



UNDP Fiji multi-Country Office

Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC) Meeting

Project Name:	Pacific Parliamentary Effectiveness Initiative Phase III
Country:	Regional
Date of Meeting:	18-Oct-24
Time:	10am-12pm
Location:	Level 2, Kadavu House, Victoria Parade, Suva
Chairs:	Tuya Altangerel and Aliona Niculita

Name	Title	Organization
Ms. Tuya Altangerel	Resident Representative	UNDP (Fiji MCO)
Ms. Aliona Niculia	Resident Representative	UNDP (Samoa MCO)
Ms. Sophia Lourie	Foreign Policy Officer	MFAT New Zealand
Mr. Jefferson Hallu	Clerk	Solomon Island Parliament
Ms. Gloria Poleo	Clerk	Tonga Parliament
Mr. Rustam Pulatov	Team Leader- EGIG	UNDP
Ms. Luisa Senibulu	Acting Project Manager (Parliamentary Development Portfolio)	UNDP
Ms. Nisa Bibi	Programme Monitoring, Learning and Knowledge Management Specialist	UNDP
Mr. David Kusilifu	Parliamentary Development Specialist	UNDP
Mr. Akuila Masi	EGIG Anyalyst	UNDP
Mr. Hui Lown	Project Finance Analyst	UNDP
Mr. Syed Sabeeh	MPO Team Leader	UNDP
Komal Khushboo	Project Analyst	UNDP



Discussions/ Decisions and Actions

Agenda 1: Opening Message

Luisa welcomed all attendees, including colleagues joining both in person and online. She clarified that the PPEI LPAC meeting would be co-chaired by Tuya and Aliona, the UNDP RRs for Pacific Office in Fiji and Samoa.

Ms. Tuya Altangerel

Tuya Altangerel conveyed appreciation to Sophia of MFAT, the Clerks of Solomon Islands and Tonga Parliaments and Aliona their spirit of collaboration and strong leadership.

Tuya emphasized the importance of a long-term commitment and support to parliaments exemplified by Phase III of the Pacific Parliamentary Effectiveness Initiative (PPEI). She thanked the project and greater UNDP team's hard work in preparing for LPAC. She noted the significance of the work undertaken by the project team, especially for key activities like the Members of Parliament induction programme like the one she attended in Honiara this year and the value of our support as development partners to democratic institutions like the parliament.

Ms Aliona Niculita

Aliona emphasized the importance of partnering with Pacific parliaments, highlighting the launch of the third phase as a testament to the project's success. She encouraged final discussions with partners to maintain the project's high quality and ensure strong cooperation between the Samoa office and the Fiji MCO.



Agenda 2: Brief presentation covering key areas of the project

Ms. Luisa Senibulu

Luisa thanked everyone for their support in finalizing the project framework, acknowledging the collaborative effort. The project will target six key parliaments, with two under Aliona's leadership and four managed by the Fiji MCO, expanding Phase III of the Pacific Parliamentary Effectiveness Initiative (PPEI) to include Kiribati and Niue while continuing work with parliaments from Phase II.

Some of the key issues highlighted included:

- The development challenge being addressed by PPEI Phase III is the limited effectiveness and capacity of Pacific parliaments to fulfill their constitutional mandates, of legislation, representation and oversight. In the implementation of the project, UNDP relies on the support and goodwill of partners, national, regional and international to support our efforts in parliamentary development, including UNDP governance projects, the Australian twinning parliaments and New Zealand, amongst others.
- Engaging citizens in parliamentary processes, enhancing the roles of opposition, and that governments are held accountable. This includes promoting citizen involvement in parliamentary committees and increasing transparency. Both regional and national parliaments will receive support, including twinning arrangements with Australia and New Zealand. A key question raised was how to better support parliaments in engaging with citizens, particularly women, youth, and PWDs. Citizen engagement is fundamental to democracy, and the project aims to foster environments where more young women, youth, and PWDs can effectively contribute to parliamentary processes. This has become an area of growing demand.
- The importance of media in sharing information about parliamentary activities was emphasized. It was noted that citizen engagement efforts would prioritize not just MPs but also parliamentary staff, ensuring they are well-prepared to support MPs effectively. This phase of the project will also encourage committees to conduct more inquiries and enhance policy development.
- The high demand for parliamentary induction programs across the Pacific and the need for a sustainable approach to professional development, including the shift from dependency on development partners to integrating this support within parliamentary secretariats. Achieving this will require long-term strategic planning and close collaboration with executive bodies to ensure appropriate resource allocation.
- The project will promote inclusive participation, creating pathways for women, PWDs, and youth. Initiatives like youth parliaments, setting up of a facebook page which are linked to a citizen engagement strategy, such as Nauru's successful approach, supported by the Victorian Parliament,



were shared as examples of progress in engaging citizens and fostering democratic involvement across the Pacific.

