



IMPLEMENTING  
THE NEW  
URBAN AGENDA  
IN THE PACIFIC

# Country Interview Summaries

*VPUF Outreach*

5 July 2021

# Kiribati Interview

(Ministry of Internal Affairs)



## Social Equity and Urbanisation

- Participatory Slum Upgrading Program in progress, housing and infrastructure upgrades in South Tarawa
- Social benefits and support funds for the unemployed between 18-59, elderlies and those with disabilities
- Approved Kiribati National Waste Management & Resource Recovery Strategy - 4-year waste management roadmap with support from MFAT and JICA



## Environment, Resilience, Infrastructure and Urbanisation

- Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan for climate resilience programs - e.g.:
  - establishment of disaster risk management committees in the 3 urban councils
  - Distribution of water tanks and solar panels to all private households in Tarawa
- Road rehabilitation in South Tarawa to improve connectivity to other parts of Kiribati



## Urban Economy

- Urban Task Force Committee established to accelerate and manage urban development
  - development of strategic commercial areas to boost local economy in Betio - in line with Ministry of Lands zoning objectives
- Public-Private Partnerships - employment and business loans, encourage innovative entrepreneurship and strengthen informal businesses (LED Training and collaboration with UN Women)



## Urban Governance

- Kiribati National Urban Policy - guiding document for the national gov towards sustainable urban development - 7 thematic areas (urban economy, social, urban housing, urban environment and infrastructure etc.)
- Enforcement of policies proven most challenging aspect to Kiribati's governance



## COVID-19

- Border remain closed until further notice - affecting trade
- Taskforce established to role out Kiribati's National COVID-19 preparedness and response plan - e.g. setting up quarantine centres, social distancing and awareness activities



# Cook Islands Interview

(Island Governance Director)



## Social Equity and Urbanisation

- Short-lived migration of populations to outer islands at the onset of the pandemic - many have since returned to Rarotonga
- “Brain Drain” challenge - contraction in the younger and economically productive cohorts of the population, as many immigrate to New Zealand and Australia for employment (where they can benefit from visa exemptions)
- Increase in crime rates since onset of COVID-19 due to unemployment



## Environment, Resilience, Infrastructure and Urbanisation

- Diverting national capital to infrastructure investment (e.g. bridges maintenance and flood defences) to create job opportunities, especially for those who worked in the tourism industry
- Disaster risk management policies implemented to guide climate adaptation and disaster preparedness measures



## Urban Economy

- The pandemic has accelerated the rate of the fibre optics construction programme between Rarotonga and Polynesia - with faster broadband speed anticipated
- Pandemic economic response plan - grants for new innovative businesses/ start-ups, capacity building for businesses
  - E.g. “Cook Safe App” - contact tracing App



## Urban Governance

- In progress: data updates for national population, land use and communities mapping - with surveys carried out
- Shifting governance to online means - e.g. online employment services and facilitating trading via Facebook (occurred more frequently since Covid)
- Efforts underway to re-establish the Local Government Association - 2020 Islands governance elections were disrupted by the pandemic



## COVID-19

- Tourism remain severely impacted - being a major economic driver of Cook Islands
- National Health Emergency Task force and a COVID-19 communication Unit established for decision making and public awareness raising
- Border will reopen for travel bubble with New Zealand as vaccination rolls out - flights will increase
- Subsidies (e.g. for energy tariff relief and loan interests) provided by national gov



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# Samoa Interview

(Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development)



## Social Equity and Urbanisation

- Strong network of village representatives/community leaders who are national government's first point of contact when implementing any local development projects
- National beautification programmes underway to improve public realm of urban areas and villages - grants and prizes for winning entries
- Active promotion of anti-violence - especially for gender-based domestic violence which increased since the onset of the pandemic



## Environment, Resilience, Infrastructure and Urbanisation

- Green Climate Fund Programme - supporting families residing in water catchment areas in Apia, embankment and bridges reinforcement, drainage system upgrades
- Community Integrated Management (CIM) Plans led by Ministry of Environment to implement climate mitigation infrastructure programmes (e.g. sea walls, forest and mangroves conservation)



