



EUROPEAN UNION



**Accountable Public Finances to serve Pacific people – Vaka Pasifika**

First Tranche Report

July 2022 – February 2023

Reporting Period	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2022 – 15 February 2023
Donor	EU - Delegation Agreement: NDICI ASIA/2022/433-294
Country	Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, the self-governing territories in free association with New Zealand, of Cook Islands and Niue, and the New Zealand dependent territory of Tokelau.
Project Title	Accountable Public Finances to serve Pacific people – Vaka Pasifika
Project ID (Atlas Award ID) Outputs (Atlas Project ID and Description) Strategic Plan and/or CPD Outcomes	<p>Award ID (UNDP): 00135551</p> <p>UNDP Project Number: 00132456</p> <p><b>Contributing UNDP Outcome</b> (UNDAF/CPD, RPD or GPD):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNDP signature solution: Governance helping countries address emerging complexities by “future-proofing” governance systems through anticipatory approaches and better management of risk</li> <li>• SRPD Outcome 5: By 2022, people and communities in the Pacific will contribute to and benefit from inclusive, informed and transparent decision-making processes, accountable and responsive institutions, and improved access to justice.</li> <li>• Output 5.2. Increased transparency and accountability in governance institutions and formal and informal decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Output 5.3. More women and men benefit from strengthened governance systems for equitable service delivery.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicative Outputs</b></p> <p>Project Output 1: Well-run oversight institutions promote accountable and transparent governance for more efficient and inclusive service delivery (GEN 2)</p> <p>Project Output 2: Budget planning, implementation and oversight processes are inclusive and people-centred (GEN 2)</p>
Implementing Partner(s)	Pacific Islands Association of Non Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) La Trobe University – Institute of Human Security and Social Change
Project Start Date	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2022
Project Completion Date	30 <sup>th</sup> December 2026
Project Duration	53 months
Total resources required	US\$6,759,329.10
Revenue received	EU funding      Received: USD \$ 934,738 Est. total: USD \$ 6,458,400
Unfunded budget	USD (if any) \$ 300,900
UNDP Contact Person	Marine Destrez Vaka Pasifika Project Manager - Specialist UNDP Pacific Office Email: marine.destrez@undp.org Tel.: 00679 2938822

## Table of Contents

Background and executive summary of achievements .....	4
Output 1.....	5
Activity 1.1. Vaka Pasifika Fellowship .....	5
Activity 1.2. Baselines and Visibility of Impacts:.....	6
Activity 1.3. Core Capacity of oversight Institutions:.....	7
Activity 1.4. Audit Effectiveness and Recommendations Tracking.....	8
Activity 1.5. Partnering across agencies: .....	9
Activity 1.6. and 1.7. Cross-cutting initiatives and engagement with Parliaments .....	10
Output 2.    Budget planning, implementation and oversight processes are inclusive and people-centred	11
Activity 2.1. Civil society: .....	12
The common dreams .....	13
Activity 2.2. Government engagement:.....	14
Activity 2.3. Media engagement:.....	16
Activity 3.1. Human Resources and communication: .....	16
Gender Specific Results.....	17
Communication.....	19
Partnerships .....	21
Risks and Challenges .....	21
Future Plans .....	22
Logical Framework – Progress tracker .....	0



EUROPEAN UNION

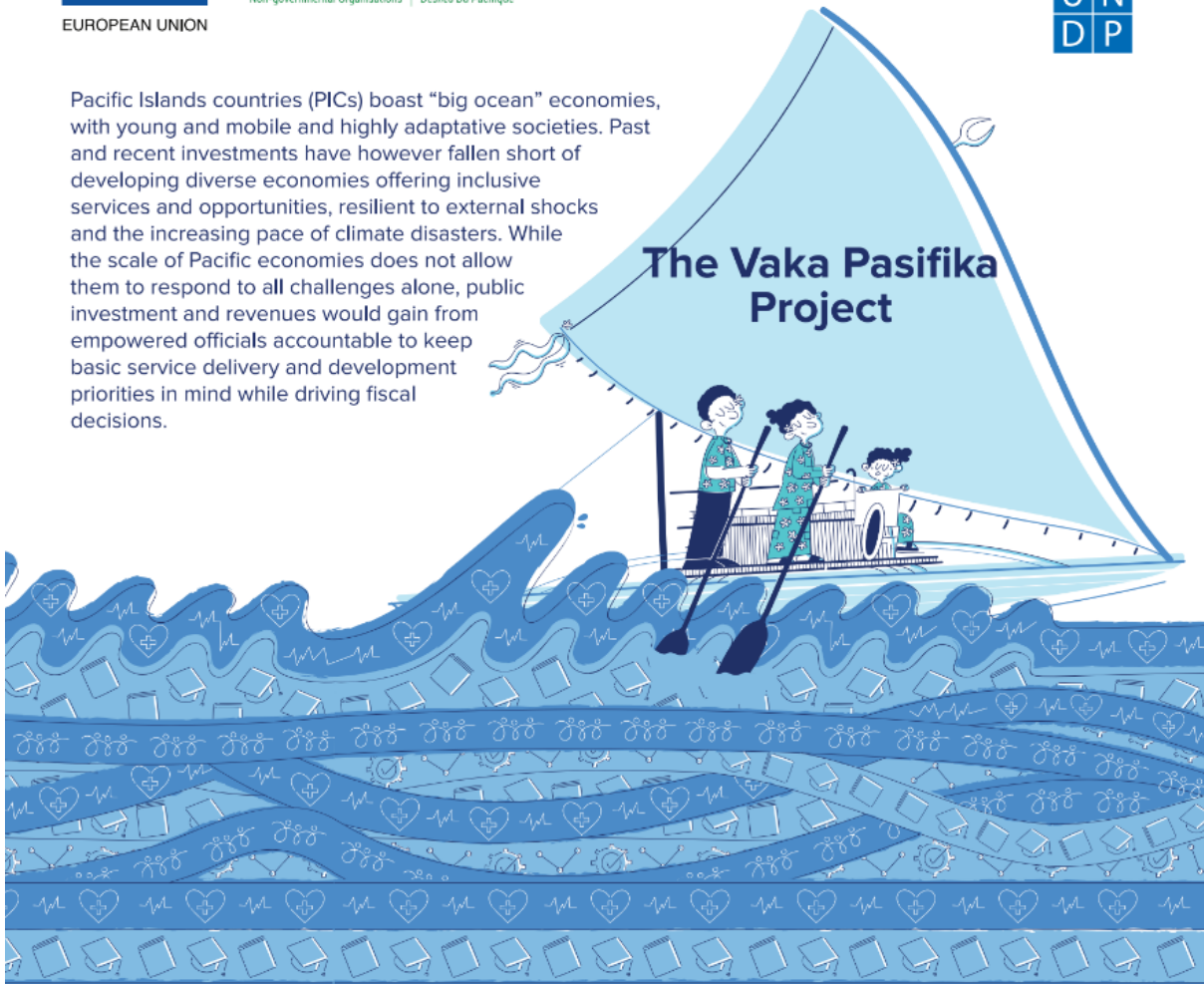


Pacific Islands Association of  
Non-governmental Organisations | Association Des Ongs  
Desiles Du Pacifique



Pacific Islands countries (PICs) boast “big ocean” economies, with young and mobile and highly adaptative societies. Past and recent investments have however fallen short of developing diverse economies offering inclusive services and opportunities, resilient to external shocks and the increasing pace of climate disasters. While the scale of Pacific economies does not allow them to respond to all challenges alone, public investment and revenues would gain from empowered officials accountable to keep basic service delivery and development priorities in mind while driving fiscal decisions.

