



International Centre for Democratic Partnerships

Australia-Pacific Connections
for a Digital Future

PACIFICCONNECT

DIGITAL TRADE AND LABOUR MOBILITY

Pacific Connect Business Network Dialogue
11/12 March 2019 • Port Vila, Vanuatu



Participants of the Pacific Connect Network Dialogue – Vanuatu

Executive Summary

The International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP) hosted the *Pacific Connect Dialogue* at the Warwick le Lagon in Port Vila, Vanuatu 11-12 March, 2019.

Under the theme '*Australia-Pacific Connections for a Digital Future*', the Dialogue brought together a diverse group of motivated individuals from Vanuatu, Fiji and Australia to discuss the challenges and opportunities of digital connectivity in the Pacific. Discussions focused on how improved digital capability could ease the application process for the Pacific labour mobility schemes of Australia and New Zealand.

The aim of the Dialogue was to establish and enhance networks between current and emerging leaders in Vanuatu, Fiji and Australia. The Dialogue provided a space for participants to forge relationships, identify challenges to solve and select practical projects to take forward.

The Dialogue was run with the support of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and was organised in consultation with Mr Fred Samuel from Vanuatu.

The Dialogue was facilitated by **Dr Ian Watt AC**, Chair, ICDP, **Professor Ian Young AO**, Director, ICDP, **Mr Fred Samuel**, Director, Pacific Group and **Mr Taholo Kami**, ICDP Pacific Partnerships Manager.

Discussions

Twenty-one emerging leaders - eleven from Vanuatu, two from Fiji, seven from Australia and one unidentified convened over two days, firstly through an initial introductory session and welcome dinner address by the Vanuatu Minister for Internal Affairs, Hon. Mr Andrew Solomon Napuat, and Ms Jenny Da Rin, Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu. Day two involved a day of brainstorming and open discussions using the second track process. Participants discussed the barriers, challenges and social issues surrounding the seasonal workers programs and broke into project teams to come up with a range of project to address these.



Dr Watt leads discussions with dialogue participants on day 1

Following the dialogue ICDP ran a workshop with a select group of existing and emerging leaders from Vanuatu and Australia. A range of ideas were raised which will be further refined to form the basis for another dialogue in Port Vila scheduled for 15-16 July 2019.

Projects

A large group allowed for the participants to break into sizeable working groups to discuss areas of interest to individuals and to forge project teams to continue work after the dialogue. As a result of discussions on day 1 which were further refined on day 2, the following topics were identified to take further as projects:

- streamlining the application process for the Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Worker Programme;
- enhancing pre- and post-orientation for workers;
- conducting research on the existing Scheme and Programme; and
- strengthening communities to provide support and encourage workers to return.

The format of the dialogue saw day 1 end with a welcome dinner, which allowed for the continuation of meaningful discussions and networking between all attendees.

Feedback

The Dialogue provided participants the opportunity to share their expertise, experience and ideas, and a space to build rapport and establish a common purpose. Feedback gathered through an independent online survey undertaken by the University of Technology Sydney has shown all survey respondents (21 total) found the Dialogue useful and 95% found that it helped expand participants' contacts and networks. Feedback from the survey also provides ICDP with useful ideas to allow for further improvements to the Pacific Connect programme.

Next steps

Participants will continue to network online via a dedicated Slack channel set up for the dialogue and nominated sub-channels for each project group to liaise separately as needed.



Dialogue participants from Vanuatu & Australia

Workshop

Whilst in Port Vila, ICDP took the opportunity to convene a workshop with current leaders in the Vanuatu to ascertain potential themes for the next dialogue. Eleven current and emerging leaders from the Solomon Islands and Australia discussed a number of topics under the broader digital innovation theme. A range of topics were discussed including education – access to services by rural areas; financial management – access to better services by rural areas; access to an online marketplace by rural producers; e-waste & recycling opportunities; and opportunity for a Hackathon on these topics. These topics will be further honed to develop a theme for a future dialogue in Port Vila to be held in 15-16 July 2019.

