

QUARTERLY PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

July-September 2024

Project Summary Information	
Project Title	Vanuatu Electoral Environment Project - Phase 2
Project ID	00123236
Project Duration	01-01-2021 – 30-01-2024
Location	Vanuatu
CPD/UNSDCF/RPD/SP Outputs	3.2 Institutions and systems accelerate inclusive development through responsive, participatory, and transparent governance processes
Gender marker	2 - Gender equality is a significant objective
Digitalization marker	Output significantly enabled through digital technology and digital transformation
Implementing Partner	National government, sub-national government (Ministry of Internal Affairs), Parliament
Total budget	US\$ 4,195,283.91 (NZD 6,420,000.00 received from MFAT)
Donors (funding sources)	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Budget (2024 annual budget)	US\$ 1,496,240.00
Expenditure recorded for the reporting period	US\$ 1,353,018.00
Expenditure recorded for the total project	US\$ 4,107,248.00
Project Manager name:	Niaz Ahmed Kandhir



1. Executive Summary

The Vanuatu Electoral Environment Project (VEEP), implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funded by the Government of New Zealand, is focused on strengthening electoral systems and democratic practices.

Following the successful conduct of a National Referendum on 29th May 2024, Vanuatu has now entered into a new phase of electoral and political reforms, which need to be implemented ahead of any future elections, especially the scheduled General Elections in 2026.

In the third quarter, two major electoral reform legislations- the Electoral Act and the Political Parties Registration Act were published in the official gazette which means they have now come into effect. The project provided technical assistance to the Electoral Commission and Vanuatu Electoral Office in initiating the process for developing the regulations, standard operating procedures and other documents required to implement these acts.

VEEP Project supported the process of reviewing lessons learned from the country's first national referendum. Three workshops, reviewing national operations, international operations, and international observers' and media perspectives enabled the Vanuatu Electoral Commission (EC) and Vanuatu Electoral Office (VEO) to develop the comprehensive report on the National Referendum that will be presented to the Parliament.

During this quarter, VEEP Project facilitated mainstreaming of inclusivity in elections in Vanuatu through a joint activity between VEO and Vanuatu National Youth Council (VNYC) to promote civic education, leadership skills and importance of political participation among young women. Overall, twenty-five young girls were trained under the "She Can Lead" initiative with VNYC. UNDP VEEP also partnered with the Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MoJCS), the Civil Registration and Identity Management (CRIM) Department and VEO to increase registration of people with disabilities (PWD), reducing barriers to vote and engage in discussions to creatively make elections more accessible in remote communities with little to no accessible infrastructure. Both events were given a broader platform and awareness through three nationally broadcasted radio and television sessions where listeners and viewers could call participants to ask questions and get information from national experts.

2. Progress Review

a) Key results achieved

This section highlights the key results achieved during the reporting period:

Output 1: Institutional Capacities of the Electoral Authorities Strengthened:

In the third quarter, VEEP Project's key focus was to support EC and VEO's plan to implement two major electoral reform legislations- the Electoral Act and the Political Parties Registration Act- which were published in the official gazette which means they have now come into effect.

VEEP project also assisted the Electoral Commission and Vanuatu Electoral Office in conducting follow up activities of the first ever National Referendum held on 29th May 2024.

Implementation of electoral reforms: The VEEP Project provided technical assistance to the EC and VEO in development of two separate roadmaps and timelines for implementation of the Political Parties Registration Act and the Electoral Act. In addition, the project provided technical assistance to the EC and VEO in development of options for restructuring of the two institutions in light of the administrative and operational independence outlined in the Electoral Act.

Lesson learning workshops: Since this was a first ever National Referendum in Vanuatu the Electoral Commission (EC), Vanuatu Electoral Office (VEO) together with the Civil Registration and Identity Management (CRIM) Department, and UNDP's Vanuatu Electoral Environment Project (VEEP) conducted a lesson learning exercise to document key findings for future elections as well as referendums. Two in-person workshops were held on 16 July and 13 August 2024 with a total of 25 participants, 9 female, 16 male. In addition to a review of relevant documents such as the Official Report Books and Call Centre Report Books and a survey of the electoral staff on key questions.