## The Vaka Pasifika Project



## Background and executive summary of achievements

Pacific Islands countries (PICs) boast “big ocean” economies, with young and mobile populations and highly resilient and adaptative societies. Past and recent investments have however fallen short of developing diverse economies offering inclusive services and opportunities, resilient to external shocks and the increasing pace of climate disasters. While the scale of Pacific economies does not allow them to respond to all these challenges alone, public investment and revenues would gain from empowered officials accountable to keep basic service delivery and development priorities in mind while driving fiscal decisions.

For this reason, the “Accountable Public Finances to serve Pacific people – Vaka Pasifika” project (hereafter Vaka Pasifika project) builds on the results of the “Strengthening Public Finance Management and Governance in the Pacific” (PFM) project implemented between 2018 and 2022. The proposed overarching goal of this project is to strengthen the governance mechanisms enabling Pacific countries to deliver public services that are better calibrated to meet specific needs of the people. Its specific focus will be to ensure scarce Pacific resources are better managed and the resource base available for achieving national development goals will be increased. To achieve this goal, PIC economies require stable and reliable institutions implementing the right mix of creativity and rigor informed by ground reality. The Project will contribute to this vision by (a) supporting oversight institutions and decision makers to define and implement their priorities through leadership and institutional capacity strengthening and (b) enhancing responsiveness of service delivery and public finance management by developing institutional mechanisms for engagement and openness and strengthening civil society capacity.

The Vaka Pasifika project (2022-2026) builds on the results of the “Strengthening Public Finance Management and Governance in the Pacific” (PFM) project implemented between 2018 and 2022. The project which started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2022 is currently finalising the recruitment of permanent staff and the launch of flagship activities.

Some key achievements in the first 8months of the project include:

- 15 Pacific SAIs participated in the revised baseline survey and shared achievements and Revision of the baseline methodology and completion of the baseline study to inform the development of the workplan 2023;
- Launch of the technical assistance component for SAIs and independent institutions: First face-to-face high-level engagement with Heads of SAIs in the region in October 2023 in Nadi followed by individual bilateral follow-ups, sub-regional webinars and expected participation at the PASAI Congress;
- Endorsement of civil society representatives from 24 countries and territories of the signature of the partnership agreement with the Pacific Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
- Design of the methodology for the political economy analysis of accountability sectors in 4 countries through a partnership with La Trobe University;
- Initiation of the individual coaching sessions with participants to the Vaka Pasifika Fellowship activity and design of a package for the first face to face event;
- Launch of the Constituency Development Funds report to an audience of parliaments and SAIs of the Pacific and presentation on the Blue Recovery report to the President of Parliaments Conference in October 2022.

## Output 1.

### Activity 1.1. Vaka Pasifika Fellowship

The Vaka Pasifika Fellowship is designed to provide an opportunity for individuals to engage longer term with the Vaka Pasifika project and test some of the ideas and tools they will be exposed to. The Vaka Pasifika Fellowship serves as a laboratory and connecting points for the institutions and decisions makers who engage with the project and provides a space for them to design and refine the pilots and activities they implement.

The design of the Vaka Pasifika fellowship is learning process and is expected to be iterative and agile in nature, responding to the needs and feedback of participants. More on the lessons learnt below.

The current proposal for the 2023 edition includes:

- A first event in March, we'll look at some big picture questions: is the way we currently manage money fit to respond to the climate change challenge? The focus is on **dreaming big and scaling back right down to the individual level**: trying to identify any changes that are directly under your control and can make a difference to the climate response. The concrete output will be individual manifestos for change and a "PFM of the future" module.
- The second week, tentatively scheduled for June 2023, will provide a structure to propose **changes and pilots at the institutional level**. The focus here is on being politically smart and aware of the ground realities and testing ideas immediately: how do we maximise budget consultation time? Where to start when it comes to performance audits? How do we ensure newly created bonds and financing instruments are fit-for-the-future? Concrete outputs include the design and finalization of pilot projects to be implemented with the support of the project.
- The third week, tentatively scheduled in October 2023, is about **regional learning and advocacy**. The focus is on how our individual pilots and learnings can inform discussions such as access to climate finance, PEFA standards and Pacific resources. Concrete outputs include a regional manifesto, drawing early lessons from the experience and feeding into the 2050 Strategy and FEMM preparations.
- In between each session, individual coaching session will accompany the participants who choose to develop pilots or test new ideas.

#### **Designing the fellowship: learning from past successes in the Pacific**

In the process of designing the fellowship, the project conducted an extensive review of successful leadership, training and long-term fellowship activities in the Pacific. Below are some of the key learning that have been incorporated into the design of the fellowship:

- A key challenge is maintaining momentum and action in between face-to-face engagements partly in due to the difficulty for individuals to adapt the ideas and new concepts they were exposed to their daily realities and their political space. Successful training programs often rely on individual coaches or less expensive substitutes like buddy-systems or online individual or group check-in to ensure follow-up in between events;
- Evaluation of fellowship programs in the Pacific and beyond consistently point to the importance of the political economy and informal relational learning spaces
- UNDP lessons learnt relating to the use of foresight and anticipatory tools in the Pacific include the limitations of scenarios (which often tend to be overly dramatic).

Confirmed participants at this stage include heads of budget sections, heads of SAIs, former and current, CSO leadership and economic journalists as well as representatives from Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the financial sector (FDB).

### Activity 1.2. Baselines and Visibility of Impacts:

Similar to the PFM Project (Phase One), one of the main activities of the new project is the collection of baseline data, to track the performance of SAIs in their PFM oversight role. This data will be collected through an annual survey that will be conducted over a three-year period from 2022-2024, to capture overall performance of Pacific SAIs in their oversight role, as well as capture best practices, success stories and lessons learnt to enhance SAI effectiveness and learning. 10 from 13 SAIs participated in the survey.