## Urban Economy

- Seasonal work programme to send young people to New Zealand and Australia for employment and training
- Active engagement of women in business development - roadside and night markets selling handcrafts and NGO supporting women in business
- Central government stimulus packages to support SMEs and local businesses during COVID-19



## Urban Governance

- Bottom-up governance: District Development Plans (DDPs) outlining programmes and aligning budgets in response to individual community development needs - developed by community leaders with support from Samoa Gov and development partners (UN and DFAT)
- Challenges with establishing a centralised national data bureau to store key statistics across ministries to inform development decisions



## COVID-19

- Zero COVID-19 cases to date, borders remained closed and preventative measures implemented
- Food and hygiene packages received from UNICEF, UNDP, DFAT
- Unemployment rocketed for tourism sector - occupational training offered by Pacific Technical College to capacitate the unemployed, business support for SMEs
- Women's committees and village reps responded by acting as stewards for village COVID-19 mitigation support alongside healthcare workers

# Solomon Islands Interview

(Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey + Honiara City Council)



## Social Equity and Urbanisation

- National Housing Policy development for drafting September 2021.
- 3 Major housing projects are ongoing. Mamara Pilot Housing project started, aiming for 1000 affordable houses in west Honiara to be purchased by government. MLHS housing project targeted for ministry staff in early surveying. Pacific Games housing complexes by China Aid.
- Land registration is ongoing and requires accelerated implementation for 2021 title allocations.
- Public service rental scheme under review.



## Environment, Resilience, Infrastructure and Urbanisation

- Climate Resilience Honiara Project is entering implementation stage but still needs to receive funding to begin. Covers community, ward and acit-level climate interventions.
- UN-Women conducting a gender forum to support action on climate change and disaster risk reduction.
- Climate change resettlement policy aims to be presented to Cabinet by the end of the year. Pilot sites in islands - Walande, Aruligo, Titiana, Nukuaisi.



## Urban Economy

- Ongoing review of land rents and drafted Honiara land valuation roll.
- Review of Lata/Tulagi local planning schemes.
- Drafted Constitution of Solomon Islands Planners Association.
- Review of Honiara Local Planning Scheme with ADB GIS support.
- Kukum Highway Upgrading (airport and terminal) due to start this year and complete by 2023.
- West Honiara Highway upgrade scoping completed.
- Submarine cabling and telecoms implemented.



## Urban Governance

- National Urban Policy draft endorsed by cabinet and represents priority shift towards climate change management and resettlement.
- Reclassification of peri-urban areas with Aerial data collection (LiDAR).
- Ward boundary review started but progress is delayed.
- UNDP-funded land recording to establish walking boundaries for >200 tribal groups.
- Greater Honiara Urban Development plan to be resubmitted to Prime Ministers Office



## COVID-19

- Budget redirection towards border security (with PNG) and health funding.
- Relocation of people out of the city coincided with TC Harlod, and then fast return to Honiara.
- Ongoing economic impact on markets for food, arts and crafts, and tourism related industries have been raised by communities during engagement.



# Fiji Interview

(Ministry of Housing and Community Development)



## Social Equity and Urbanisation

- Informal Settlement Upgrade Programme.
- Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP), Phase III in progress – Lami Informal Settlement Analysis and Strategy.
- First Home Initiative Programme.
- Rural Housing Assistance Program.
- Social Housing Assistance Policy (Subsidies).
- Debt Relief Programme.



## Environment, Resilience, Infrastructure and Urbanisation

- Fiji Resilient Informal Settlements (FRIS)
  - Vulnerability and Risk Assessments at community, municipal and national level.
  - Coordination, knowledge management and data collection/mapping of informal settlements.
- Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP), Phase III in progress – Lami Informal Settlement Analysis and Strategy, aims for replication in other municipalities in Fiji.
- Rural & Maritime CAT4 Cyclone Resilient House plan.
- Development of CAT5 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom house plans for settlements in the Urban and peri-urban areas.
- Fiji's updated NDC (Dec 2020) includes two critical provisions: (i) multi-hazard risk assessments and “planning and development of climate-resilient human settlements” and (ii) strengthened housing stock and “climate resilient upgrading of informal settlements”.