Additionally, a questionnaire dealing with the identified issues to be specifically discussed during the sessions was shared a few days ahead with the participants of the workshops. The sessions covered the operations of the 2024 national referendum including all phases of the electoral process, both substantive (such as regulatory and procedural issues, training, voter information and public outreach) as well as administrative and financial issues (such as procurement, logistics, operations, information technology, security, legal, and external relations). It considered the central, provincial and local levels, including polling stations. Crosscutting issues were considered including gender and social inclusion during the overall referendum process.

Decentralization support: Under the Letter of Agreement (LOA), Vanuatu Electoral Office has refurbished its Torba Provincial Office. This included upgrading and reinforcing the roof, windows, exterior and interior walls, along with the beautification of the office. Additionally, every provincial officer has been provided with access to the required technology to meet the growing demands of their services in Vanuatu. This includes tablets, computers, and laptops. All of these assets have been officially registered with the Asset Manager of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Gender analysis: The VEEP Project has been supporting the VEO and EC in providing technical assistance and knowledge to increase awareness of gender inclusion in electoral processes. VEEP conducted a gender analysis of the 2024 National Referendum, providing recommendations for future similar electoral events to ensure all populations are equally capable of casting an informed vote. With the launch of the two new electoral reform laws, VEEP also provided advice to increase gender balance in the new EC and VEO staffing structures with an action plan to achieve more diverse representation in senior level positions in the office and reach the National Sustainability Development Plan of the Government of Vanuatu for 2030. Finally, VEEP presented on primary barriers for women to engage in politics in Vanuatu, how they may be impeded from standing for and winning elections in Vanuatu with tangible options for VEO and EC to explore to lower those barriers.

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

VEEP project continued to support the development of RV5 (Central Register system) and VanElekta (Voter Registration System) during this quarter. The relevant documents and development source codes were delivered by the developer to the project. Together with CRIM and OGCI, the project started to improve and reshape the system to remove any dependencies on external support, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the system and that it matches the human resource available at OGCI with minimum external support. Some of the challenges identified in the system are compatibility of data structure in the existing RegisterVIZ4 and new RV5 system and geographical hierarchy of the country as represented in the systems. These are essential lesson learned for any future UNDP project in Digital Governance and will lead to better digital projects moving forward. CRIM worked closely with the Department of Lands and Natural Resources to address the geographical hierarchy and ensure that the structure followed the legal requirements in the country.



To better understand the implementation and reach of CRIM activities in the rural communities of Vanuatu, a weeklong workshop was jointly organized by CRIM and VEEP. This workshop was attended by all six CRIM Provincial Managers, CRIM Headquarters Staff, All Tanna Area Administrators, and a vast area of key stakeholders from Tafea's Child Desk, Disability Desk, Youth Officer, Vanuatu National Provident Fund, Lenakel Hospital, Assistant SG, Woman's Affairs to police and education.

The workshop allowed participants to contribute to CRIM's understanding of the challenges of services delivered in the most remote areas of Vanuatu while suggesting ways to address these shortcomings better. Additionally, CRIM was able to provide better in-depth training to the provincial managers, area administrators, and stakeholders regarding the legal boundaries guiding vital event registration. This is key to ensure that moving forward all partners understand why some amendments or processes are not allowed and the importance of the integrity of the data in the Central Registrar, which is the foundation for the Voter Registration. Thus, the following outcomes were achieved:

- The Tafea Provincial CRIM committee appointments which include all stakeholders
- Two printers and two laptops presented to two Area Councils to ensure that they can registrar all vital events in their coverage area
- Better understanding of the new CRIM and National ID card legislation including the Regulation and SOP

- Detailed 2025 and 2026 work plans for each province created using the knowledge gained during this workshop and in collaboration with their key stakeholders. This two-year work plan will be endorsed at the Bi-Annual National Workshop in November.
- Increased knowledge of community awareness and identifying best practices for each Area council
- The Area Council's network coverage was mapped, allowing Provincial officers to identify how best to grant access to the Central Registrar. Participants were also provided with desegregated data per area council and village. This data allows area administrators to recognize their jurisdiction, especially when notifying deaths and marriages.