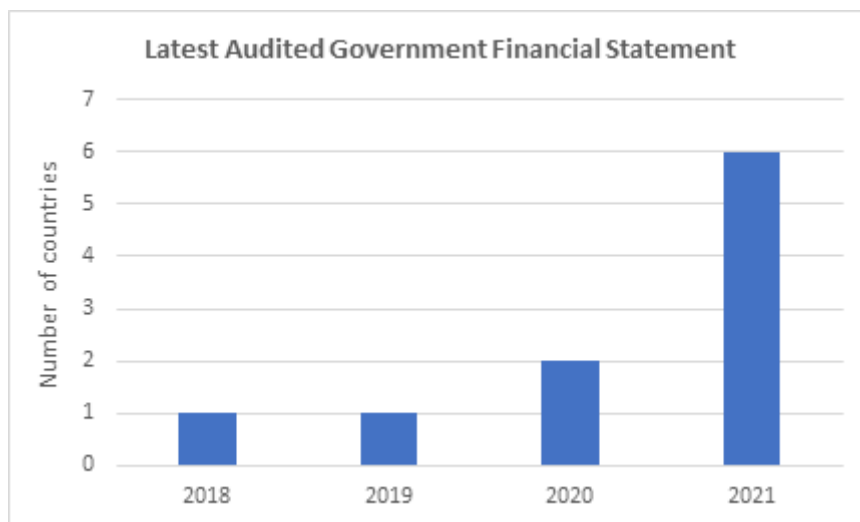
#### Independence

The survey results showed that in 2022, most SAIs (8/10) worked on legislative amendments to strengthen their independence, such as the review of the Constitution and audit legislations to embed audit independence. In some countries, work was also undertaken towards the development of an Independence Strategy.

#### Financial audit

A major challenge faced by SAIs in the Pacific is the backlog in the audit of Government Annual Financial Statements. The issue of lengthy delays both in receipt by SAIs of the financial statements and by parliaments of the SAI audited financial reports continues to be a recurring issue which presents a serious public management weakness and substantially reduced budget transparency.

**Figure 1: Latest Audited Government Financial Statement**



#### Performance audit

Three countries have not conducted any performance audit, one country reported minimum experience, the rest of the six countries that participated in the survey have a lot of experience in conducting performance audits.

#### Stakeholder engagement

The active engagement of CSOs is new to many SAIs in the Pacific and many are still in a ‘discovery’ stage of their relationship with CSOs. The survey reveals that most SAIs start out with the development of a Communication or Engagement Strategy/Plan to guide their *communication* or engagement with citizens and stakeholders. Five countries already have a plan while in others it is currently being developed or planned to be developed.

#### **Lessons learnt: communicating around the baselines**

One of the shortcomings of the annual baseline exercise under the PFM project (phase I) was the absence of feedback to SAIs and parliaments on the results and the use of the data in the planning process of the project. The new Vaka Pasifika baseline exercise intends to rectify this through the following actions:

- Feedback webinars to SAI, the first of which took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of February with an attendance of Fiji, Solomon Islands, Nauru and FSM SAIs.
- Publication of high-level results to the general public within a summary blog (upcoming February 2023);
- Publication of case studies on the best practices highlighted in the report (upcoming 2023).

#### **Activity 1.3. Core Capacity of oversight Institutions:**

The project maintained regular contacts with Supreme Audit Institutions during the first 8 months of implementation. Beside several webinars aimed at introducing the project conducted in August 2022, the first major regional event for the project took place in Nadi in October 2022. The sub-regional consultation with south pacific SAIs is taking place on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October with 5 SAIs represented (Solomon Islands, Tonga, Kiribati, Fiji and Papua New Guinea). The following significant Pacific PFM topics received comprehensive and extensive discussion during the 2-day workshop:

- **Increasing Audit Impact through Recommendation Tracking.** The topic of tracking of recommendations is a new one in the Pacific. Most SAIs represented at the workshop are tracking audit recommendations through the audit procedures, with recommendations included in the following years audit report or as appendices to the audit report. SAIs found themselves having limited capacity or focus on following-up or developing processes to ensure audit impact and implementation of the recommendations, working either with the legislatures of the clients directly. Digital solutions were discussed with a number of concerns highlighted with regards to current challenges linked to the adoption of a specific commercial digitalization solution in the Pacific. An area of discussion focuses on the main audience and the relationships of SAIs with government, legislature and media.
- **Debt Oversight in the Pacific.** The group reviewed the World Bank’s Monitoring Debt Transparency or Heat Map illustrated where the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are placed in terms of: data accessibility; instrument coverage; sectorial coverage; information on recent contracted loans; periodicity; time range; debt management strategy; annual borrowing plan; and other debt statistics including contingent liability. SAI Heads debated the advantages and disadvantages of regional versus national approaches and the possibility of increasing the focus and level of details on debt management and levels in financial and performance audits. Based on UNDP’s report and recommendations, the importance of contingent liabilities was highlighted as an area of concerns for SAIs.



- **Creating a Resourcing Plan.** All SAIs indicated that resource planning was an annual process and all factors were incorporated including improvements in audit practice through artificial intelligence (AI) systems as well as audit approaches through improvements in accounting and transactional controls. All SAIS emphasized that short-term technical assistance had not functioned for them especially when new audit methodologies are proposed.

Two other major topics were under review at the conference: the project baseline survey which received feedback and endorsement of SAIs and the Constituency development Funds report which is discussed under activity 1.6.

**Highlight on: Technical Assistance to Solomon Islands Office of the Auditor General**

The first bilateral technical assistance activity of the project is on-going in Solomon Islands. The support resulted in two Memorandum of understandings being signed between the SAI and the Parliament as well as the anti-corruption commission. The TA also produced a full review on human resource capacity and needs assessment for the SAI. This activity resulted in a restructuration exercise for the SAI supported by DFAT and the development of a concept note for further support and comprehensive engagement with the SIOAG. The concept note was selected by the World Bank and DFAT for funding and will result in a further USD \$ 2.5m allocated to the SAI for development in the coming 3years.

**Activity 1.4. Audit Effectiveness and Recommendations Tracking:**

Work on audit effectiveness and recommendation follow-up and tracking (1.3.) was initiated with studies conducted in two areas: potential for the use of artificial intelligence and current practices and frameworks for digital and non-digital solutions. The work on artificial intelligence proved to be too ambitious in the current context and will be revived at a later stage. The work on tracking of audit recommendations is expended on below.

The biggest output produced by SAIs are their audit reports, but across the Pacific there remain considerable challenges regarding how such audit reports are actually actioned. The parliamentary recommendations emerging from the audits reviews as well as recommendations formulated by SAIs in their reports demand a response by the concerned department, ideally with an action plan and solving of the highlighted issue. A proper audit recommendation tracking system may be an answer to the problem and can help to identify areas for improvement and ensure that all funds are being used efficiently and properly, as well as to identify the key responsibility and timing for the implementation of the recommendations developed by SAIs.

Tracking and auditing impact can be an effective tool also for enhancing independence and stakeholder relationships. Continuous review of audit results and coordination of their implementation with key stakeholders will increase confidence in the work of SAIs, encourage support and impact the implementation of recommendations. And this, in turn, will allow to concentrate the support of the SAIs and ensure their independence. Therefore, working with stakeholders and building support should allow not only strengthen the influence of SAIs but also ensure the independent performance of their functions.

