

PROJECT GovernanceTHE FORTNIGHTLY
INSIGHT

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Vanuatu Public Service Commission representatives with
PROJECT Governance team at the reflections workshop

Vanuatu Public Service Reform Marks Milestones with Support from PROJECT Governance



5-6 November 2024

The Government of Vanuatu's Public Service Commission (PSC) has been on a transformative journey to reform its public service sector, with support from USAID through PROJECT Governance.

From 5 to 6 November, a team from SPC's PROJECT Governance carried out a Learning and Reflection workshop with the Office of the Public Service Commission in Vanuatu to assess the outcomes of the Public Service Reform for the Government of Vanuatu. As part of this workshop, the PSC senior managers and officers who have been at the forefront leading these reforms reviewed progress of the reforms, assessed achievements and mapped out strategies to sustain the gains made.

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The workshop aimed to reflect on successes, identify improvements, and plan for sustainability in Vanuatu's public service reforms. Objectives included refining the project's log frame, risk mitigation strategies, and sustaining reform activities. "The workshop allowed us to understand what worked, what didn't, and how to sustain our achievements," said Mr. Stephane Bong, Deputy Secretary General of Vanuatu's PSC.

Supported by PROJECT Governance since 2023, Vanuatu's PSC has introduced significant reforms aligned with good governance and human rights principles. Among these is the Panel of Peers, a merit-based recruitment process for executive-level public servants. This has led to the appointment of 12 capable Director-Generals. "Now, we have developed a panel of diverse, well-respected professionals from NGOs and private companies who oversee this process. The results speak for themselves – we have recruited capable Director-Generals who truly embody leadership," he explained.

Reforms also included updating the Public Service Staff Manual (PSSM) after 16 years, with rigorous input through stakeholder consultations, truly embodying a people-centred approach to its development. The updated manual emphasises accountability, non-discrimination, and human rights, providing clearer processes for public servants.

Efforts extended to the Vanuatu Institute of Public Administration and Management (VIPAM), aligning its operations with the National Human Resource Development Plan. This included drafting competency-based job descriptions, succession planning, and standardising procedures.

The workshop provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on our reforms, understand what worked well, and identify areas where we can improve and sustain our achievements... Through these discussions, we also strengthened our collaboration with PROJECT Governance to ensure the continuity and success of our public service initiatives

Mr. Stephane Bong,
Deputy Secretary General
of Vanuatu's PSC



Capacity-building initiatives supported HR officers with training on the PSSM and performance systems, complemented by consultants running workshops. "We need our HR teams to be fully informed and skilled, as they are at the heart of implementing these changes," Mr Bon remarked.

With continued support from SPC, USAID, and PROJECT Governance, Vanuatu's PSC is advancing decentralised, accountable, and people-centred governance.



So what?

The reforms within Vanuatu's PSC, supported by SPC, USAID, and PROJECT Governance, are transforming public service delivery by ensuring accountability, inclusivity, and efficiency. By implementing merit-based recruitment, updating the Public Service Staff Manual, and aligning training with national priorities, these initiatives strengthen governance and improve public sector performance. The focus on capacity-building equips HR teams to sustain reforms, while the emphasis on fairness and human rights fosters trust in public institutions. This sets a strong foundation for responsive and people-centred governance in Vanuatu.



(L-R) FEO Supervisor of Elections, Ana Mataciwa, IFES Pacific Islands Director, Pascaline Krone, and Eric-Chad Drodrolagi at the Vienna, VA polling station

Fijian Elections Office participates in the United States Elections Programme



4-7 November 2024

Over 4-7 November, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) welcomed participants from around the globe to attend the United States Elections Programme (USEP). This event facilitates dialogue among election commissioners, stakeholders, and experts, exploring the US electoral system from an international perspective. Among this year's attendees were Fiji's Supervisor of Elections, Ana Mataciwa, and Community and International Engagement Coordinator, Eric-Chad Drodrolagi, who joined discussions on voting technologies and comparative practices.

The four-day programme featured panels and sessions addressing election integrity, disinformation, gerrymandering, artificial intelligence, and voter access. Keynote speaker Anne Applebaum, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, provided insights into democratic resilience, while expert-led discussions explored issues like election observation and accessible voting for people with disabilities. Practical activities included polling station tours and examining voting technologies.

On Election Day, 5 November, participants observed polling stations in Washington, D.C., and Virginia, comparing systems across constituencies. In D.C., registered voters receive ballots before Election Day, with options for write-in or machine-counted voting. Virginia offered a contrasting approach, requiring manual ballot counting and same-day voter registration. Delegates noted bipartisan election official oversight in Virginia, ensuring transparency and accountability.