Under the LOA with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, over 250 villages across nine different islands covering twelve area councils have been tagged. Each village is tagged with its GPS coordinates, the names of the village with the chief dictating the spelling, the contact details of the village chief, the category of the village or secondary village, and a picture to mark the location of the GPS. This is based on the work of the Civil Registration and Identity Management Department with the support of a multifaceted stakeholder group including the CEO of the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs, and representatives from the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards, Environment, Energy, and Disaster Management and others. This collaboration commenced working towards improving access to Civil Registration points and ensuring that there is one collective agreed upon Vanuatu Geo-data Location Registry. This raw data is now ready to be reviewed and validated against the Area Council Community Profile and finally be published in the official gazette.

Output 3: Ability to Conduct Voter Education and Raise Public Awareness Strengthened:

VEO, with the support from VEEP project, scaled up its efforts to promote inclusion and increased participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities in the electoral processes. One of the key achievements under Output 3 was the launch of the "She Can Lead" programme. VEEP sponsored and provided technical guidance to the VEO and Vanuatu National Youth Council (VNYC) which trained 25 young women in civic education, life skills and empowerment and leadership. The pinnacle moment of the programme was the visit of young female leaders to the Parliament of Vanuatu, where they conducted a mock session of the Parliament and election of the "She Can Lead" Prime Minister within the Parliamentary Chambers. It was first hand experience for these young leaders to imagine themselves as future representatives of the country.



Figure 1 She Can Lead participants, VEO representative, and Parliamentary Clerks in the Parliamentary Chambers.

VEO and VNYC are now in discussions on how to roll out the programme across the country. This has also initiated discussions with the Vanuatu Parliament about possible youth Parliament exchanges around the Pacific and plans to launch the next national Youth Parliament.



Figure 2 Vanuatu Electoral Office's Principal Electoral Officer presenting certificate of completion to She Can Lead Prime Minister Abelia Sope

VEO and VEEP continued the partnership with Ministry of Justice and Community Services' (MoJCS) Disability Desk at the Medical Disability Registry (MDR) Training of Trainers (ToT), presenting to MoJCS Provincial Officers on work during the 2024 National Referendum to make the election more accessible to people with disabilities. The presentation also included a briefing on the new Electoral Act, of which the MoJCS officers praised VEO on the alignment of the policy with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) guidelines on elections.

To promote these activities, UNDP/VEEP sponsored national talkback radio and television sessions. Two sessions on She Can Lead explored why women should be in decision-making spaces and how to motivate young women to more actively participate in voting. A final session on how and why PWD should get their National ID cards and how family members can support PWD to be informed voters.

VEO has supported the implementation of "Liftemap Fiuja – Hear Our Voices" strategy in raising the voices of the most marginalized people of Vanuatu – people with disabilities.

Output 4: Legal Electoral Framework Improved and Capacity Building on Electoral Reform to Key Stakeholders Provided:

The VEEP Project continued to provide technical assistance to EC and VEO in establishment of regulations corresponding to the two new Electoral Act and Political Parties Registration Act.

The project provided support through a legal drafting specialist, who conducted an in-person mission to Port Vila to conduct a series of workshops to finalize the drafting instructions for the two acts. After several consultations, the drafting instructions were reviewed by the Minister and DG of Internal Affairs before being sent to Office of Attorney General.

The regulations are in the process of drafting by the Office of Attorney General and the project will continue to provide further assistance to finalize them in the next quarter.

b) Output progress

The below table summarizes the accumulative progress against the results framework to date as per the project document.