Mr. Akuila Masi, Programme Analyst for Effective Governance

Akuila Masi highlighted the following on the **Governance arrangements and Project Finances**:

- The project's governance structure includes a Project Board with key stakeholders such as beneficiaries, executives, the Fiji and Samoa MCOs, and donor partner New Zealand, who will drive the project forward.
- The Project Assurance Team, composed of in-house members from both MCOs, will ensure quality implementation.
- With skilled analysts and specialists, the project is well-positioned to achieve its goals through direct implementation, with both MCOs providing insights and support services like finance and HR.
- Progress will be tracked bi-annually to address issues proactively, while annual reviews will ensure compliance with UN standards.
- Two Project Board meetings will be held annually, with a Mid-term Evaluation in 2027 and a Final Evaluation in 2029.
- A multi-year work plan allocates the \$7.1 million budget, with \$5.3 million for the Fiji MCO and \$1.8 million for the Samoa MCO, to support effective implementation.



Clerk Jefferson Hallu

Key points highlighted by Clerk Jefferson included:

- He described PPEI Phase III as “manna falling from heaven,” as the project team has provided vital support to them over the years . The Solomon Islands Parliament has faced budget cuts since 2019, with a 50% reduction due to the Pacific Games last year. PPEI support has helped the Parliament move toward its goals.
- The Clerk thanked Tuya for her presence at this year’s parliamentary induction, emphasizing the positive impact of inter-parliamentary cooperation, such as the twinning arrangements and collaboration through the Pacific Island Parliamentary Group. This cooperation has helped Members of Parliament gain exposure to international parliamentary issues and identify common challenges and solutions to their issues.
- To demonstrate the value of UNDP support, Clerk highlighted that their Civic Engagement team recently completed a successful public engagement program in rural and outer islands, receiving valuable feedback. Sustaining stakeholder support at the national level remains a challenge, especially for national parliaments where the executive dominates decision-making.
- Looking ahead to PPEI Phase III, the Solomon Islands Parliament remains very optimistic about continued engagement with UNDP and partners.

Tuya summarized the Clerk’s remarks:

- The success of the Pacific Parliamentary Meeting in Palau was an important milestone, supported by previous PPEI phases.
- Financial oversight of national and multi-year budgets is a critical function for parliaments, and there are opportunities to provide further expertise and capacity-building in this area. The Floating Budget Office offers valuable support to parliaments in this regard.
- Tuya highlighted that more than 50% of Solomon Islands’ MPs are new, a common challenge in many countries where fresh leadership emerges following elections. This situation underscores the importance of developing leadership skills and providing specific training for MPs, particularly for those appointed to committees, which require unique skill sets. Tuya noted that with election cycles bringing in new parliamentarians globally, providing tailored support for these new leaders is critical.



Clerk Gloria Poleo, Tonga Legislative Assembly

Key points highlighted by the Clerk were:

- She expressed enthusiasm for the meeting and echoed the sentiments of the Solomon Islands Clerk, stating that the PPEI support is deeply appreciated by their parliament, especially given the financial constraints they face. The programmes organized through PPEI have been instrumental in strengthening the role of Tonga's Parliament.
- The Clerk highlighted how the Floating Budget Office initiative has played a significant role in enhancing MPs' understanding of the national budget. This support enables Parliament to hold the government accountable, with a particular focus on thematic areas such as climate change and gender-related issues.
- PPEI's strong focus on citizen engagement has empowered civil society and the general public to better understand the budget process. It also provides a mechanism for raising issues and concerns before the budget is passed, ensuring greater transparency and inclusivity in the process.
- PPEI has supported greater citizen involvement in the law-making process through public consultations. These consultations allow citizens to make submissions, fostering a more participatory approach to governance. The Clerk acknowledged the technical expertise and capacity-building initiatives for MPs and parliamentary staff, particularly through regional networks such as the Pacific Parliamentary Groups. These initiatives have contributed to the strengthening of parliament management through staff training. The Clerk acknowledged that change takes time and expressed Tonga's eagerness to participate in the next phase of PPEI.
- The Clerk concluded by thanking the Government of New Zealand and UNDP for their support in the third phase of the project.



