



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

REPORT

OF THE

**COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE, HOUSING AND CHIEFS' AFFAIRS
ON THE PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE PROVISION OF
FIREFIGHTING AND RESCUE SERVICES IN ZAMBIA**

FOR THE

FIFTH SESSION OF THE TWELFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Published by the National Assembly of Zambia

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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE, HOUSING AND CHIEFS' AFFAIRS ON THE PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE PROVISION OF FIREFIGHTING AND RESCUE SERVICES IN ZAMBIA FOR THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE TWELFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Membership of the Committee

1. The Committee consisted of Mr N Samakayi, MP (Chairperson); Mrs S SMulyata, MP (Vice Chairperson); Mr G Chiyalika, MP; Mr M M Kabanda, MP; Mr M Chikote, MP; Dr E I Chibanda, MP; Mr E Musonda, MP; Mr D Livune, MP; Mr C Chali, MP; and Mr A Kasandwe, MP.

The Honourable Mr Speaker
National Assembly
Parliament Buildings
LUSAKA

Sir

The Committee has the honour to present its Report for the Fifth Session of the Twelfth National Assembly on the Performance Audit Report on the Provision of Firefighting and Rescue Services in Zambia for the Fifth Session of the Twelfth National Assembly.

2. Functions of the Committee

The functions of the Committee in accordance with Standing Order number 157 (1) are to:

- (i) Study, report and make appropriate recommendations to the Government through the House on the mandate, management and operations of the Government ministries, departments and agencies under its portfolio.
- (ii) Carry out detailed scrutiny of certain activities being undertaken by Government ministries, departments and agencies under its portfolio and make appropriate recommendations to the House for ultimate consideration by the Government.
- (iii) Make, if considered necessary, recommendations to the Government on the need to review certain policies and existing legislation.
- (iv) Examine annual reports of Government ministries and departments under its portfolio in the context of autonomy and efficiency of Government ministries and departments and determine whether the affairs of the said bodies are being managed according to relevant Acts of Parliament, established regulations, rules and general orders.
- (v) Consider any Bills that may be referred to it by the House.
- (vi) Consider international agreements and treaties in accordance with Article 63 of the Constitution.

- (vii) Consider special audit reports referred to it by the Speaker or an Order of the House.
- (viii) Where appropriate, hold public hearings on a matter under its consideration.
- (ix) Consider any matter referred to it by the Speaker or an Order of the House.

2. Meetings of the Committee

The Committee held six meetings to consider submissions on the Performance Audit Report on the Provision of Firefighting and Rescue Services in Zambia for the Fifth Session of the Twelfth National Assembly.

4. Procedure adopted by the Committee

The Committee requested for detailed memoranda on the Performance Audit Report on the Provision of Firefighting and Rescue Services in Zambia from relevant stakeholders and invited them to make oral submissions and clarifications on issues arising from their submissions. The Institutions that appeared before the Committee are as listed hereunder.

- i. Office of the Auditor General
- ii. Zambia Airports Corporation
- iii. Town Clerk, Lusaka City Council
- iv. Road Transport and Safety Agency
- v. Indeni petroleum refinery
- vi. Town Clerk, Solwezi Municipal Council
- vii. National Fire Services Training School, Kabwe
- viii. Town Clerk, Livingstone City Council
- ix. Mines Rescue Associations of Zambia
- x. Chief Executive, Zambia Bureau of Standards
- xi. Town Clerk, Kitwe City Council
- xii. Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection & WAMA
- xiii. The President, Fire Fighting Equipment and Safety Suppliers Association of Zambia
- xiv. Disaster Management and Mitigation
- xv. Zambia Air Force
- xvi. Ministry of Mines
- xvii. Ministry of Finance
- xviii. Ministry of Local Government and Housing

5.0 Auditor General's Comments

The Auditor General reported that the Performance Audit Report on the Provision of Firefighting and Rescue Services in Zambia was for the Period 2015 to 2019 in accordance with the Provisions of *Article 250 of the Constitution of Zambia (Amendment) Act No. 2 of 2016, Public Audit Act No. 13 of 1994 and the Public Finance Management Act No. 1 of 2018.*

5.1 Background to the Audit

The Committee was informed by the Auditor General that performance auditing was an independent, objective and reliable examination of whether Government undertakings, systems, operations, programmes, activities or organisations were operating in accordance with the principles of Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness and whether there was room for improvement. This type of audit sought to promote economical, effective and efficient

governance as well as contribute to accountability, transparency and quality delivery of public services.