However, due to the nature of the project, quantitative data collection has its limitations in that it cannot fully capture the qualitative aspects of the project and its achievements under unintended positive outcomes. These qualitative aspects have been captured in the previous section and the quarterly reports of the VEEP project. Nevertheless, to fully capture what the project has been doing and achieving beyond the existing results framework, it is proposed to change the nature of outputs from “electoral only” to government and EMB’s capacity in general in the results framework. It is suggested to keep it to minimum changes as re-design processes for the next phase will commence in 2024, however these minimum changes may provide the project some anchor to report more adequately beyond the existing results framework for the final completion report. This is in line with the recommendations from the VEEP-II independent evaluation conducted in end of 2023.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT INDICATORS	BASELINE Value (2020)	Annual Target	End of the project target	Status: On-track/off-track/complete	Means of verifications and comments to substantiate the selected response
Output 1 Institutional Capacities of the Electoral Authorities Strengthened Gender marker: 2	1.1 Number of provincial electoral and civil registration offices with recruited and trained staff, sufficient physical and technical infrastructure to accommodate their mandate	0	NA	6	Completed	VEO and CRIM have a presence in all six provinces with all required services being provided to citizens close to their areas of residence. VEO has five Provincial Electoral Officers, one in each of five provinces, and one more in the process of recruitment. CRIM has six permanent Provincial Registrars and now also six Assistant Provincial Registrars following last year's restructure submission. Evidence: • Staff lists for provinces • VEO and CRIM Job Descriptions/Contracts • Approved restructure documents • New Project Plan (NPP) documents
	1.2 Number of new increased and trained permanent staff at HQs and provincial offices, including joint training activities with the CRVS Department	5	18	54	Completed	Vanuatu Electoral Office has 12 staff including four women as permanent staff and Civil Registration and Identity Management Department has 18 staff members including eight females. Both departments have nearly completed their new structures. • Over 300 presiding officers and polling staff training on electoral operations and

						procedures in the lead-up to snap elections in 2022. • 37 presiding Officers trained on electoral operations and procedures training in the lead-up to By-elections in Tanna 2023. • 40 presiding Officers trained on electoral operations and procedures training in the lead-up to the By-elections and provincial election in Malekula 2023. • 10 presiding Officers and polling staff trained on electoral operations and procedures training in the lead-up to By-elections in Emau 2023. • 30 CRIM and VEO staff training on Vital Events Registration Procedures and Identity Management • 300 Youth Leaders and 47 Government Officials from 5 different Ministries trained on the Kobo Tool collecting data for the Vanuatu Village Registry Project • 30 Youth Leaders training on Identity Management best practices and Kobo data collection following the double cyclone Kevin and Judy in 2023 to ensure that every citizen has access to their legal identity • 40 temporary data validation officers trained in 2023 on data integrity and accuracy to support the first National Referendum • 40 temporary data validation of identity training and supporting the cleaning of data follows two field missions in 2023 to ensure everyone has access to National ID Cards • 30 VEO and CRIM Staff sensitization training on the action plan for improving accessibility
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						of persons with disability to the electoral processes • 2 VEO Staff trained in website management and content creation • 71 Area Administrators trained in Identity Management (importance of cleaning electoral database), Vital Registration, and Village Registration Verification • 30 VEO and CRIM staff briefings on the electoral legal framework, and draft electoral and political parties' legislation. The next round of training is to be done in 2024 as the new legislation has been passed. Evidence: CRIM 2023 Business Plan VEO 2023 Business Plan CRIM Training Needs Assessment and Skills Gap Audit undertaken
	1.3 Number of formalized EC internal regulations and VEO operational procedures drafted and endorsed.	0 regulations 5 procedures	15 8	15 internal regulations 8 operational procedures	Completed	EC regulations and 3 codes of conduct have been developed by the Electoral Commission with support from UNDP/VEEP in the form of orders, to substantially improve the practices involved in the preparation and conduct of the various phases of the electoral processes in Vanuatu. More regulations will be supported after the passage of the Single Harmonized Electoral Bill and Political Parties Bills by the parliament. Civil Registration and Identity Management (CRIM) Department also introduced a number of regulations following the passing of Acts related to National Identity Card and Civil Registration.

