

**Annex B: Minutes of the Local Project Appraisal Committee Meeting  
UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji**

**Date:** 06 November 2020

**Project(s) Appraised:** Vanuatu Electoral Environment Project (VEEP) II /UNDP

**1. Attendance**

**LPAC Members:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Pierro Willie	Head of Finance	Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA)
Edward Kaltamat	Chairman, Electoral Commission	Vanuatu Electoral Commission (VEC)
Benuel Lenge	Director / Registrar General	Civil Registry & Vital Statistics Department (CRVS)
Gary Tavo	Deputy PEO - Operations	Vanuatu Electoral Office (VEO)
Adham Crichton	First Secretary	New Zealand High Commission (NZ HC)
Charlie Mangawai	Programme Manager – Political, Law & Justice	New Zealand High Commission (NZ HC)
Lauren Anderson Lister	Vanuatu Policy Officer	MFAT Wellington (NZ HC)
Revai Makanje Aalbaek	Team Leader, Effective Governance	UNDP/Pacific Office
Anne-Sofie Gerhard	Project Manager/TA	UNDP/VEEP
Paulo Siqueira	Civil and Voter Registration Specialist	UNDP/VEEP
Maurizio Cacucci	Public Outreach Coordinator	UNDP/VEEP
Wendy Melenamu	Project Assistant	UNDP/VEEP
Donald Wouloseje	Programme Analyst	UNDP/UNJPO

**LPAC Members hindered in face-to-face participation but attending through representatives, and approval received by mail.**

Cherol Ala lanna	Director General (DG)	Ministry of Internal Affairs
Joe Johnson Iati	Principal Electoral Officer (PEO)	Vanuatu Electoral Office

**2. Introduction**

The VEEP II Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC) meeting was arranged and held on 6 November 2020 at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The meeting was chaired Revai Aalbaek, the Effective Governance Team Leader/UNDP Pacific Office joining in through zoom video conferencing. Also co-chairing the meeting was the Chairperson of the Vanuatu Electoral Commission Mr Edward Kaltamat. The LPAC was convened to review, discuss and comment on the VEEP II project document (prodoc), which had been circulated to LPAC members in advance of the meeting. The agenda of the LPAC meeting was the following:

1. Presentation of the VEEP II prodoc;
2. Comments on the different sections of the prodoc;
3. Agreement on changes, if any;
4. Following LPAC, undertake the incorporation of proposed changes to prodoc
5. Agree on date and format for formal endorsement and signing ceremony

**3. Background information on the project presented by VEEP**

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## Vanuatu Electoral Environment Project (VEEP)



The Project Manager, Anne-Sofie Gerhard, presented the scope of VEEP phase II and outlined overall development challenge, strategy, the four main outputs and some of the key results expected. Other main points included:

- The project will have a new important partner - the Civil Registry & Vital Statistics Department.
- The project will furthermore aim to work closely with Government agencies such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Department of Local Authorities, Ministry of Youth & Sports, Ministry of Justice, Department of Women's Affairs, OGCIO – in addition to local NGOs, CSOs, FBOs etc. The project will also work with UN agencies such as UNCDF, UN Legal Identity Task Force/Council of Europe, UN Women, UNICEF, UNITAR, UNOSAT and IOM – in addition to a number of regional electoral organisations.
- Gender mainstreaming and gender equality is marked as a significant objective in all the outputs of VEEP phase II (GEN2)
- Focus of VEEP II will also be on consolidating decentralisation and the strengthening key actors at local levels such as provincial officers, area administrators/area secretaries as extension arms of the electoral authorities as well as CRVS.

Project Outputs were outlined as follows:

### ***Output 1: Institutional Capacities of the Electoral Authorities Strengthened***

The main result will be the continued strengthening of the institutional and operational capacities of the electoral authorities to achieve their mandate, including:

- Work will continue to focus on consolidating the progress made during VEEP I in terms of capturing, organizing and codifying information and procedures, formalizing the EC/VEO regulatory and operational frameworks through the issuing of EC internal regulations and VEO operational procedures etc.
- Continued work on restructuring of the Vanuatu Electoral Office (VEO) and the Electoral Commission (EC), making emphasis in the establishment of functional units and the setup of the new provincial field presence.
- Identification and roll out of renewed capacity building efforts for the VEO (involving human, financial and material resources), including training on TORs for the new increased permanent staff at HQs and provincial officers, including empowering field officers (AAs/ASs) and focus on training and development of internal and external reporting guidelines.
- Improving relationship and networking with other organisation within the country and regionally.
- Continued digitization and digitalisation of the electoral authorities, building archive and institutional memory.
- Support capacity-building for the EC/VEO in the area of boundary delimitation - demarcation and alignment of electoral boundaries/area councils.