The event concluded with reflections on post-election processes and peaceful power transitions.

So what?

USEP 2024 was a significant event as it provided participants from around the world with a firsthand look at the complexities of a U.S. presidential election. The event tackled several critical issues, including election security, cybersecurity, voter education, and accessibility. It focused on promoting fair elections by supporting local and state officials in managing voter registration, combating misinformation, and ensuring that the electoral process was inclusive and accessible to all citizens, particularly marginalised communities. Additionally, the event underscored the importance of strengthening public trust through independent election monitoring and nonpartisan oversight, ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the election process.



File Photo from Vanuatu Disability Promotion Advocacy Association

USAID Vanuatu Chargé d’Affaires meets with PPAC Grantees



6 November 2024

On 6 November 2024, the Chargé d’Affaires for US Embassy in Vanuatu, Eric Sheffield met with Pacific People Advancing Change (PPAC) grantees in Luganville, Santo, Vanuatu. Held at the Anglican Church of Melanesia, the meeting aimed to deepen USAID’s understanding of the PPAC programme’s impact in Vanuatu. The programme empowers civil society organisations to advocate for human rights, social justice, and sustainable development across the Pacific.

Four grantees presented their initiatives, including the Anglican Church of Melanesia’s efforts to address gender-based violence, Rosie’s, an organisation focused on food security in Luganville, the Vanuatu Disability Promotion Advocacy Association’s accessibility audits, and Lopa Girls’ disaster risk reduction initiatives. These projects, supported by PROJECT Governance funding through PPAC, highlight the importance of grassroots action in addressing critical community challenges.

This engagement underscored USAID’s commitment to fostering local partnerships and enhancing collaboration, ensuring tailored solutions for the unique issues faced by Vanuatu’s communities.

So what?

This meeting demonstrated the tangible impact of grassroots advocacy in addressing Vanuatu’s pressing challenges, from gender-based violence to disaster preparedness. By supporting PPAC grantees, USAID is not only empowering local organisations but also amplifying community voices in sustainable development and resilience-building. The discussions highlighted the critical role of tailored, community-driven solutions in promoting equity, inclusivity, and preparedness in vulnerable regions. This collaborative approach ensures that investments effectively meet local needs, fostering a more sustainable and resilient future for Vanuatu.



Hon. Henry Puna with PROJECT Governance fellows during the Student Talk Story

PROJECT Governance Fellows Meet Pacific Leaders: Marshall Islands President and Former Cook Islands Prime Minister



25 October 2024

On 25 October, the PROJECT Governance fellows participated in two East-West Center events featuring high-level Pacific Island leaders: a talanoa with the Honorable Henry Tuakeu Puna, former Cook Islands Prime Minister and recent Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum as well as the East-West Center's annual Women of Impact event honoring Her Excellency Marshall Islands President Hilda Heine.

At the talanoa event with the Hon. Henry Puna, the PROJECT Governance fellows along with a small group of other students were able to talk and exchange stories with the former Prime Minister just before attending the Women of Impact event. At the private event, President Heine was presented with the East-West Center's 2024 Women of Impact Award in recognition of her successes as the first woman to lead a Micronesian nation, as well as her significant contributions as a leader in education and climate change advocacy.



It was truly an honor to attend the Woman of Impact Award event and hear from President Heine, the first woman to serve as the head of state in the Pacific. As a Micronesian woman, I am deeply moved and inspired by her continuous work and dedication to community, equality, and resilience. This event is one of many ways to pave the way for our younger women to pursue leadership roles and create a lasting impact on their communities

PROJECT Governance fellow Marisha Jones

So what?

While participating in the PROJECT Governance fellowship, fellows not only have the opportunity to earn advanced degrees at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa but also benefit from unique opportunities for connection with the wider East-West Center community, including high-level leaders from the Pacific Islands region. These experiences are proven to be valuable in helping fellows reflect on their personal and career journeys, as well as their sense of place in the Pacific region. Through the fellowship, PROJECT Governance not only grants promising individuals the opportunity to advance their knowledge and skills, but also empowers them as young leaders to promote sound, just, and responsive governance in their home communities across the Pacific.