Agenda 3: Open Discussions	<u>Sophia Lourie, MFAT</u> Sophia responded with the following: - She expressed New Zealand's enthusiasm for the upcoming phase of the PPEI project. She mentioned that for New Zealand, this development support is viewed as a "sister project" alongside another significant program they are involved in, highlighting the collaborative nature of the initiatives. - She emphasized the importance of the relationship between the UNDP and New Zealand's Tai a Kiwa project, noting that it has been referenced multiple times throughout the PPEI project documents. This reflects a strong alignment between the two initiatives, which is important for the overall success of both. - Sophia highlighted the need for clear and timely communication between UNDP and New Zealand, particularly around planning and scheduling. She emphasized that the earlier New Zealand is informed about upcoming events or requirements, the better they will be able to offer their support as they have seen value in sending New Zealand representatives to activities and events under the project. - Sophia noted that UNDP and MFAT still have to agree on a wording in the GFA then the agreement can be signed. - Rustam acknowledged that the intention was to sign the GFA as planned. He confirmed that since MFAT had raised concerns about specific legal language in the agreement, the matter is currently being reviewed by the UNDP legal team. As a result, the signing of the GFA will be postponed until the matter is amicably resolved. - Sophia confirmed that MFAT will not be signing until a resolution has been reached and thanked UNDP for their efforts.
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Question and Answer	MFAT sought clarification on whether recommendations from the PPEI II review had been integrated into the Project Document. Particularly output 3, point 12 of the project evaluation of phase 2 that suggested a new approach, to the support provided to women, youth, and persons living with disabilities. The recommendation was that UNDP should take a more strategic approach to the activities that they are undertaking in this area as previously, they were delivered on sort of an ad hoc basis. There were also concerns about the sustainability of that approach raised by Philip in his evaluation. In response, UNDP RR, Tuya, affirmed that gender and inclusivity are principles that have been embedded and mainstreamed into the project document in a very strategic manner. There is strong emphasis on the project's support to women, youth and persons living with disability. Further, the Gold Seal in Gender was awarded to the UNDP Pacific Office in 2023 as a recognition of the UNDP Pacific Office's exceptional performance in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. This award is part of UNDP's Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme, which assesses and certifies the progress of UNDP offices in integrating gender into their work. UNDP Team Leader, Rustam, also reiterated that there is also a social and environmental screening which is a compulsory element of the appraisal process of every project of UNDP. The project document has already identified that the project will develop a gender action plan which will be talking to the main critical areas. In response to MFAT's inquiry about the project's flexibility to adjust its scope, Tuya emphasized that Phase II was implemented during the challenging and unpredictable period of the global pandemic, which made it difficult to stay on course. For Phase III, the approach would shift from being supply-driven to demand-driven, with a focus on anticipating and proactively responding to emerging developments. The project will aim to meet the specific needs of individual parliaments effectively. Rustam emphasized that the project's evaluation process is designed with adaptability in mind. The project framework allows for flexibility to adjust to changes and evolving contexts within the parliaments it supports. Rather than adhering to rigid strategic plans, the project will prioritize continuous learning and ongoing monitoring, enabling it to respond effectively to the current and specific needs of each parliament. This approach ensures a balance between pursuing long-term strategic goals and addressing immediate priorities.
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	Sophia inquired about the potential inclusion of Fiji as a target country in about a year, asking whether this should be reflected in the Project Document or addressed when necessary. Luisa responded that, from the project's perspective, they would wait until the timing is appropriate. She confirmed that UNDP is supportive of including the Fiji Parliament in the future.
Agenda 4: Recommendations of the LPAC - Approve - Approve with qualifications - Disapprove	Tuya guided the meeting forward by outlining three options for the approval of LPAC: approval, approval with qualifications, or disapproval. She noted that the overall discussion had been very positive and expressed hope that the MFAT and UNDP Legal teams could expedite the process on both sides to finalize the signing and enable the project to begin with fresh resources next year. Tuya then invited Sophia, as the principal stakeholder, to share her recommendation. - Sophia expressed satisfaction with the project document and endorsed proceeding without qualifications. - Aliona confirmed her endorsement for the prodoc, praising the document as well-developed. - Finally, Tuya gave her approval without any qualifications.
Agenda 5: Closing Remarks	<u>UNDP RR Tuya</u> UNDP, New Zealand, and Pacific Island countries discussed continuing their partnership in supporting Pacific parliaments through the third phase of the project. Key points included learning from previous phases, prioritizing roles for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, and maintaining a strong relationship with the New Zealand Parliament's Tai a kiwa program. The team highlighted the importance of adaptive management and continuous learning. The meeting concluded with gratitude expressed and a commitment to collaborate closely, emphasizing regular check-ins and flexible partnerships. With no further comments, the meeting was adjourned.



Approved:

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Tuya Altangerel
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Tuya Altangerel – Resident Representative (Fiji MCO)

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Aliona Niculita – Resident Representative (Samoa MCO)