UNDP Vaka Pasifika project carried out desk research, in the last quarter of 2022 where 11 Pacific SAIs were sampled, to identify challenges in the audit recommendation tracking with the aim of coming up

with suggested solutions tailored to the Pacific region for the effective implementation of audit recommendations. Preliminary results indicate that automated audit recommendation tracking can lead to visibility of audit impact unlike manual systems. This is due to ease of availability of information to stakeholders who may influence action on implementation of audit recommendation.

The project is planning a sub-regional workshop for SAIs of the North Pacific in April 2023 which will present the report findings and the tools.

### Activity 1.5. Partnering across agencies:

Under Activity 1.5., the project signed a Partnership Agreement with La Trobe University in Australia to deliver the political economy analysis. The Institute of Social Change and Security of La Trobe University was identified as having a distinct and unique advantage of being specialist of political economy analysis and methodology in the region, having a network of local researchers in the relevant Pacific countries and a team of globally renowned researchers in leadership and accountability in the Pacific region. The proposed individual country reports will produce a wealth of information and insights for the implementation of the activities going forward.

The Institute approaches accountability and oversight broadly – not as a technical function that is the reserve of formal government institutions alone, but as a political concept that is defined differently across contexts and involves a broad range of formal *and informal* actors. This might include ombudsman and auditor-generals but also extends to civil society, customary actors, the media and others – a concept increasingly referred to as the ‘accountability ecosystem’.<sup>1</sup>

Efforts to improve accountability and oversight have learned that a narrow, technical approach is less effective than a broader, societal approach that takes account of context.<sup>2</sup> Accountability and oversight can thus be achieved in diverse ways, including through social accountability, with roles for a wide range of actors.<sup>3</sup> The Institute recognises this contextual nature of accountability and oversight, and that efforts to improve accountability will remain underwhelming if locally specific meanings are not first understood. This is especially important in the Pacific, where there is a long history of externally-led efforts to bolster accountability and ‘good governance’ that have failed to deliver impact. In large part, this is due to an overly technical focus on implementing ‘best practices’ from elsewhere, rather than beginning with understanding the varied approaches to accountability and governance in the Pacific, building on existing good practices.<sup>4</sup> As the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent notes, accountability is central to maturing governance across the region but will be informed by local values and contexts.

The Institute also recognises that accountability is inherently a political concept – related to holding to account those who wield power. This is fundamentally shaped by relations of power in terms of who has the right and interest to demand accountability and who is likely to respond to such

---

<sup>1</sup> B. Halloran (2021) ‘Accountability Ecosystems: The evolution of a keyword,’ Washington, DC: Accountability Research Centre.

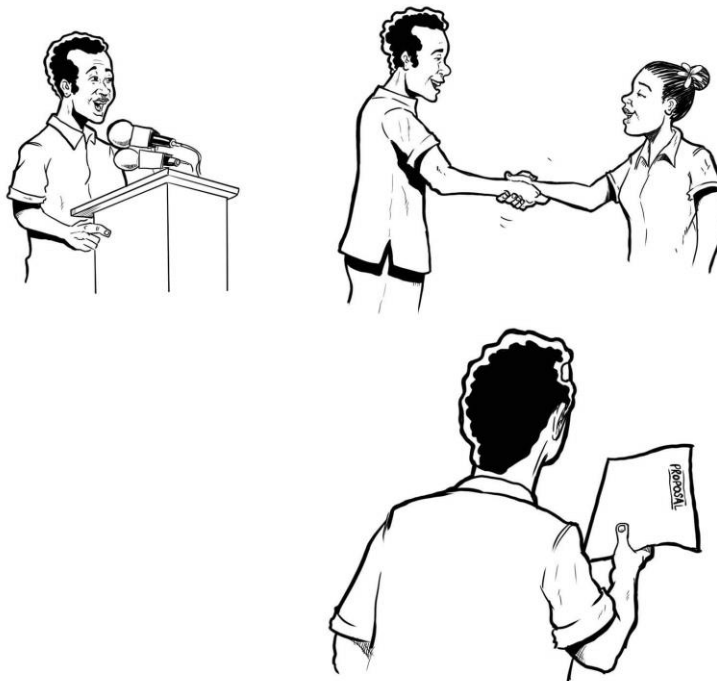
<sup>2</sup> C. Santiso (2006) ‘Banking on Accountability? Strengthening Budget Oversight and Public Sector Auditing in Emerging Economies,’ *Public Budgeting and Finance* 26(2): 66-100.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Fox (2015) ‘Social Accountability: What Does the Evidence Really Say?,’ *World Development* 72: 346-361.

<sup>4</sup> N. Haley (2008) ‘Civil Society and Governance in the Pacific,’ SSGM Briefing Note 8, Canberra: ANU.

demands.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, understanding how different accountability actors relate to each other, the government and wider society is key to understanding why accountability and oversight play out in the ways that they do in different contexts. In the Pacific, there are often deeply political and personal relationships between accountability and oversight actors and those they hold to account, related to geography, gender, age and kinship that fundamentally shape their roles.<sup>6</sup> Embedding an understanding of power and interests in how we think about accountability brings its political nature to the fore and is central to political economy analysis methods. Central to this is an integration of gender, disability and social inclusion, as set out below.

Given the importance of context and local political dynamics to understanding accountability, and the diversity within the Pacific, the Institute will work with local researchers in each country. It will also work collaboratively with UNDP and the Fellowship Scheme to maximise the practical utility of the research.



*“Engaging in Budget Consultations” Illustration by Tui Ledua, November 2021*

### Activity 1.6. and 1.7. Cross-cutting initiatives and engagement with Parliaments

A mission of Nic Cheeseman and Rebecca Gordon, two world-class experts on Constituency Development Funds (CDFs) and authors of the Pacific CDF report took place in October 2022 in Fiji. The mission included participation in the SAI workshop as well as two regional webinars and development partners roundtable. There was considerable interest and engagement both with the practical side of CDF management and the technical aspects of CDF audit. A number of SAI and parliament as well as government representatives requested follow-up and 1x1 meetings with the team, including representatives of the relevant Ministry in Solomon Islands and the AG of Solomon Islands, among others.

<sup>5</sup> P. Newell and S. Bellour (2002) ‘Mapping Accountability,’ Working Paper 168, Brighton: Institute for Development Studies, p. iii.

<sup>6</sup> J. Corbett (2015) “‘Everybody knows everybody’: Practicing politics in the Pacific Islands,’ *Democratization* 22(1): 51-72.

- Feedback from the meeting with donor partners highlighted the value of a comparative perspective on CDFs across the region, as well as the recommendations underpinned and driven by an actor-driven analysis.
- Feedback from the online webinar was positive, particularly about the extent of information and thematic connections of key challenges and opportunities as part of the CDF process across the region, and also positive feedback on the feasibility of the recommendations.
- Feedback from the SAI Workshop again noted the value of the comparative perspective of the research, as well as the importance of best-practice examples from other countries with CDFs.