Participants at the ICJ Speakershop in Nadi, Fiji

Regional Collaboration: Pacific Nations Prepare for ICJ Climate Case

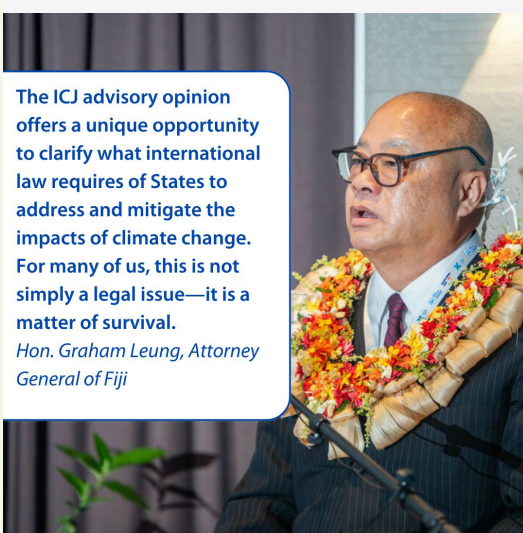


15-17 October 2024

Over 15–17 October, representatives from 13 Pacific Island countries convened in Nadi, Fiji, for the Regional Speakershop co-hosted by the Government of Vanuatu and SPC. Delegates from the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu collaborated to strengthen national oral statements for submission to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in December.

The event provided a platform for refining evidence-based arguments, drawing on legal expertise, scientific insights, and the lived experiences of climate-affected communities. Participants engaged in expert-led sessions on international law, climate justice, and intergenerational equity, while peer discussions enhanced coordination and collaboration across nations.

This Speakershop marks the Pacific's most significant representation at the ICJ to date, reflecting a unified regional commitment to amplifying the voice of vulnerable communities and addressing global climate responsibilities.



The ICJ advisory opinion offers a unique opportunity to clarify what international law requires of States to address and mitigate the impacts of climate change. For many of us, this is not simply a legal issue—it is a matter of survival.
Hon. Graham Leung, Attorney General of Fiji

So what?

The participation of 13 Pacific Island nations underscores a powerful regional response to climate change's impacts. By refining oral submissions for the ICJ, these nations aim to influence global legal obligations on climate change. This collaboration, blending scientific evidence with lived experiences, highlights the Pacific's leadership in climate advocacy. The outcomes will shape international discourse on climate justice and set a precedent for utilising legal mechanisms to address the challenges faced by vulnerable regions like the Pacific.

A portrait of Andrew Taylor Awa, a man with short dark hair and a beard, wearing a blue patterned shirt and a beaded necklace. He is smiling slightly. The background is a blurred green outdoor setting. On the right side of the image, there is a vertical decorative element with blue and white geometric patterns. On the left side, there is a vertical decorative element with green and white geometric patterns.

Meet Andrew Taylor Awa, PROJECT Governance Fellow

I chose a career that deals with allegations of corruption, fraud, and misconduct because I'm passionate about addressing fraud and corruption, advocating for justice, and creating policy change in the Solomon Islands

Andrew Taylor Awa

Andrew Taylor Awa has led an impressive career as a lawyer in the Solomon Islands. Through his work investigating and providing legal analysis on fraud and corruption with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Finance and Treasury as well as with the National Criminal Investigation Division, he was inspired to pursue further studies to deepen his understanding and better serve in this field.

Andrew eventually discovered the PROJECT Governance fellowship through social media, and felt that its focus on governance and leadership in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region aligned well with his career goals. "I want to make a tangible impact by ensuring to upholding of anti-corruption policies and laws in the Solomon Islands, and strengthening the integrity of institutions and civil society groups in the Solomon Islands," said Andrew.

He notes that his experience thus far has been incredibly enriching, and the East-West Center has provided a "uniquely supportive and intellectually stimulating environment that has expanded my understanding of promoting and collaborating on projects with fellows from other countries, exchanging ideas, and learning about governance issues from multiple perspectives."

Andrew specifically highlighted his positive experiences with fellow students at community activities, in the residence halls, as well as during orientation week, where fellows across all East-West Center degree programs could share their personal stories and aspirations.

These experiences have not only helped me grow technically but also reinforced my passion for policy development in my home country

Andrew Awa

Snapshots



East-West Center's annual Women of Impact event honouring Her Excellency, Marshall Islands President, Hilda Heine.



Hon. Henry Puna with students during the Talk Story session



PROJECT Governance Communications Officer, Kalpana Nizarat interviews Vanuatu's Director-General of Internal Affairs, Mr. Keith Veremaito

MARK THE DATE

18 - 22 November:

SPC Human Rights and Social Development Division Annual Planning and Reflections Workshop - Suva, Fiji

20-25 November:

Strengthening Inclusion in Tonga's 2025 General Election: EDAWG Formation and Strategic Planning Workshop - Nuku'alofa, Tonga

21 November:

Webinar - Pacific Electoral Justice Network on Protecting Electoral Integrity in the Age of Social Media. (Participation is based on invite only)

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