						A comprehensive set of Standard Operating Procedures was also developed and signed to govern the management of various aspects of the civil registration through RV5. Evidence: Electoral Regulations EC Administrative Procedures VEO Electoral Operational Procedures CRIM Regulations CRIM SOPs
	1.4 The percentage of progress in codifying and digitizing institutional memory of EC/VEO systems and procedures, including congregating files to the Government Document Management System (Saperion);	5%	20%	100%	50% completed	This activity was completed by 50% and data is saved in an external drive. This activity was put on hold due to Government priorities and constant operational pressure. However, additional Data Validation Officers (DVOs) could be utilized for this activity when/if no operational pressure of elections is on/priorities allow. Unexpected, unbudgeted By-Elections, snap elections etc. create unexpected budget and delivery issues causing some activities to be deferred due to competing priorities.
	1.5 No of electoral administrative processes where gender is mainstreamed, and gender-disaggregated	0	2	8	Completed	All electoral laws have been amended to be gender sensitive; All Job Descriptions have been amended to be gender-neutral; Furthermore, VEEP supported the development of an EC/VEO PWD Action Plan to raise

						awareness of issues faced in electoral inclusion for People with Disabilities. New CRIM legislation for Civil Registration and Identity Management, and National ID Acts approved by November 2021 in Parliament, gazetted Feb 2022 are gender-sensitive. Electoral Commission and Vanuatu Electoral Office (VEO) have endorsed a VEEP-supported Gender and Inclusion Policy “Leftemap Fuija”, which is Vanuatu’s first ever culturally nuanced approach to gender and inclusion in the electoral processes. Evidence: -National ID Card Act. # 27 (2021) -Civil Registration and Identity Management Act #28 (2021); -Electoral Act (2023) -Political Party Registration Act (2023) PWD Action Plan is available on VEO's Website. Leftemap Fuija Gender Inclusion strategy available on VEOs website.
Output 2 Integrity and Accuracy of the Voter Register Enhanced	2.1 Proportion of eligible voters who are registered to vote, disaggregated by sex, age, and location – to be done every year	265,000	100%	100%	Completed	The 2023 verification and validation project following the national joint civil & voter registration campaign begun in 2019 has been extended to be a “de facto” registration process, with the entire population being registered. Registration of citizens above 18 is now reportedly at 98% of the population.

Gender marker: 2						Evidence: -Project progress reports -Data reports from the voter register (GRVS) and civil register (RV4). -Data reports from RV5
	2.2 Number of voters issued with national ID card disaggregated by gender (replacing the electoral cards)	130,000	190,000	200,000	Completed /Over achieved	By the end of 2023, 368175 Ni-Vanuatu citizens were issued with National ID cards. Following is the age and gender break up of ID cards issued: Male (over 18): 156,079 Male (17 and under): 34,920 Female: (over 18): 143,982 Female 917 and under): 33,194 Total: 368,175 It should be noted that the total number of active ID cards is not reflective of the total population of the country. This is because the data cleaning process is still underway. However, it is important to note that with the support from VEEP, civil records have been cleaned from over 1.2 million records, down to 368175. Evidence: RV4 RV5
	2.3 Percentage of merge of databases/transition to	0%		100%	On track	The new civil registration system, RV5, has voter registration and voter management features, in addition to being an integrated

	new voter registration model.					interoperable identity management system. The software and system have been fully developed, with full documentation and SOPs, and will be re-deployed (after GoV cyber-attack) on OGCI0 servers will full data migration from RV4 in October 2023. There is however still a list of enhancements being developed for RV5 to better meet the needs of the country.
	2.4 Expected number of duplicated and deceased citizens removed from the Civil and Voter registries.	20,000	5,000	40,000	Over achieved	UNDP/VEEP has supported a comprehensive data cleaning exercise through an operational data centre with data validation officers, which has resulted in the cleaning of the civil registration data. The issuance of National ID cards to citizens is now based on clean and complete data. The new RV5 system supported by the UNDP/VEEP will have a systematic arrangement to avoid the majority of duplications in the future. Provided target awareness in Emau, Malekula, and Tanna of the part every citizen must play to ensure that deceased people are removed from the Civil Registration System and thus the Electoral lists. In 2024, biometric kits will be installed at provincial levels to further support one citizen one identity, and one only, through automated deduplication.
	2.5 New components developed and updated for Civil and Voter registration systems.	-	20%	100%	Completed	The new CRIM central civil register, RV5, is a foundational system with provisions to meet multiple requirements of the whole of the government's digital transformation needs. The system provides for the management of all