This initial engagement open opportunities for follow-ups, the below activities were selected for further exploration based on discussion with consultants and country focal points:

- Individual country-visits by the team, e.g. to Solomon Islands and Tonga to consolidate emerging networks and undertake constituency visits and discuss potential reforms in a more context-specific format.
- Global CDF event [online] similar to those conducted this week, that brings in other countries with CDFs, e.g. India, Jamaica, Kenya etc..
- Development of Best Practice report on CDF audit, drawing on relevant cases and highlighting different options for effective tracking and auditing of CDF expenditures across countries.
- Follow up event specifically focusing on Social Audits bringing together willing partners amongst SAIs with a greater focus on prominent CSOs.
- Explore the ways that technology has been used to facilitate social audit/audits of CDFs in complex areas.

## Output 2. Budget planning, implementation and oversight processes are inclusive and people-centred

This output focuses on strengthening the “demand side” of PFM public accountability by supporting civil society build their understanding and expertise on budget analysis and oversight and to leverage their connections with communities to produce advocacy and information products which can be used by the public, but which can also be used by government stakeholders to inform their own budget planning and oversight activities. Under this output, the Project will also develop and/or strengthen institutional mechanisms and capacities to better utilize insights, data and analysis generated outside government to contribute to a more agile and citizen-centered public finance management and service delivery in the Pacific.

Progress overview:

- Activity 2.1.: Signature of the of Responsible Partnership Agreement with PIANGO based on series of consultations at the regional level;
- Activity 2.2.: initiation of government engagement in Tonga;
- Activity 2.3.: initial engagement with journalists identified as per of the regional economic media scoping report.

### Activity 2.1. Civil society:

For the past three years, UNDP and the Pacific Islands Association for Non-Governmental Organizations (a regional umbrella organisation, hereafter PIANGO) have been partnering in the Pacific and working toward simple sustainable and healthy public finances. The partnership has resulted in countless small and big achievements. Some of them printed in various languages such as the Citizen Budget Guides of Fiji, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tonga, Vanuatu and Tuvalu. Other more immaterial such as relationships between CSO and government, Parliaments and Supreme Audit Institutions. This proposals seeks to build on these successes while amplifying their reach and adapting to the ever changing context and new lessons learnt.

PIANGO focuses on well established goals adopted by a community of civil society representatives in 21 countries and territories of the Pacific. PIANGO's network is at the center of the design of this proposal and provides the space of National Liaison Units and national representatives to further shape the activities and agenda. As such this agreement is a frame for joint action rather than a linear pre-defined workplan. It provides objectives and principles for the next 4years of joint work and will hopefully lead to PIANGO securing its position as a key player at the regional and national level on public finance, accountability and development effectiveness.

In February 2023, PIANGO and UNDP signed a responsible partnership agreement, this contract for a value of one million USD will allow for the implementation of the activity 2.1. in the next four years. The full agreement is included in the annexes, below is a short description of the process which led to signature.




The design of the partnership was initiated under the PFM project Phase I with two learning events focused on designing the next phase of partnership:

- a) a foresight event supported by the UNDP Pacific Innovation Specialist and the global UNDP foresight team took place in December 2021. The following conclusions were highlighted :
  - **Data** – the network seeks to move from being holder of raw data and information to being the investors, creators and decision-makers on data value, ownership and use.
  - **Voice** – the network seeks to shift from being relevant as “on the ground implementers” to being agent and drivers of development trajectories.
  - **Access** – the network seeks to ensure the Pacific and Pacific CSOs are not falling behind on digital connection and presence, and ensure communication is going two ways.
  - **Protection** – the network seeks to ensure close monitoring of threat physical and potential reduction in participatory safe spaces, and continuously work to increase public space for intergenerational, inclusive debates.
- b) A closing event which convene CSO Parliaments and SAIs in 7countries in small national face-to-face events and two regional talanoa convening. Which highlighted the following:
  - There is a need to constantly build in country context and specificities in the activities – notably with a continued focus on translating knowledge products;
  - The most valuable output of the national projects were the relationships build with government and oversight actors, which have positioned the PIANGO network as an entry point and reliable partner throughout the Pacific;
  - There is a need to continue to innovate on communicating on complex topic and expanding the number of citizens and actors that are engaging on the budget and monitoring, increasing active citizenship.

These discussions were the point of departure for the following activities:

- Co-design workshop in August 2022 with the PIANGO regional team. This workshop (1day) resulted in a draft framework for the partnership agreement which was presented to the PIANGO Board by the Vaka Pasifika Project Manager in September 2022 in Nadi;
- Mission-led design workshop in October 2022 in Brisbane. A delegation from the PIANGO network (representing Tonga, Solomon Islands, Fiji and the regional team) attended a workshop organised by Griffith University Yunus Center on mission-led design and build on the original framework endorsed by the Board to develop a full-fledged proposal. The trip also provided the space for a partnership workshop which explored how the conversation on localisation of development project could be formalised under the specific activities of the project.
- The full-fledged proposal was then unpacked with the full PIANGO network (21countries and territories) during a two days side event to the first face to face PIANGO regional Council which took place in Nadi in November 2022.

The results was a full co-design and endorsement of the project (sketch below) and “dreams” framework, which is described in the box below.

**PIANGO Vaka Pasifika Profile at a glance**




Output 1: Local work

Mentorship

Focus on budget advocacy

Visibility Result in Year 1

**Deep Demonstrations Cohort 1**

Citizen Budget

Accountability Mechanisms

Quick response/funding

**Experimentation Cohorts (2&3)**

Output 2: Regional Network

PFM experts

Regional Publications

**Regional Advocacy**

IAM / Capacity

Secondment Programme

**Sustainable Network**

**its impact. But our common assumption is that we can only gain by ensuring that budgets are shaped by people’s knowledge, views and priorities.**

