Environment should prepare remediation plans for incomplete projects, while the Health Commission must enforce consultant accountability and ensure legal vetting of major contract variations.
- 5.7 The Committee further recommends system modernization to enhance transparency — notably digital management of allowances within the Commission for Agriculture, fisheries and Others and review of e-Procurement procedures to facilitate local participation. Immediate safeguards are also required for critical assets at the Honey Research Centre and Crop Gene Bank.
- 5.8 Finally, the PAC stresses the need for formal agreements with project partners and timely audit follow-up. Community agreements and pending MOUs must be concluded without delay, and the Health Commission's Audit Follow-Up Committee should report quarterly on implementation progress.
- 5.9 The Committee recommends that the Assembly take the foregoing findings into account and consider the following integrated measures to strengthen governance, accountability and the protection of public funds: -
- 1) Establish, at Commission level, formal Contract-Management functions with named responsibility for project oversight, procurement compliance and contract administration, with access to technical expertise.
 - 2) Ensure Legal Advisers are timely engaged at procurement drafting and before approval of significant contract variations or repairs.
 - 3) Require Accounting Officers to apply contractual remedies in accordance with contract terms and to document any decision not to apply such remedies.

- 4) Maintain current asset registers, preventive maintenance schedules, and named custodianship for high-value equipment.
- 5) Strengthen procurement compliance by verifying DTC approvals and complete procurement files prior to payment; where deviations occur, consider administrative measures.
- 6) Pursue departmental enquiries and recovery procedures for suspected overpayments or unperformed services in accordance with established rules.
- 7) Consider an evidence-based review of the e-Procurement system's operation in the RRA to determine whether adjustments are needed for local supplier participation.

CONCLUSION

The Committee submits this report to inform the Assembly of the findings from its review of the Director of Audit reports, hearings, and site inspections conducted across the Commission for Health and Others, the Chief Commissioner, the Commission for Environment and Others, and the Commission for Agriculture, Fisheries and Others. The inquiry revealed systemic weaknesses in project planning, procurement management, contract supervision, allowance and attendance monitoring, service delivery, and oversight of external consultants. These deficiencies collectively compromise accountability, operational efficiency, and the safeguarding of public resources.

The Committee's recommendations aim to ensure strict compliance with rules, directives, and legislation, while providing the Assembly with the basis to consider corrective actions where mismanagement, non-compliance, or inadequate stewardship has been identified. Emphasis is placed on strengthening internal controls, improving verification mechanisms, enforcing audit recommendations, and ensuring transparent reporting procedures. Notable areas for improvement include timely issuance of letters of award, enforcement of liquidated damages, systematic record-keeping, and reducing excessive reliance on consultants without sufficient in-house technical capacity. The Committee strongly believes that collaboration with parent ministries may help improve service delivery by tapping into their expertise and experience in dealing with similar challenges or situations.

The Committee underscores that continued weaknesses could lead to inflated costs, delayed project implementation, and erosion of public confidence. By highlighting these challenges across multiple commissions, the Committee seeks to promote a culture of accountability, prudent financial management, and effective service delivery. The Assembly is urged to take note of the findings and to actively oversee the implementation of corrective measures to safeguard public funds, enhance governance, and strengthen institutional performance.

Jean Rex RAMDALLY
Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee
Fifth Rodrigues Regional Assembly
27 October 2025

Annex A- Standing Order 63

63. Public Accounts Committee

- (1) There shall be a committee to be known as the Public Accounts Committee to consist of a chairperson to be appointed by the Chairperson and not more than four other Members to be elected by the Assembly.
- (2) The Committee shall examine the audited accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted by the Assembly to meet the public expenditure and other accounts laid before the Assembly together with the Director of Audit's report thereon.
- (3) The Committee may, in the exercise of the duties mentioned above, send for persons and records, to take evidence, and to report from time to time.
- (4) Where the Chairperson is unable to be present at any meeting, the Committee shall elect a chairperson for the day only.
- (5) In discharging its duties under this Order, while examining accounts showing the appropriation of funds granted by the Assembly and such other accounts which the Assembly had referred to it, the Committee shall satisfy itself –
 - (a) that the monies shown in the accounts as having been disbursed were legally available for, and applicable to, the services or purpose to which they have been applied or charged;
 - (b) that the expenditure conformed to the Authority which governed it;
 - (c) that every re-appropriation has been made in accordance with the provisions made in this behalf under appropriate rules; and
 - (d) that cases involving negative expenditure and financial irregularities wherever they have occurred in the financial year under study, having regard to the financial report and the estimates as approved by the Assembly, are subjected to scrutiny.