						aspects of citizens' legal identity as well needs of other government departments, including the VEOs voter management requirements. Two-day user testing with key stakeholders to further fine-tune the MVP for CRIM to start using. Over 87 user cases were tested to ensure standard results and outputs, most features are working with challenges identified.
Output 3 Ability to Conduct Voter Education and Raise Public Awareness strengthened Gender Marker 2	3.1 Number of new partnerships with civil society developed (Women, PWDs, churches), as well as regional bodies, and national and international stakeholders.	0	3	9	Completed / Over achieved	With the technical support and guidance of UNDP/VEEP, VEO has progressed its relationships with the Ministry of Education and Training, Department of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Community Services, and the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports. Evidence: See Annex IX - She Can Lead Project Terms of Reference See Annex X – National Disability Committee Report for June 2024 VEO continues to increase its Facebook presence with a current following of 10,200 people and 27 organizational pages following the Vanuatu Electoral Office's Facebook page. UNDP VEEP supported the development of awareness packages for the 2024 National Referendum. These awareness packages were used in mass awareness campaigns across all 13

						Ministries of Vanuatu's government, covered all 81 Area Councils of Vanuatu
	3.2 Percentage of matrix on gender tracking in elections developed, including gender-disaggregated data on all aspects of the electoral administration - done on an annual basis.	25%	100%	100%	Completed	UNDP/VEEP is now in discussions with Electoral Commission to begin publishing and gazetting results of elections with gender disaggregation of political candidates. Currently, the results do not show the gender of the candidates. Evidence: RV5
	3.3 Percentage of matrix on gender tracking in Civil registry developed, including gender-disaggregated data – done on an annual basis.	0	100%	100%	Completed	Gender tracking in Civil Registry data, including gender-disaggregated data has been developed and integrated into the new civil register, RV5. Evidence: as above
	3.4 Assessment of civic understanding and access to information implemented.	0		1	Completed	UNDP/VEEP produced a detailed analysis and statistics of civil registry processes including birth certificate and national ID coverage; electoral participation, and; access to information and news. The analysis report produced recommendations used for Phase II of the Vanuatu Electoral Environment Project (VEEP) awareness campaign for improved engagement in the national election.

Output 4 Legal Electoral Framework Improved and Capacity Building on Electoral Reform to Key Stakeholders provided Gender Marker 2	4.1 Number of viable and practical reform proposals developed	0		8	over-achieved	UNDP/VEEP has supported the drafting of six substantive bills to introduce electoral and civil registration reforms. The bills passed in 2023 include: 1. 8th amendment to the Constitution 2. Single Harmonised Electoral Bill 3. Political Party Registration Bill 4. Referendum Act (amendment) 5. Charitable Association Act (amendment) Additional amendments have been drafted to provide more effectiveness to the bills. Following bills and amendments have been passed and gazetted, while others are still in the process. 1. National ID Card Act. # 27 (2021) 2. Civil Registration and Identity Management Act #28 (2021) 3. An amendment to the Representation of Peoples Act has mandated the VEO to use National ID cards as the only source of voter registration and identification. 4. Another amendment was passed in the National ID Card Act. This amendment legitimized the use of electronic forms of National ID for citizens' identification. This amendment has paved the way for advancing the journey of digital transformation of Vanuatu's civil registration.
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						Three EC regulations and the code of conduct were drafted, vetted, approved, signed, and recorded in the official Government Gazette, along with General Election Order No. 127 of 2021, Municipal Government Council Election Regulations Order No. 128 of 2021, and Provincial Government Council Election Regulations Order no. 129 of 2021; 1. Data Protection Bill 2. Digital Safety Authority Bill 3. Harmful Digital Communications Bill (These bills have been table twice and withdrawn, now being tabled for April 2024 Parliament:
	4.2 Number of electoral staff (gender disaggregated) trained on new reform measures	0	10	40	Completed	All VEO & CRIM staff trained on the laws passed in Parliament, Parliament committees, Civil Society sessions, AAs. Since the bills have been passed, this activity will resume in the early next year.
	4.3 Number of key stakeholders trained on new reform measures	0	5	70	Completed	All VEO & CRIM staff trained on the laws passed in Parliament. Since the bills have been passed, this activity will resume in the early next year.
	4.4 Electoral Gender mainstreaming action plan for the project developed and monitored	0	0	1	Completed	'Liftemap Fuija' Gender and Inclusion Strategy, anchored into culturally nuanced approach, provides a way forward to Electoral Commission and Vanuatu Electoral Office to enhance gender and inclusion aspects of the electoral and political participation. Based on a 9-C approach, the strategy takes into account various