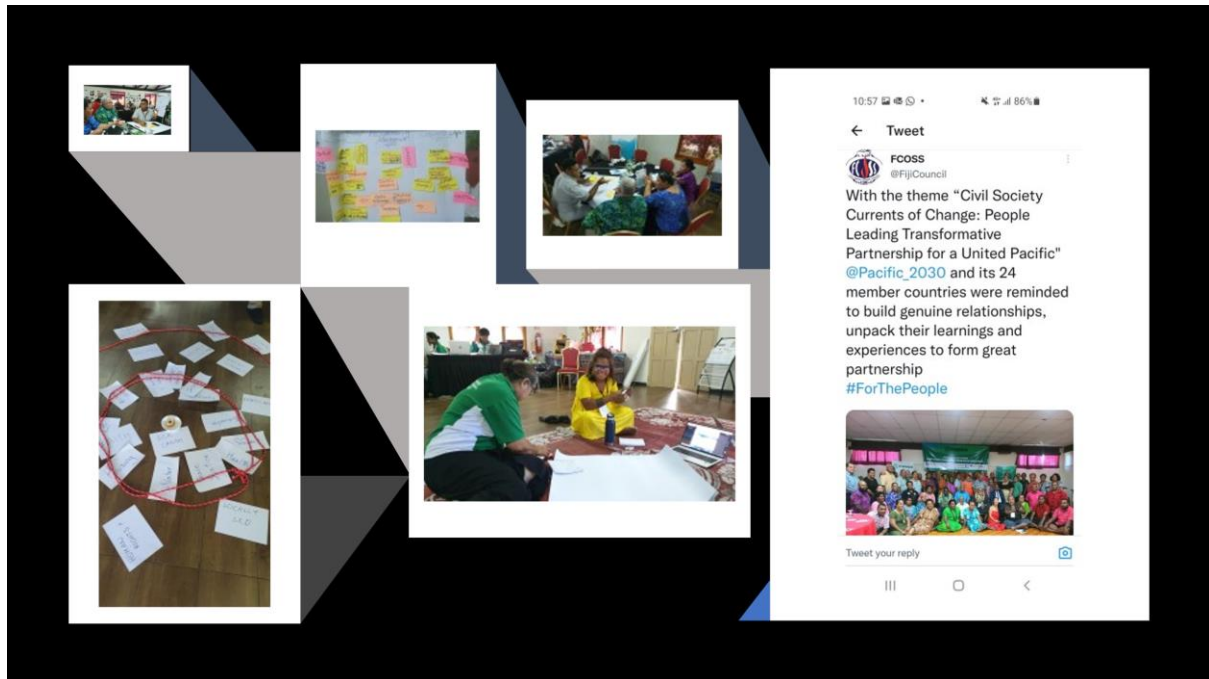
**Based on this assumption we endorse three “dreams” which will become our goals:**

- **By 2030, public finance budgets in the Pacific reflect inputs from citizens.**
- **By 2026, citizen budget accountability mechanisms exist in every country and territory of the Pacific.**
- **By 2024, citizen budgets are available to all in all countries and territories of the Pacific.**

*PIANGO Council, November 2022, Nadi, Fiji*



In pictures: Consulting 21 Countries and Territories representatives at the PIANGO Council side event



*Participants from North Pacific and regional team discuss proposed framework during PIANGO Council side event.*

### Activity 2.2. Government engagement:

The project undertook a first scoping mission for engagement with the government of Tonga. The current context in Tonga offers multiple opportunities to engage on budget participation and accountability. On the one hand the Parliament has for the past few years held budget briefing sessions during budget adoption time for civil society. Government and parliament have been increasingly engaging with civil society actors and calling in consultations. Civil society organisations on the other hand of the spectrum have been experimenting with online platforms for coordination, producing citizen budget guides and reports on the use of funds during emergencies and at the constituency level.

#### Tonga scoping mission: key observations

Tonga benefits from dynamic leadership figures in key positions:

- The new Minister of Finance is highly qualified and technically knowledgeable, considering positioning himself as a bridge between government and community/citizens in terms of communication and transparency – DFAT advisor (former governor general) currently formulating PEFA roadmap (expanding on the strategy supported by PFTAC in 2020);
- The Lord Speaker of Parliament has a vision focused on engagement with youth and reinvigorating the electorate's interest going hand in hand with a strong modernization and digitalization agenda for the Parliament;

- The Auditor General has a clear vision of priorities including audit quality and performance audit. He sees performance auditing as the way forward to engage with citizens. Notes that development project auditing are becoming a burden due to lack of resources;
- From the side of civil society an overwhelming majority of them have little access and engagement in the policy making process, let alone the budget. The constituency funds have opened a new area of interest and concerns for the CSO and is perceived as a disrupting and potentially competitive process.

Strong entry points include:

- Budget consultations and citizen budget guides – strong demand and interest from MoF;
- Constituency Funds follow-up: a) with parliament on e-portal for constituency offices, regulations, training and induction of parliamentarians, request for research on participatory methodology; b) with auditor general ensuring consistency on the audits of the CF in each constituencies; c) with MoF on regulations for grants reporting (under which CF fall); d) with civil society on composition of constituency offices recommendations and monitoring;
- Civil society engagement: government consultations and engagement on policy and budget level appear to be at a very early stage in Tonga. Engaging in preparatory work and slowly building in approach for consultation and feedback to government appears to be a useful entry point. From the CSO side there appear to be the need for a conversation about government's role and functions (some confusions appeared on role of government and very limited understanding of the role of independent institutions transpired from the CSO consultations) + building in steps to
- Auditor general office: the request for support on performance audit, incorporating participatory audit is aligned with the interest of several audit offices in the region. Possibility to combine TA with SOI SAI. Another low hanging fruit is the work with the OAG on brochures and work for citizen awareness and participation.



In pictures: Engaging with the full spectrum of accountability stakeholders in Tonga

*Top right: design the next phase of activities in Tonga with partners and tweet activity from UNDP Pacific.*

*Bottom right: lunch meeting with CSO leaders*

*Left: Meeting with Minister of Finance*

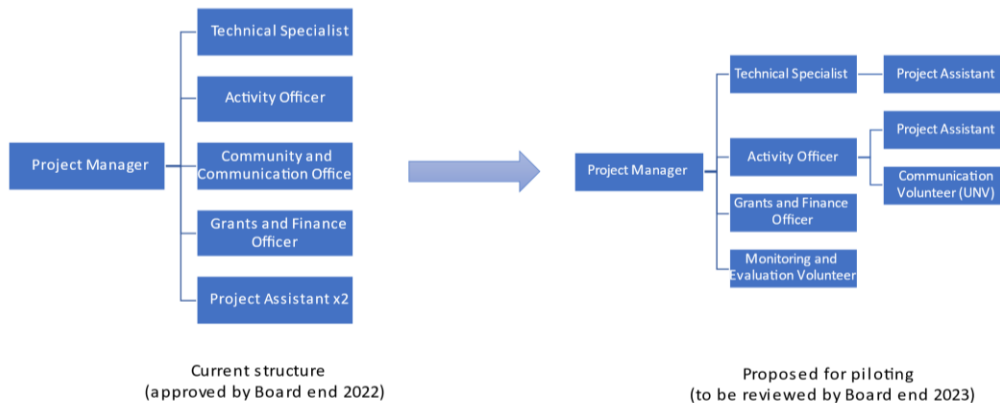


### Activity 2.3. Media engagement:

the PFM project completed a scoping study of media coverage of Public Finance which mapped the most engaged journalists and publications in the region on budget and fiscal strategy reporting. The project is engaging with identified profiles and offering them opportunities to join selected activities. More formal engagement on media will be initiated in 2023. One proposal is to pursue the launch of an economic newsletter.

### Activity 3.1. Human Resources and communication:

One of the core focus of the project is to recruit and built the team as well as to launch the project and develop a sound communication strategy. A communication advisor, a graphic designer and an illustrator are engaged as consultant. A structure under review is proposed in the below graph:



## Gender Specific Results

In order to deepen its engagement on gender specific activities, the project commissioned a short report in 2022 on effective tools to consult and ensure effective representation of women and women's issue in PFM. The report defines barriers to the engagement of youth and women and proposes digital and analog solutions and methodologies to overcome them. These recommendations – which will be finalized in February 2022, are included in the box on p13.