5.2 Motivation of the Audit

The Committee was informed that wildfires had been increasing in frequency and size due to global warming with devastating effects, resulting in loss of life, property and livelihoods and biodiversity.

In the recent past, the country had witnessed an unprecedented rise in fire calamities where life had been lost and properties worth millions of kwacha had been destroyed such as the fire breakout at Chalimbana University in 2017 in Chongwe where part of the University was razed to ashes.

In addition, fire outbreaks had become a common phenomenon in almost all districts in the country for various reasons. However, the response to such fire outbreaks had in the past been hampered by the lack of adequate firefighting equipment.

5.3 Audit Objective

The objective of the audit was to assess whether the Ministry of Local Government had put in place measures to enhance emergency preparedness in the provision of firefighting and rescue services in the country.

5.4 Audit Questions

The following audit questions were addressed:

- To what extent had the Ministry of Local Government put in place infrastructure, equipment and personnel to support the provision of Firefighting and Rescue Services in Zambia?
- What mechanisms had the Ministry of Local Government put in place to collaborate with stakeholders in the provision of fire services and emergency preparedness in Zambia?

5.6 Sources of Assessment Criteria

The criteria was drawn from:

- Local Government Act of 2019;
- National Fire and Rescue Services Policy 2019;
- Fire and Rescue Services Standard Operation Guide 2018; and
- National Fire and Rescue Services Policy for Zambia Implementation Plan 2017.

6.0 Summary of submissions by stakeholders on the audit findings and Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee considered submissions from the identified stakeholders and the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development and the Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection. The submissions of these stakeholders and Permanent Secretaries, as well as the observations and recommendations made by the Committee, are set out below.

6.1 Lack of a Legal Framework for Fire and Rescue Services

Stakeholders' Submission

The Committee was informed that the greatest impediment to the effective and efficient delivery of fire and rescue services in the country was lack of a principal Fire Act. Stakeholders, in that regard, submitted that the concerns identified in the Audit Report on the delivery of fire and rescue services in the country required an effective legal framework which could ensure solutions to the enumerated challenges.

Submission by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government

The Committee was informed that the Ministry had started the process of developing the legal framework following the approval and launch of the National Fire and Rescue Services Policy of 2019. In view of that, the Ministry was actively pursuing the enactment of the fire and rescue services in Zambia through multi-sector consultations and was likely to be concluded within the third quarter of 2021. Additionally, the Ministry was engaging other providers of firefighting, rescue and paramedical services to develop well scheduled and structured meetings as a way of enhancing stakeholder coordination.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

In noting the submissions from stakeholders and the Ministry of Local Government, the Committee urges the Government to conclude all multi-sector consultations as assured by the third quarter of 2021 and expedite the development of a legal framework to govern the provision of fire and rescue services so as to address a lot of challenges identified in the Auditor General's Report. The Committee awaits a progress report on the matter.

6.2 Infrastructure and equipment

Stakeholders' Submission

The Committee was informed that most of the fire stations were constructed in the pre-independence era when the population and catchment areas were relatively small. It was evident with the growth in population, commercial and industrial areas, that the existing fire stations were not adequate. Stakeholders further informed the Committee that more central and satellite fire stations needed to be constructed. In addition, most local authorities did not have the capacity to procure the appropriate firefighting equipment. Therefore, the Ministry of Finance needed to consider increasing the budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Local Government for the procurement of various firefighting equipment. Furthermore, the Ministry of Local Government should involve cooperating partners such as the donor community in sourcing the funds for firefighting and rescue equipment.

Stakeholders also submitted that even if districts were declared as fire authorities, they had inadequate fire tenders and few pieces of firefighting equipment. Some stakeholders such as the mines had capacity to assist during emergencies, but they were restricted in the areas to cover. Therefore, there was need for the local authorities to re-introduce zones in each district to effectively cover emergencies. This activity could be coordinated by the local authority and should be communicated to all stakeholders through stakeholder meetings and memoranda.