### ***Output 2: Integrity and Accuracy of the Voter Register Enhanced***

The main result will focus on the successful transition to the future voter registration model, where the VEO will derive the voter register from the civil registry database, with the aim of increasing the integrity and accuracy of the voter register and increasing its public confidence, including:

- Continued provision of technical advice and operational support during the transition period with registration being done jointly by the VEO and the CRVS department, and issuing national ID cards to all citizens;
- Support to capacity building in ICT related components to ensure its sustainability and cost-effectiveness, as well as improve technical resources, systems sustainability and stimulating local ownership;

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- Provision of technical support for the use of the CRVS and voter database by other governmental offices and departments;
- Provision of satellite imagery and analysis services to support the establishment of a common location datasets enhancing cooperation and collaboration between VEO, CRVS, Vanuatu National Statistics Office (VNSO) and other government offices, which also will be important for the boundary delimitation exercise.
- Examination of, and support to, the use of new technologies and digitalization processes for improved voter registration and voter verification, for example mobile applications and facial recognition systems.

### ***Output 3: Ability to Conduct Voter Education and Raise Public Awareness strengthened***

The main result will centre on improving institutional capacities to initiate and maintain longer-term voter education efforts and to strengthen the capacity of the VEO to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate voter information and awareness efforts, including:

- Establishment of strategies for enhancing EC/VEO capacities to achieve results in the medium- and long term, not necessarily linked to the electoral events;
- Capacity building of the newly established public outreach unit
- Support the establishment of partnerships between the EC/VEO with other government agencies incl. the Ministry of Education and Training, and CSOs/FBOs to conduct long-term and continued initiatives in terms of civic and voter education;
- Engagement with initiatives that create support to the introduction of special temporary measures to increase women political participation;
- Training of local youth leaders (municipal and provincial level) in collaboration with other UNDP sub-regional projects, including on (MLC) functioning and elections, as well as Provincial Local Council (PLC) functioning and elections.

### ***Output 4: Legal Electoral Framework Improved and Capacity Building on Electoral Reform to Key Stakeholders provided***

Main result will focus on supporting the electoral reform initiatives, including the capacity of the EC/VEO in developing and presenting viable projects for electoral reform on complex aspects of the electoral processes such as, but not limited:

- The regulation of political parties
- change of electoral system
- special temporary measures to ensure broader inclusiveness of marginalized and under-represented groups at all levels of the electoral process
- exploring out of country voting, out of constituency voting
- support to improve and consolidate the electoral legal electoral framework, ideally in a single act.
- Providing options on the use of single ballot paper.
- Continued support to potential political reform, including a constitutional referendum

#### **4. Quality Assurance Assessment Report by the Project's QA Assessor (areas of strengths and weaknesses)**

See attached.

#### **5. Summary of LPAC member comments**

The First Secretary to the New Zealand High Commission to Vanuatu inquired with the Government of Vanuatu if it was important and meaningful for the project to continue. The Chairman of Electoral

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Commission confirmed the strong support of the national authorities and stressed the relevance and importance of all four outputs presented, particularly output two because by the comprehensive data cleaning exercise and field validation the data of the voter lists will massively improve voters' turnout, as well as increase the trust in the electoral processes and the credibility of the election results.

The NZ First Secretary further inquired about the possible impact of the continued closure of borders on the project. The VEEP Project Manager/TA clarified that out of the four current VEEP staff, three of the staff (Paulo Siqueira, Wendy Melenamu and Anne-Sofie Gerhard) will remain in Vanuatu for the continuation of phase II. Maurizio Cacucci will repatriate by end of the year but can provide support as consultant, relying on his existing knowledge of the local context and strong networks. There is also other possible consultants with previous experience in Vanuatu and in the Pacific that can be engaged by the project as remote support, as well as a number of qualified in-country specialists. The project will also need the expertise of both local and international legal electoral experts given the focus on electoral reforms, but resources appear available. Paulo Siqueira (Civil and Voter register specialist) added that there are plans for significant database training, which will ensure enhancement of local capacities and less and less reliance of external support.