### Entry Points

#### Understanding and engaging with social norms

Although numerous interventions have been tried in the region, they are typically isolated, modest, and specialised. Identifying, understanding, and engaging with social norms are vital to improving programming and results. It is generally agreed that if we want to attain gender parity and have more women in positions of power and authority, we need to work to shift societal norms. However, there has yet to be much media coverage of this subject in the Pacific regarding direct programming. In response to the Roadmap Report's consultations, stakeholders' comments reaffirmed the necessity of conducting perceptions surveys and studies of men's and women's perspectives to understand better and monitor the power dynamics and belief systems underlying contemporary gender roles. Recently, the Tonga Women's Crisis Centre (2016: unpublished) conducted a novel, highly contextualised perceptions study that other organisations may find helpful as a model.

#### Engaging and involving young women

The creation of the PYWLA in recent years has prompted discussion about the lack of young women in leadership positions and decision-making forums. Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Bougainville have all seen some effective interventions, but young women in the region have received little systematic support to take up leadership roles. This is a good entry point, especially considering the region's youthful population.

#### Women's various and intersecting identities:

Efforts to advance women in leadership positions may do more to acknowledge the myriad ways women are already marginalised and how these identities interact. Women in the LGBTQIA+ community, single mothers, and women who have lost a spouse all face unique obstacles when reclaiming their independence.

#### Women's inclusion in local government and through inclusive community-level decision-making

There has been much focus on national-level leadership but less on sub-national-level governance and community engagement in policy and finance—women's inclusion in local government and through inclusive community-level decision-making. Although various provincial government projects financed by donors have occasionally incorporated activities supporting women's leadership, only CLGF has maintained sustained engagement with women working in local government.

### Engaging women in leadership positions in the civil service

Anecdotal data suggests that women are increasingly filling top positions in national and regional Pacific public services; this is an area where further support should be provided. Women in leadership roles within the Pacific public service.

### Working with religious groups

In some circumstances, religious groups like FBOs and churches have impeded efforts to promote gender parity. However, they are an integral component of Pacific civilisation and must be included in development efforts to alter established ways of being. It is a boon to leaders everywhere. It may be politically fraught with interacting directly with FBOs; therefore, initiating dialogue with them through umbrella organisations may be best.

### Engaging traditional leadership

There has been some effort to cooperate with traditional leaders through provincial government or community development programmes, but the gender component of such participation has been inconsistent.

Working within existing structures of authority is essential to promote women's leadership, yet this is often disregarded. Although men predominate in traditional leadership roles, women can and do hold such positions in various settings (Steege, 2008). Even in patriarchal societies like Samoa and Fiji, traditional women leaders have positions of authority within their communities. Only a tiny amount of study has focused on how women in conventional leadership roles might be helped to develop their leadership abilities to advance gender parity. Likewise, there need to be more initiatives involving the next generation of heads of state and chiefs.

### Working with parliaments and traditional leadership councils

While women's leadership and gender equality initiatives frequently work with Departments and Councils of Women, these institutions are often overlooked because national governance is in parliaments and traditional leadership councils. Specifically, parliaments have received inadequate aid from international organisations. National and local traditional leadership councils have been underutilised as potential allies and advocacy objectives. To increase women's influence in public policy, more work is needed to connect them with male decision-makers.

### Women in Private sector leadership

In the commercial sector, women have varying degrees of success as leaders. Women in the Pacific as business leaders. Women are making strides in the corporate world, and their success stories may be studied to see if and how they can be repeated in the non-profit or government spheres. For instance, the Westpac Women's Business Awards annually recognise the achievements of several highly regarded female business owners in the Pacific business community. Business leaders from Papua New Guinea have banded together to form the PNG Business Coalition for Women to help the country's private sector attract, retain, and advance women in all roles, including employee, leader, customer, and business partner.<sup>1</sup>

## Communication

In order for the Vaka Pasifika project to gain the visibility it deserves and requires, a communication framework has been developed to provide strategic direction and actionable tactics that would allow progress towards more successful and engaging communications in order to reach four main objectives:

1. Inform relevant public authorities on the efficiency of the project in improving governmental services and mainstreaming financial processes
2. Raise citizen awareness on the importance and impact of financial oversight
3. Shape the narrative around the project to solicit partners, public authority, and media interest in communicating about its impact to citizens
4. Engage private sector actors, civil society, and citizens in providing feedback and insights on financial management

Over the last few months, with the support of a communication consultant, an illustrator who completed the Public Finance e-learning modules and a professional design team, the team developed a communication framework and full visual identity package. The communication package includes detailed messaging briefings for team and partners as well as FAQs for internal and external audiences. An advocacy calendar was produced to ensure the project could align its messaging to key events all year round. Some sample visuals are provided below.

Additional activities included:

- Sending periodic newsletters to share updates on achievements:  
<https://www.undp.org/pacific/publications/vaka-pasifika-project-2022-review>
- Designing a brochure that shapes the narrative and tells the story in a simple manner that can be understood by all target audiences  
<https://www.undp.org/pacific/projects/vaka-pasifika>
- Disseminating press releases on specific milestones:  
<https://www.undp.org/pacific/press-releases/annual-baseline-survey-results-identify-major-challenges-supreme-audit-institutions-pacific>
- Preparing media kits including templates for social media cards and PPP presentations in addition to the main communication products

Snapshot of the first Vaka Pasifika results newsletter:

**Here are some of the year's highlights:**

**Supreme Audit Institutions secured additional 2million USD in donor funding** for national level activities thanks to the support of the Vaka Pasifika project. Auditors General and their staff gathered for a first technical meeting in Nadi to examine the topic of planning and communicating around sensitive audits and reviewed the most recent UNDP publications on debt management, [crisis recovery](#) and Constituency Funds.

**It was a first** for many [Parliaments, Supreme Audit Institutions, civil society organisations and Ministries of Finances](#) when in May 2022 they convened Kiribati, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, [Fiji](#), Vanuatu, Tonga and Marshall Islands at the invitation of the Pacific Alliance of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) in May 2022. Their learnings, shared during two regional events, were featured and informed recommendations at the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum in August 2022 as well as during global [World Bank](#), International Budget Partnership and OECD events..

**Parliaments continued to expand their budget oversight in Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and Fiji** thanks to a flagship partnership between Pacific parliaments facilitated by UNDP. The initiative, featured by the [OECD Innovation awards](#), provides reliable independent budget analysis to members of parliaments. UNDP's support continued to enable feature budget brief on climate change allocations and dissemination of the analysis to civil society organisations

**200 visitors were welcomed to an exhibition of 50 illustrations, photography and country stories in Suva In May 2022** to mark the closure of the PFM project. Featuring hosts from 7 countries across the Pacific, the [exhibition](#) enabled students, visitors and partners to connect with recent developments and lessons learnt during the pandemic.