In some cases, there was adequate manpower at the local authority fire brigade but no appropriate equipment to attend to emergencies. If stakeholders' involvement was well

coordinated, local authorities could benefit from the stakeholders' equipment which could be utilised together with local fire authority firefighters.

Submission by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government

The Committee was informed that the Ministry acknowledged the inadequate number of fire stations across the country and was working to ensure that a fire station was established in each district. The Committee was further informed that from the time when the audit was undertaken, more fire stations had been established with the number increasing from the reported forty to sixty two. The forty were now full-fledged fire authorities with regard to provision of fire and rescue services.

In addition, the Committee heard that the Ministry would endeavor to mobilise resources to facilitate infrastructure development in those fire authorities. In the 2021 budget, K13,654,830 had been allocated towards infrastructure development, part of which would facilitate the completion of the three sub-fire stations in Makeni-Bonaventure (which was currently at 42 per cent complete), Chilenje (at 45 per cent complete) and Matero (at 70 per cent complete).

The Ministry had also prioritised the acquisition of equipment in the existing fire stations to enhance service provision. To that effect, part of the K14,840,105 allocated towards service improvement and equipment acquisition in the 2021 budget would be utilised to procure fire and rescue service equipment.

The major challenge to the establishment of fire stations was availability of funding to facilitate procurement of equipment and infrastructure development. Although allocations had been made in the Ministry's budget, the funds were not adequate to meet the demand for infrastructure and equipment. The Ministry of Local Government would continue engaging the Treasury for improved funding to expedite the establishment of fire stations.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee notes with concern that lack of infrastructure and equipment has had far reaching consequences with regard to properties that have been burnt to ashes due to lack of firefighting equipment. In agreeing with most stakeholders who appeared before it, the Committee urges the Ministry of Local Government to engage the Treasury so that budget allocation for firefighting equipment is increased to levels that can respond to fire emergencies in all the districts. The Committee also urges the Ministry of Local Government to engage some cooperating partners in its quest to improving the firefighting infrastructure across the country.

In view of this, the Committee recommends that the fire brigade stations in the remaining seventy six out of the 116 districts be constructed in a phased manner. The Ministry of Local Government should come up with a standard fire station building plan or uniform structure for the fire authorities in the districts which should only differ according to the establishment and grading such as city, municipality or district.

With regard to the old and dilapidated firefighting infrastructure and fire equipment, the Committee urges the Government to increase the budget allocation towards servicing and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the 2022 Budget. The Committee awaits a progress report on the matters highlighted above.

6.3 Fire Hydrants

Stakeholders' submission

The Committee was informed that water utility companies were responsible for supplying water for firefighting purposes. As observed in the audit report, there should be a fire hydrant every 244 metres in low risk areas and 123 metres in high risk areas. However, this was not what was obtaining on the ground. Fire hydrants were either not there or where they existed; they were few and normally did not give the required system pressure.

In most cases, the hydrants which were still functional were far from the risky areas and this frustrated the responses to fire emergencies. The other drawback for stakeholders was that the water utility companies usually had no plan for the location of the fire hydrants in the city or district. Compelling firefighters to draw water further from the fire scene was frustrating. In that regard, the Committee was informed that local authorities should be required to provide the plans for the locations of fire emergency response.

Submission by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection

The Committee was informed that water utility companies under the Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection were responsible for installation and maintenance of fire hydrants located in and within the water supply distribution networks. Most water utility companies had fire hydrants within their water distribution networks and those hydrants were usually visibly marked and were accessible to local authorities.

However, some fire hydrants had become dysfunctional and others had been vandalised as they were not often used. It had been noted, however, that some fire hydrants had been abused as water was drawn for purposes other than firefighting. During the period covered in the performance audit (2015 to 2019), the Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection through various water utility companies had some engagements with the Ministry of Local Government through the local authorities regarding the availability and usage of water at the fire hydrants.

National Water Supply Council (NWASCO) was also on record advising water utility companies to ensure that fire trucks were metered and that water drawn from the fire hydrants was properly accounted for as a way of managing non-revenue water. It was worth noting that water drawn from the fire hydrants formed part of non-revenue water. Non-revenue water was water that was produced but was unaccounted for as it was lost before it reached the customer. Some of the sources of non-revenue water included leakages, storage tank over flows, unauthorised use, and unmetered consumption, among others. Non-revenue water deprived water utility companies of the much needed revenue and therefore, it was imperative that fire hydrants were properly managed to prevent escalation of non-revenue water which brought about audit queries as was the case in 2020 when some water utility companies were cited in the Auditor General's Report.

The Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection, through water utility companies, had always remained open to engagement regarding the supply of water even to vital installations such as fire hydrants.

Furthermore, local authorities were shareholders in water utility companies and that provided an avenue for local authorities to engage any water utility company on many issues, including the functionality of fire hydrants. Therefore, enhanced engagements with all stakeholders were key to ensuring improved efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of firefighting and rescue services in the country.

Submission by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government

The Committee was informed that the Ministry of Local Government had directed all local authorities to ensure that local area plans and other layout plans were developed with input from water utility companies to ensure that water hydrants were incorporated in the development of water networks. Further, all planning authorities were required to ensure that they made provisions for water hydrants for all prospective developments and that implementation was done through building inspections.

In its 2021 Action Plan, the Ministry of Local Government had prioritised increased collaboration with water utility companies in the layout and maintenance of distribution lines in all local authorities. The Plan would also focus on maintenance and servicing of fire hydrants in public designated emergency areas and ensure that fire hydrants were established every 244 metres on the water networks in line with the regulations.

Committee's Observations and recommendations

The Committee appreciates the directive issued to all local authorities by the Ministry of Local Government to ensure that local area plans and other layout plans are developed with input from water utility companies in order to incorporate water hydrants. In view of this, the Committee urges the Government to ensure that all local authorities adhere to this directive without fail in line with the recommended standard of having fire hydrants not more than 244 metres apart.

The Committee also notes that a lot of fire hydrants across towns and cities are either dilapidated or have low pressure, thereby being unusable by fire fighters in case of a fire emergency. In view of this, the Committee urges the Government, through the Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government, to work on the dilapidated water systems and fire hydrants. To achieve this, there is need to increase the budget allocation towards the repair of dilapidated fire hydrants and the water systems supplying water to fire hydrants. The Committee in this respect urges the Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection to engage the Treasury to secure funds for the repair of fire hydrants and water systems that supply water to fire hydrants.

Further, the Committee also urges the Government to ensure that all commercial properties being developed within the respective local authorities have fire hydrants and horse reels which the fire fighters can use on their premises in case of a fire emergency. Furthermore, all local authorities should also ensure that this also applies to markets and bus stations across the country. These facilities should be maintained by the local authorities.

With regard to commercial premises that handle flammable liquids, the Committee urges the Government to ensure that the local authorities secure foam concentrate for their fire brigades to fight fires of flammable liquid. The Committee awaits an update on the matters raised above.

6.4 Staffing Levels

Stakeholders' Submission

The Committee was informed that the statistics given on the existing number of firefighters against those required in the country was very alarming. A total of 1,149 fire fighters had been employed out of the required 2,068. This called for other stop gap measures to mitigate the delivery of fire and rescue services.

Where it was not possible to always comply with the standard requirements, interim measures could be taken to preclude the non-conformity by training auxiliary firefighters within the respective local authorities to supplement the shortfall in firefighters. In this regard, the Ministry of Local Government should consider establishing a pool of voluntary firefighters and provide regulations to guide on the procedures, training, drills and services. Where this was not tenable, the Ministry should endeavor to recruit more firefighters in order to meet the recommended firefighters to population ratio of 1 to 599.

With regard to the establishment and functioning of the Fire and Rescue Services Unit in the Ministry of Local Government, stakeholders expressed concern that it was headed by the Director, Housing and Infrastructure, who was assisted by the Chief Inspector and Senior Inspectors of Fire Services. Arising from this, stakeholders expressed the view that the Ministry of Local Government had not put in place adequate measures to enhance preparedness in the provision of firefighting and rescue operations in the country.

Given that this unit was a sensitive one which required independence in decision making, stakeholders took the position that it was imperative to elevate it to departmental level where it would have its own director with powers to make its own decisions. They, in that regard, recommended that the Fire Services and Rescue Unit be turned into a fully-fledged directorate. In addition, stakeholders proposed that it should be well staffed with both full time and part-time firefighters. The Chief Inspector of Fire Services should become the Director of Fire and Rescue Services at the Ministry of Local Government. At local authority level, the rank of Chief Fire Officer should also become the Director of Fire and Rescue Services.