## Urban Economy

- Engagement with key stakeholders such as Min of Lands, Min of Eco, Rural & Maritime Dev, Solicitor General
- Land status review: state land and native land. Land leases are facilitated by Ministry of Lands for State Land and Itaukei Affairs for native land.
- Pandemic has shifted services towards an online/virtual platform.



## Urban Governance

- Review of National Housing Policy – which will include a provision on informal settlement upgrading.
- Development Lease – upgrade of informal settlements resulting in access to basic utilities and issuance of 99-year lease titles to occupying residents.
- In progress of capturing data for informal settlements.



## COVID-19

- Borders remain closed. Preventative measures implemented for businesses and remote working.
- Reactivation of Veilomani Food Bank initiative and distribution of face masks in informal settlements
- Diversion of Civil Servants to National COVID-19 response operation in conducting awareness, screening, facilitating isolation and quarantines.
- Development of Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on urban systems in Fiji, with particular focus on informal settlements.
- Tourism heavily impacted as it is one of Fiji's major source of revenue.



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# Marshall Islands Interview

(Ministry of Internal Affairs)



## Social Equity and Urbanisation

- Marshall Island Development Bank continues to provide three housing support options, including a self-build rural housing programme with USDA which targets low-income and very-low-income citizens. Planning to continue expansion of services to 5 more atolls. 20+ years experience.
- Lots of marshalese, especially young and educated are migrating internationally.
- Continued trend of rural to urban migration.



## Environment, Resilience, Infrastructure and Urbanisation

- Green climate fund for adaptation, infrastructure and climate resilient buildings. Also runs training for women and youth groups on climate adaptation and DRR including running large multistakeholder workshops that bringing communities together from more remote islands and atolls
- Ongoing environmental cleanup programme with ngo and womens groups in Majuro.
- Ongoing work and Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce to protect, preserve and restrict use of cultural fishing sites. To be introduced in 18-19 local governments from when parliament reconvenes in August.
- Sea level rise remains a big focus for marshall islands and is promoted at international fora (COP). Ongoing training and planning for the relocation of communities from at-risk atolls.



## Urban Economy

- Land status - Land owned by local people, families and clans. Businesses don't own land except under lease. The Historic Preservation Office and Office of Environment issue leases.
- CLGF project - Training for local governments to support Local Economic Development with a focus on sustainable natural resources use, knowledge sharing and training between local mayors through the Marshall Island Mayors Association (MIMA).
- New 'Digital RMI' project funded by the World Bank and implemented by Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Transport and Comms, National Telecommunications Authority. The national telecom authority is the only communications provider at present.



## Urban Governance

- No national urban development policy but recently published the national building code for urban developers. Developed by Ministry of Works Infrastructure and Utilities over 2 years, currently distributed for review and aims for cabinet approval and implementation by the end of 2021.
- Data collection by different organisations is decentralised and non-standardised. Potential to support data centralisation integration into the RMI 2022 workplan.
- Two priority areas for support - (1) develop urban data architecture and strategy, and (2) devise a national urban development plan.



## COVID-19

- Emergency declaration from the president and closed borders.
- Low cases so lots of preparation by hospitals and urban health infrastructure.
- No international tourism so government assistance for affected local companies and workers.
- No major changes to city budgeting.
- Receiving strong assistance from donors including US gov (CDC), World Bank, ADB, Japan, New Zealand - funding for hospitals. Water and sanitation access is a priority.
- National disaster committee, in partnership with local College of the Marshall Island, have built a 2-story isolation unit for repatriating citizens. Also good relationship with US military atoll to provide additional quarantine capacity.



# Papua New Guinea

(Department of Provincial and Local Government Affairs)



## Social Equity and Urbanisation

- Gender-Based Violence Parliamentary Committee
- Duran Farm Housing project to develop 2,500 allotments to address housing shortage in Port Moresby.
- National Housing Corporation progress on fraudulent sales of assets and working to restore rightful land titles.
- Introduced and funded a new Higher Education Loan Program (HELP)
- UNICEF programme to register all children under five under civil identify registry.