						important features of Vanuatu (and Melanesian) culture and custom to effectively engage with culture, custom, chiefs, churches, communities and other stakeholders. It uses the “Nasara” tool to engage with all important voices for coordination and consultation. People With Disability (PWD) Action Plan developed that includes polling and electoral staff sensitization training and website information, with intentions to improve physical accessibility issues to polling booths (ramps, PWD-friendly transport).
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c) Financial Progress Report:

There are very minor over/under expenditure in some of the line items at outputs and sub-output levels for the yearly and overall project period from 01/01/2021 to 30/09/24. The project is working to make them streamlined in the final project closure reporting and correct accordingly by budget reshuffling or shifting of incorrect lines. This exercise will make all the line-item expenditures variance at the tolerance level. All Outputs are on track for overall and yearly targets. The progress for the entire project is currently 97% against the overall Project Budget, while 90% was realized until the 3rd Quarter 2024 against the yearly budget of USD 1,496,240.00 with total expenses reported as of 30th September is USD 1,353,018.00. The funds utilization rate for the entire project is 97% as total funds received USD 4,195,283.91 (NZD 6,420,000.00) and the total expenditures is USD 4,107,248.00. The project has also received support from other donors and UNDP (core) with total funding of 800,054.95 USD till to date.

During this quarter the Project focused its attention on the implementation of electoral reforms passed by the parliament in December and National Referendum scheduled to be held on 29th May 2024. As per steer of the Project Board and the consultation with MFAT, it was decided that the VEEP will receive a no-costed extension until 30 November 2024 so that critical support could be continued till next phase of the project is designed and rolled out. Separate communications were planned with MFAT to take the costed extension forward.

The project provided sub-output level explanation/comments in detail in Annex - 1 (Q3, 2024 Financial Report)

SL	Output	Output Description	Budget	Expenditure	Balance	Utilization %
1	Output 1	Institutional Capacities of the Electoral Authorities Strengthened	1,045,442	1,005,371	40,072	96%
2	Output 2	Integrity and Accuracy of the Voter Register Enhanced	1,154,978	1,112,681	42,297	96%
3	Output 3	Ability to Conduct Voter Education and Raise Public Awareness strengthened	862,096	756,116	105,980	88%

4	Output 4	Legal Electoral Framework on Improved and Capacity Building on Electoral Reform to Key Stakeholders provided	885,591	930,721	-45,130	105%
5	5	GMS	302,364	302,361	3	100%
		Total	4,250,471	4,107,248	143,222	97%

2. Communications, visibility, and partnerships

VEEP Project supported the partnerships between Vanuatu Electoral Office and Ministry of Justice's Disability Desk and Vanuatu National Youth Council. With the support from VEEP, VEO was able to engage with these organizations in an effective way.

These partnerships also received coverage in local media and social media.

- https://www.dailypost.vu/news/child-protection-officers-unite-for-progress/article_13d3502d-c0a2-5fe3-96ea-51678e563f0b.html
- https://www.dailypost.vu/news/vnyc-kickstarts-she-can-lead-program-with-25-participants/article_f718cf65-f8bd-503b-92ab-999f9716d9e8.html

3. Project risks and mitigation measures

VEEP team maintains a risk register and brings it to discussions during the Board Meetings. Following are two major active risks during the reporting period.