Submission by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Finance

The Committee was informed that, as the population in the country grew, there was need for a proportional growth in the available resources for the provision of the various public services, including fire and rescue services. However, without addressing the fundamental challenges such as the low revenue generating capacities for the local authorities and the huge debt levels in the local authorities, any re-orientation efforts to the staff establishment would be rendered ineffective as there would not be available fiscal space to provide other complimentary requirements to deliver the public services and attain the desired developmental outcomes.

In that regard, the Ministry of Finance would endeavour to conduct a joint in-depth review with the Ministry of Local Government and the Local Service Government Commission to establish the capacity levels in local authorities of fire brigades and rescue officers to address low staffing levels, whose recommendations would be analysed for recruitment consideration.

Submission by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government

The Committee was informed that the Ministry of Local Government was cognisant of the need to increase the number of firefighters to the ideal levels in order to enhance service delivery. However, local authorities were faced with limited capacity to employ more firefighters and could only work within the available finances. The long term strategy that the Ministry envisioned was to facilitate the increase of own source revenue generation, especially through issuance of fire certificates. By enhancing the capacity of local authorities to enforce compliance with fire regulations, more revenue would be realised and subsequently this would improve the financial capacity to pay staff.

The following were other interventions that the Ministry was undertaking:

- i. engaging the Local Government Service Commission to harmonise staff establishment, modalities of recruitment, training, deployment and staff promotion; and
- ii. development of a training policy (short term and long term).

In addition to this, the Ministry of Local Government would continue to enhance the skills of firefighters by facilitating training through various institutions of learning, including the National Fire Training School and the Local Government Training Institute.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee, in agreeing with the recommendations in the audit report and the proposals by the stakeholders, urges the Government to revisit the staff establishment and staffing levels in the Fire and Rescue Services Units. The Committee recommends that the Unit be upgraded to departmental level with its own director and decision making ability as opposed to being a unit without decision making authority of its own.

Regarding the small number of fire fighters in the country, the Committee recommends that local authorities should consider partnering with well-equipped firefighting institutions within their respective jurisdictions so that they could assist in training their staff. Further, the Committee urges the Government to expedite the upgrading and building of the proposed ultra modern training school in Kabwe, which in the long run will not only train fire fighters under local authorities but also train auxiliary volunteer staff in Government institutions who can be used as back up fire fighting staff in case of a fire emergency in their respective institutions.

To ensure the continuous enhancement and sharpening of knowledge and skills of firefighters, the Committee recommends that the Government should maintain standard fire and rescue service structures which will have a component of training facility at every fire brigade. These facilities should have a drill tower, drill yard, lecture theatre, smoke chambers, pressurised and static water supply sources and various other simulation chambers or facilities with corresponding equipment for practical training and exercises. These can also be used as fire awareness and training facilities for voluntary auxiliary staff in local authorities and Government. The Committee awaits a progress report on these matters.

6.5 Personal Protection Protective Equipment (PPE)

Stakeholders' Submission

The Committee was informed that the provision of equipment and the necessary tools for any institution like the Fire and Rescue Service Unit was quite important. In that regard, the fire and rescue service was a technical field which required necessary tools and equipment to fight fires speedily and proficiently.

In the recent past, the Government did procure state of the art modern fire tenders and rescue equipment for road traffic accident rescue operations that were distributed to some fire brigades both in local authorities and civil aviation institutions respectively. However, stakeholders were of the view that the gesture should be extended to all the fire brigades in the country that had been declared as fire authorities.

Submission by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government

The Committee was informed that the provision of personal protection protective equipment (PPE) was a requirement under fire and rescue services regulations. The Ministry of Local Government would undertake to provide PPEs to enhance the performance of firefighters in fire and rescue services. An allocation had been made in the budget under the acquisition of equipment.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

In agreeing with the recommendations of the audit report and those of stakeholders, the Committee urges the Government to ensure that all fire stations are equipped with fire engines, ambulances and rescue equipment in a phased approach as per required standard. The size and level of sophistication of the equipment should also match with the likely fire emergencies in the respective areas. The Committee awaits a progress report on the matter.