## Environment, Resilience, Infrastructure and Urbanisation

- Aiming for carbon neutrality by 2030.
- PNG Electrification Programme aiming to connect 70% of houses by 2030.
- Merged Edu Ranu and Water PNG services to improve WASH provision.
- 'Connect PNG Program' investing in road, air, and maritime infrastructure. Includes 100 roads to be linked in all regions and a trans-islands highway.
- New monitoring and surveillance system for illegal logging exports and ban all log exports by 2025.



## Urban Economy

- Creation of special economic zones aiming to attract foreign investments.
- Launched National Digitization Transformation Policy to improve access to communication and technology.
- Digitization of land titles and formation of an online land management and payment system.
- Crackdown on illegal unreported and unregulated fishing with increased surveillance.
- Aim to have 500,000 SMEs in the country by 2029



## Urban Governance

- National Housing Policy 2021-2031 being drafted.
- Decentralization reform to empower provincial governments. Three City Authorities have been established since 2019 to support local delivery of municipal services.
- District Facility Audits in 2019 to monitor the effectiveness of administrative reform and operational efficiency.
- Civil identity registration is ongoing, processing over 2.12 million.



## COVID-19

- National Pandemic Act 2020 and establishment of national and provincial control centres to address COVID-19 institutional challenges.
- Revitalized provincial radio stations to achieve the PNG COVID-19 Communications Strategy
- Provincial hospital program to upgrade health facilities.
- Major economic impact - 35% of households reported job losses; 75% of MSMEs severely impacted by lockdown; travel and tourism sectors lost 97% of income





# Vanuatu

(Department of Urban Affairs and Planning)



## Social Equity and Urbanisation

- Participatory Slum Upgrading Program Profiling completed for National, Port Vila, Luganville and Lenakel.
- Sub-division policy recently launched by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources
- The National Housing Corporation (NHC) is a statutory with the mandate to execute government policy on housing
- The Building Act officially gazette by State Law Office to ensure proper quality of the construction of buildings
- UNELCO is a private enterprise that transport and supply of electricity and water in Port Vila and partly Lenakel, while VUI (private enterprise) supply electricity in Luganville, while PWD responsible for supply of water



## Environment, Resilience, Infrastructure and Urbanisation

- Displacement policy launched in September 2018, to fulfill the Vanuatu Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy by providing a holistic approach to ensure protection for displaced people while addressing the long-term recovery and development needs of communities
- Vanuatu National Disasters Management Office's (NDMO) education and awareness programs devolve climate change and disaster preparedness to the community level continued with the on-going formation of Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees.
- Provincial Disaster Offices officially opened in 2018, furthering the ability of NDMO to operate at the provincial level and strengthening relationships with the communities we serve directly.



## Urban Economy

- Seasonal work programme to send young people to Australia and New Zealand for employment
- Pandemic economic response plans - central government issuing stimulus packages to help SMEs and small locally owned businesses
- Women engagement in small business through roadside markets and selling handicrafts
- Public-Private partnerships (government subsidies - 70/30, 60/40) on agriculture and fisheries sector to encourage innovative entrepreneurship for locals who wish to start a small business
- New gazettal bylaws for Port Vila Provincial Government



## Urban Governance

- New dedicated Department of Urban Affairs and planning recently launched - mandated to deliver a range of basic urban services
- Legislative review and amendment of Municipalities, Physical Planning Act, Foreshore Development Act and development of National Urban Policies
- Elected councilors from Port Vila and Luganville received Local Elected Leadership training



## COVID-19

- NDMO takes lead on overall coordination of COVID-19 operation with the Health Cluster leads the medical aspects of the operation
- State of Emergency (SoE) is currently ongoing with directives pertaining the SoE regulations and the latest Council of Ministers (CoM) decision on stimulus packages to be issued
- To date, there is no confirmed case of COVID-19 in Vanuatu
- Tourism, being a major economic driver of Vanuatu, remain severely impacted