**158 Pacific developers and aspiring developers** took part in the [first ever Pacific wide hackathon](#) to amplify Pacific voices on accountability. Working with our partner the Pacific Internet Society (PICISOC), the [ahava project](#), which supports homeless youth in Fiji, facilitated the participation of 20 of their members to the event exposing them to coding, social entrepreneur challenges and competitions.

**3 common "dreams" were adopted by 24 Pacific Islands Countries and Territories** of the PIANGO network in [their first face-to-face council meeting](#) since 2016, namely accessible public finance information for all, formal accountability and participation mechanisms in all Pacific countries and citizen-centered budgets.

The [Vaka Pasifika public finance e-learning course](#) was launched for all after being tested by more than 300 participants across parliaments, supreme audit institutions, civil society and artist illustrators. It was adopted by the Fiji Public Service Commission as a foundation course for all civil servants in Fiji and incorporates modules on climate change, gendered analysis of the budget and budget advocacy for CSOs.

## Partnerships

Beyond regular engagements with PIFS, PFTAC/IMF, ADB and the World Bank, the project developed a closer relationship with the Open Budget Survey team of the International Budget Partnership. The Project Manager and Project Specialist were appointed as formal reviewers for the upcoming

The International Budget Partnership will be partnering with the Vaka Pasifika project on a number of events this year and notably setting up international panels sessions for events on audit impact and civil society engagement.



*Feature of project results in INTOSAI newsletter.*

## Risks and Challenges

The project continues to be impacted by the ripple effect of the COVID 19 pandemic notably with the first waves of contagion taking place between September and November 2022 in the North Pacific. No countries in the region are now free from COVID-19. With a high rate of vaccination and border re-opening under certain conditions

The main challenge throughout the first 8months of implementation of the project remained human resources – with delays in recruitment and challenges in finding the adequate fit for the anticipated positions the project will be proposing a new Human Resource plan to the board in up-coming communication. With most of the project team now recruited the main challenge is to devise a solution for the communication and M&E position which could not be recruited as a full staff. The current back-stopping solution has been the recruitment of a consultant which supports the team on communication activities. Until a longer-term solution is found the project will initiate the recruitment of a M&E consultant as well to ensure the early learning from the project are consistently documented.



## Future Plans

Activities scheduled in the next quarter include:

- Participation to the PASAI Congress in Palau between the 27 February and 3<sup>rd</sup> March. Anhela Bochi, PFM Technical Specialist, will be representing the project and present during two sessions on (a) the project strategic priorities and technical assistance workplan and (b) building relationships with Parliaments, CSOs and media;
- CSO PFM training and engagement workshop in Palau on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March. Anhela Bochi will deliver a half day session for CSO in Palau in order to introduce them to the PFM modules and brainstorm areas of action and budget advocacy. This activity is organised in partnership with BANGO and PIANGO;
- Joint mission with World Bank to Solomon Islands (6-10 March 2023). Marine Destrez, Vaka Pasifika Project Manager, will participate in a 3days technical mission to the Office of the Auditor General in Solomon Islands to finalise coordination of technical assistance and support on audit quality and HR restructuring.
- First week of the Vaka Pasifika Fellowship, 15-23 March 2023. (see details under activity 1.1.)
- Sub-regional SAI workshop on Tracking Results and Recommendations, Pohnpei, FSM, 18-23 April 2023. (see details under activity 1.4.)

Some other initiatives will be implemented in the near future, including some online and offline activities:

- Preparing for the official launch of the project
- Creating advocacy support groups to mobilize audiences around important matters, share key messages and use each other's media platforms for wider outreach
- Mobilizing the media and key influencers to amplify the messages
- Organizing briefings to selected key influencers for direct and indirect communication
- Focusing on media outreach and identifying strategic capacity building activities to shed the light on the project

By following these steps, the Vaka Pasifika project will be able to achieve its overall communication objectives for the near future by engaging effectively with stakeholders, demonstrating the success of the work done, all the while ensuring that all audiences understand the nature and scope of its work, and changing behavior and perceptions where necessary.

## Logical Framework – Progress tracker

Expected Outputs	Output Indicators	Data Source	Progress tracker		
			Baseline	Y1 target	Status and comments
<b>Output 1. Well-run oversight institutions promote accountable and transparent governance for more efficient and inclusive service delivery</b>	<i>1.1 Number of Emerging Leaders engaged on oversight and policy utilizing the skills, capacity and networks provided by the project</i>	Independent report and media publications. Publications by participating Pacific experts.	0	15	<b>On-Track:</b> 15 participants have confirmed attendance of the Vaka Pasifika Fellowship scheduled for 15-23 March 2023.
	1.2. Number of selected oversight institutions in countries documenting increased effectiveness thanks to received technical assistance.	Parliaments -, SAIs- and/or independent reports (PEFA, OBS, other international publications)		1	<b>Achieved:</b> Solomon Islands SAI feedback on technical assistance from the past 6months indicates increase capacity to deliver on mandate with Parliament and relationship with Anti-Corruption Commission.
	<i>1.3. Number of recommendation tracking mechanisms including gender relevant indicators supported</i>	Parliaments -, SAIs- and/or independent reports (PEFA, OBS, other international publications)			<b>On-track:</b> this activity is progressing faster than expected with a tracker tool planned to be rolled out in FSM and Nauru in April 2023.
	1.4. Number of knowledge products providing tailored guidance and data on Pacific PFM oversight – with a minimum of 50% contributing specifically to increased oversight of cross-cutting policy issues (climate change, gender, human rights).	Project publication, media coverage.		1	<b>On-track:</b> 3 country-specific knowledge products produced for Tonga, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands on Constituency Development Funds (to be presented at the MP inductions in Vanuatu and Tonga In March 2023). Revised publication on Debt Oversight planned for March 2023. Publication on engagement with women group during budget consultations upcoming March 2023.



<b>Output 2. Budget planning, implementation and oversight processes are inclusive and people-centred</b>	2.1 Number of mechanisms and initiatives developed to enhance accountability, sustainability and gender inclusiveness in public finance management processes (central and subnational level)	Parliaments -, SAIs- and/or independent reports (PEFA, OBS, other international publications)	0		<b>On-track:</b> On-going negotiations with the new government of Fiji and the government of Tonga.
	2.2. Number of countries where citizen budgets (and/or equivalent civil society tool to simplify and enhance understanding and access to budget information) are widely available to public	Government and or CSO publication in country		5	<b>Slight delay:</b> Partnership agreement with PIANGO signed, 4 grants to national partners to be awarded in next quarter. Citizen budgets can be expected in the second half of 2023.
	2.3. Number of articles expanding the scope of budget-related media coverage including disaggregated data on articles focusing specifically on cross-cutting issues such as climate and gender-related	Independent media articles	0	10	<b>Delayed:</b> difficulties in the recruitment of the communication manager who was expected to lead on media engagement led to delays in the launch of this activity. Launch of the media engagement expected in the second half of 2023.