6.6 Stakeholder Coordination

Stakeholders' Submissions

The Committee was informed that as pointed out in the Auditor General's Report, there was very little coordination among stakeholders in ensuring effective and efficient delivery of rescue and firefighting services. Further, the Committee was informed that rescue and firefighting was a mammoth undertaking that required the concerted efforts of all stakeholders.

Furthermore, the emergency preparedness plans and incident command systems both at national and sub national levels had not been availed to all stakeholders. For instance, stakeholders that turned out to render assistance during a fire emergency experienced many challenges due to the absence of clear guidelines on their roles.

Collaborative meetings with all stakeholders needed to be encouraged in order to allow inclusiveness in decision-making. Those meetings could be communicated and coordinated by the local authority every quarter of the year. In the same vein, it had been observed that when a fire emergency operation had been completed, there were no debriefing meetings held with stakeholders. This was important because other issues for continuous improvement came out from such meetings.

With regard to the safety of the fire tenders and fire equipment, the Committee was informed that there had been reports of firefighters being stoned and sometimes fire engines being burnt by members of the public because of the perceived failure to arrive at the fire incident in good time to extinguish the fire. Those unfortunate incidences could be avoided if the police provided escort and traffic control for fire fighters. The other reason why fire fighters were unable to reach the fire scene within the recommended response time was due to inaccessible roads that were sometimes too narrow for fire engines to pass through. In some cases, no designated road network was available due to poor city planning. The Ministry responsible for road infrastructure should provide easy access ways into communities for fire and emergency response purposes. If there was proper coordination with all the necessary stakeholders, the challenges highlighted above could be avoided.

Submission by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government

The Committee was informed that the Ministry of Local Government took cognisance of the need to establish a multi stakeholder coordination mechanism that would enhance the fire and rescue services. One of the factors that had affected the coordination mechanism was the absence of a legal framework to support the engagement mechanism of stakeholders and facilitate the establishment of a command system for response to emergencies.

Given the above, the Ministry had started the process of developing a legal framework following the approval and launch of the National Fire and Rescue Services Policy of 2019. Additionally, the Ministry was engaging other providers of firefighting, rescue and paramedical services so as to develop well scheduled and structured meetings as a way of enhancing stakeholder coordination.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee notes that improved collaboration would not only pool the resources together in fighting fire emergencies but would also pool the skills and equipment to better handle any fire and rescue operations. In view of this, the Committee urges the Government to initiate joint emergency rescue and firefighting trainings with stakeholders such as mining companies, airports and the local authorities on a regular basis so as to enhance collaboration and coordination.

Further, the Committee recommends that in an effort to improve coordination in the fire and rescue operations, the operations of the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) should have its activities decentralised to district level where it should have enhanced coordination and collaboration with local authorities. The collaboration and coordination of operations between the local authorities and DMMU would improve the response rate to disasters, rescue and fire fighting operations. In view of this, the Government should prioritise the decentralisation and improvement of the DMMU operations to district levels.

The Committee also reiterates its earlier recommendation on the need to develop a legal framework which will provide direction on the coordination and engagement mechanism with stakeholders in the fire and rescue operations in the country. The Committee awaits a progress report.

6.7 Emergency Line

Stakeholders' Submission

The Committee was informed that an effective toll free emergency line was essential for the fire brigade to respond to emergencies timely. The 993 toll free line in its current state could not be relied upon as the most convenient and fastest means of summoning the fire brigade. When dialed, the 993 call went direct to Lusaka City Fire Brigade irrespective of where one was calling from. That caused unnecessary delays in responding to fire incidents, since Lusaka City Fire Brigade would in turn have to transfer the call to the relevant fire brigade station. The task force established to resolve the defective 993 toll free emergency line, should, therefore, implore mobile network providers to decentralise the toll free line to other districts.

Submission by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government

The Committee was informed that the Ministry of Local Government had engaged the Zambia Information and Communication Technology Authority (ZICTA) and Smart Zambia to operationalise the emergency phone line. In addition, the Ministry was in the process of establishing a multi stakeholder taskforce to facilitate effective operationalisation of the toll free emergency line.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

In noting the response, the Committee urges the Government to ensure that the 993 toll free emergency line faults are urgently resolved. The Committee awaits a progress report.