Implementation of Electoral and Political Reform:

After successful conduct of the National Referendum, next challenge for the electoral authorities in Vanuatu is the implementation of the electoral and political reforms passed by the Parliament in December 2023.

As per the new legislation, the Electoral Commission and Vanuatu Electoral Office will have to establish their institutional and operational independence. This is an uncharted territory for the two offices as the processes for establishment of independent commissions and offices are not well established in Vanuatu. The EC and VEO are relying on consultations and advice from key stakeholders.

Following are some of the key risks for the implementation of the Reform.

- The establishment of new structures and independence will require a change management strategy which is not in place so far.
- The Vanuatu is facing economic challenges and it is unknown whether sufficient resources will be available for the electoral management bodies to establish their newly gained independence.
- The Political Parties Act now needs to be implemented which requires great deal of home work by the political parties as well as by EC and VEO. This process will need to be carefully handled to avoid any issues and political conflicts.

RV5 Risks:

The VEEP project is now addressing the risk of dependencies of the RV5 and VanElekt on any external support and addressing the lack of in-country expertise by building partnership between CRIM, OGCI and a Vanuatu-based experts to hand over the RV5 to national counterparts.

A weekly meeting has been instituted with CRIM Director to keep him informed of emerging developments and risks related to RV5. Similar meetings were conducted with leadership of VEO to keep them informed of developments under VanElekta.

4. Lessons Learned

VEEP assisted the EC and VEO in the lessons learning exercise following the National Referendum. There are number of lessons learned from this exercise which will help VEEP in designing the next phase of support to EC and VEO.

A number of reforms areas were identified which will need close consideration for future support.

Number of activities were conducted through the LOA with the Ministry of Internal Affairs during this quarter. There needs to be further close collaboration between various departments for timely transfer of funds from one government entity to the other. This issue needs to be addressed so that future support received through LOAs is utilized in effective and timely manner.

5. Way Forward

Following are the key considerations for the next reporting period.

- Next reporting period is the last quarter of the VEEP-II project. The team will be focusing on concluding remaining activities and focus on operational closure including final reporting.
- The team will work with key stakeholders to finalize the VEEP-III Project Document and funding agreement for seamless transition into the new phase.

Priority actions for the project and other teams before the next reporting cycle

Issue/observation	Action to be taken	Responsible	Timeline
Support implementation of the electoral reform specially completing preparations for registration of Political Parties	Support VEO in drafting regulations, standards and forms for registration of Political Parties	VEO, VEEP	October-November 2024
RV5 and VanElekta Deployment completion, handover to CRIM and OGCIO and roll out of training and capacity building	VEEP, CRIM and VEO to work together to complete deployment of the systems and start user trainings on the RV5 system	CRIM, VEO and VEEP	October-November 2024

Support Data migration analysis, data cleaning and data integrity of RV5	VEEP and CRIM to work with OGCIO and other stakeholders to complete data cleaning	CRIM, VEO and VEEP	October-November 2024
Assist VEO in the implementation of legislative reform.	The Project to remain strongly engaged on providing technical assistance for conduct of the national referendum, especially in the areas of linking electoral authorities to referendum experienced expertise, capacity building, communication and voter awareness.	Niaz Kandhir, CTA	October-November 2024
Operational closure	The project will complete remaining activities and focus on final reporting and other closure requirements.	Niaz Kandhir, CTA	October-November 2024

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6. Quality Assurance

Project Manager	DocuSigned by:	Programme Clearance	
Name: Niaz Ahmed Kandhir	<i>Niaz Kandhir</i>	Name: Rustam Pulatov	DocuSigned by:
	C705D66D4BEE4B7...		<i>Rustam Pulatov</i>
	28-Oct-2024		1-Oct-2024
Title: Chief Technical Adviser & Project Manager a.i		Title: Team Leader, Effective Governance and Inclusive Growth	479CAAA23D024A5...
UNDP/VEEP		UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji	
Signature:		Signature:	

7. Annexures

1. Annex-I VEEP Financial Report (1 April-30 June 2024)
2. Annex-II Gender and Equity Analysis_2024 National Referendum
3. Annex-III Assessment of Inclusion in EMB of Vanuatu