The NZ First Secretary added that New Zealand would be very happy to see exploration of offshore voting as part of the project, given direct government talks on this in recent past, and it was confirmed by the EC Chairman that it is included in the business plan to explore options for out-of-country voting systems.

First Secretary NZHC further inquired on the commitment and support of the Vanuatu Government side regarding the new staffing structure and if they will support this important aspect, as VEEP II is a significant investment on the capacity building of the EC/VEO. The EC Chairman confirmed that last year the Public Service Commission (PSC) approved the new VEO structure, although recruitments were mostly put on hold by COVID19 considerations, however already 4 provincial officers were identified, soon to be fully recruited, and two more will be recruited soonest. The position of voter education has been shortlisted and should be on boarded soon. By the end of the year, there should be an increase of the staff from 'permanent' five to 17 staff. There is a plan in place to submit an updated proposal to PSC which is organising staff into functional units and with detailed and aligned job descriptions, clear reporting lines etc. in the next few weeks' time.

The first secretary of NZ Adham finally thanked all for the document received which aligned very well, and further added that NZ is very honoured to work together with the Govt of Vanuatu and UNDP on the Vanuatu Electoral Environment project.

The UNDP Programme Analyst, Donald Wouloseje, suggested adding the Vanuatu Skills Partnership of the Ministry of Education as a partner of the project. They can support VEO by training trainers for voter education activities, ensuring sustainability. The Acting Deputy PEO, Gary Tavoia, explained that the office has already engaged with some of the organisations including Wan Smol Bag and Further Arts.

Director of CRVS suggested involving other ministries' who have their own existing databases (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education) in the database capacity training, planned by VEEP next year.

According to the Director of CRVS, the Civil Registry system itself is under a transition period. It is already in the business plan for system review. There has been a large increase in the number of users of the CRVS system and therefore there is a need to have data protection layers added, which has already been discussed with VEEP. Director Lenge expressed he was very happy that UNDP is willing to support this important area of data protection and data privacy.

The VEEP manager also commended that Vanuatu is one of the first countries in the Pacific to introduce national ID to its citizens, despite limited resources, a very complicated geography and some

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areas with very limited access to information – it is a great achievement for both the civil registry and voter registry databases. At the same time, it's a significant cost saving measure for the Government and an essential start of having accurate population statistics to identify appropriate strategic responses to development challenges.

As detailed feedback on the prodoc had not been received by MFAT Wellington, Effective Governance Team Leader Revai Aalbaek checked with NZ HC if there would be significant changes coming from Wellington. The First Secretary explained that there would not be significant changes/comments from Wellington as most has already been communicated. The funding package and the prodoc are well aligned and funding has been officially confirmed from NZ. No big changes or comments are thus expected but all were in agreement to wait for feedback from Wellington early next week for its inclusion and finalisation of the project document. It was agreed that the VEEP Project Manager will add a few more partners including the Skills Partnership in the prodoc, in addition to adding a line on out-of-country voting exploration as part of the next years reform package. This, together with any possible feedback from Wellington will be integrated and circulated soonest possible, before signing ceremony with press released hopefully Wednesday.

The LPAC agreed to sign the Prodoc and the Legal agreement the following week as follows:

Signing parties:

GFA/Cost sharing agreement: - UNDP Resident Representative and NZ High Commission  
Project Document – Government of Vanuatu Representative (DG?), UNDP Resident Representative  
Date – TBC (possibly Wednesday 11 November 2020)

Closing remarks from Chairman:

Thanked all for attending and the strong partnership between UNDP, New Zealand Government and the Government of Vanuatu as represented by those present in the meeting including the EC, VEO, and NSO. She especially expressed gratitude to NZ for agreeing to support the second phase of VEEP,.

## 6. Final LPAC recommendation:

With the conclusion of the discussion, the LPAC adopted and approved the VEEP II project document subject to the changes arising of the meeting discussion and any from MFAT Wellington.

**NOTE:** Subsequent to the meeting, First Secretary of New Zealand communicated on 12 November 2020 that there were no further comments from Wellington.

LPAC minutes prepared by:

Wendy Maleham

LPAC minutes are approved by:  
(Chairperson of the meeting)

Revai Aalbaek (Chairperson)