6.8 Community Sensitisation

Submission by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government

The Committee was informed that effective prevention of fire emergencies as well as the protection of the public against the fatal and damaging effects of fire was largely dependent on stakeholders' adherence to fire regulations. Communities and the general public had a role to play by complying with fire standards in business premises, public facilities and residences.

The Ministry of Local Government was developing a communication and corporate affairs strategy to facilitate sensitisation and stakeholder engagement for improved adherence and compliance to fire regulations and standards.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee notes the submission and urges the Government to ensure that all local authorities take deliberate initiatives to hold town hall meetings to sensitise the community on how to deal with fire and rescue emergencies at least on a quarterly basis in order to improve community awareness of fire hazards. The Committee awaits a progress report on the matter.

6.9 Management of Collected Revenue from Building Inspections and Fire Certificates Stakeholders' Submissions

The Committee was informed that the Government was in the process of preparing the guidelines that will cover the use of funds raised from the issuance of building inspections and fire certificates. The guidelines would also cover the banking arrangements for the revenue collected was and were expected to be ready by 30th June 2021.

The table below was the roadmap for preparation of the Guidelines:

NO.	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
1.	Appointment of Technical Committee to prepare Guidelines	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government	January 2021
2.	Preparation of Guidelines	Technical Committee	March 2021
3.	Stakeholder Consultations	Technical Committee	April 2021
4.	Review and incorporation of comments from Stakeholders	Technical Committee	May 2021
5.	Submission and approval of Guidelines	Permanent Secretary	June 2021

Submission by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government

The Committee was informed that the Ministry of Local Government recognised that financial accountability in local authorities was key for enhanced revenue collection and utilisation. Previously, financial reporting in local authorities was fragmented with no standardised framework that formed a basis for the preparation of auditable statements. The Ministry of Local Government was working with the Ministry of Finance and Auditor General's Office and had since developed Local Authorities Accounting Policies which were aimed at standardising financial management and presentation of financial statements. It was expected that by the end of 2020, the accounting framework would be rolled out to all the local authorities. With the framework in place, local authorities were expected to be accountable and transparent in the utilisation of all revenues collected, including those from fire certificates and building permits.

Additionally, the Ministry would facilitate the following to ensure accountability and transparency in revenue collection from fire certificates:

- i. re-organisation of the client database (creation, addition, modification and deletion) in line with the existing premises and the appropriate fees at each local authority; and
- ii. initiate the development of an integrated e-system to facilitate fire certification and revenue collection.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee appreciates the efforts being made to develop local authorities accounting policies by the Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Finance and Auditor General's Office with the objective of enhancing accountability and transparency in the utilisation of revenues collected from fire certificates and building permits. The Committee in this regard, urges the Government to ensure that the implementation of the accounting policies is done expeditiously and before the end of 2021. The Committee awaits a progress report on the matter.

7.0 Conclusion

It is the hope of the Committee that the observations and recommendations made in the Committee's Report, based on the concerns raised in the Performance Audit Report on the Provision of firefighting and Rescue Services in Zambia, will be taken in to consideration by the Government in order to improve the provision of fire and rescue services in Zambia generally.

The Committee wishes to pay tribute to all stakeholders who tendered both written and oral submissions before it during its deliberations. Tribute also goes to the Office of the Auditor

General for undertaking the Performance Audit on the Provision of Firefighting and Rescue Services in Zambia, which formed the basis for the Committee's work.

Gratitude further goes to the Office of the Speaker and the Clerk of National Assembly for their guidance and support during the Committee's deliberations.

We have the honour to be Sir, the Committee on Local Governance, Housing and Chiefs' Affairs appointed to consider the Performance Audit Report on the Provision of Firefighting and Rescue Services in Zambia.

Mr N Samakayi, MP
CHAIRPERSON

February, 2021
LUSAKA

APPENDIX I – LIST OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OFFICIALS

Ms C Musonda, Principal Clerk of Committees
Mr F Nabulyato, Deputy Principal Clerk of Committees
Mrs C K Mumba, Senior Committee Clerk (SC)
Mr D Kunda, Committee Clerk
Ms M Kalonga, Typist
Mr D Lupiya Committee Assistant