Participants

Facilitators

- Dr Ian Watt AC, Chair of ICDP
- Professor Ian Young AO, Director of ICDP
- Mr Fred Samuel, Director, Pacific Group, Vanuatu
- Mr Taholo Kami, Pacific Partnerships Manager, ICDP

Vanuatu Participants

- Elsie Bong, IT Manager, ANZ Bank
- Florence Bellon, Marketing & Communications Consultant
- Nicole Colmar, Media Production Advisor, Further Arts Nesar Studio
- Christy Haruel, Managing Director, KBC Elevate
- David Nalo, Consultant, Lokol Eyes
- Deli Nalo, Consultant, Lokol Eyes
- Sarah Doyle, Coordinator, Humans of Vanuatu
- Patrice Kuautonga, Senior Labour Officer, Dept of Labour & Employment Services
- Olaf De Cuester, Director, ODC Technology Consultants
- Glen Korikalo, General Manager, ODC Technology Consultants
- Sylvie Kalmet, ETM Consultants
- Dalsie Baniala, Consultant

Fiji Participants

- Andrew Naigulevu, Systems Analyst, Ministry of Employment, Productivity & IR, Fiji Government
- Tima Racule, Consultant, KBC Elevate - Fiji

Australian Participants

- Chris Sampson, Founder, Digital Society Foundation
- George Holt, Head of IT, TAFE NSW
- Peter Njoroge, Senior Ops Manager, My Connect Training
- Tom Atkinson, Director, Think Technology
- Emily Hallissey, Senior Consultant, KPMG
- Dr Rachel Hay, Lecturer, James Cook University
- Tom Dick, Strategic Partnerships, Hitnet

ICDP

- Simone Pensko, Chief Executive Officer, ICDP
- Tina Briggs, Program Manager, ICDP

Summary of Proceedings

Day 1 – Leadership Roundtable & Welcome Dinner

Introductions of Programme, Participants & Second Track Process

In the first session, Dr Ian Watt and Mr Fred Samuel opened the Dialogue with introductions and overview of ICDP and the Pacific Connect Programme, as well as providing participants with an understanding of the ‘Second Track’ process and expected outcomes of the Dialogue. Participants were then provided with an opportunity to introduce themselves and their backgrounds and to verbalise their expectations of the Dialogue and outcomes. A copy of the Dialogue Programme is attached.

This session was then followed by a Welcome Dinner hosted by ICDP which was attended by 33 Ni-Vanuatu, Fijian and Australians and was also attended by the Vanuatu Minister for Internal Affairs, Hon. Mr Andrew Solomon Napuat, and Ms Jenny Da Rin, Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu as guest speakers. The Minister spoke enthusiastically about the importance of taking advantage of greater connectivity and the importance of IT to the future of all sectors in Vanuatu. He welcomed the programmes association with Australian’s step up in engagement in the Pacific and commended ICDP in delivering Pacific Connect.

The Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu Jenny Da Rin spoke about current and future DFAT programmes in Vanuatu and welcomed ICDP’s Pacific Connect programme that works on the development of long term enduring relationships between people in Vanuatu and Australia.



Minister Napuet and Aust High Commissioner Jenny Da Rin at ICDP Welcome Dinner

Day 2 – Planning Sessions The how, what, why, when & who & Next Steps

Professor Young provided an overview of the Labour Mobility Scheme and the opportunity for Ni-Vanuatu to input into and influence the scheme. Taholo Kami provided summaries of day 1 and

then encouraged the participants to choose a project of interest and break into groups to narrow down the focus on the relevant topics under the theme. Participants were then asked to discuss, identify and plan the next steps in progressing these projects. There was abundant time for individuals to circulate to different groups to add ideas and determine where specific interests lay in terms of working on the projects post dialogue.

As mentioned above the final project topics that the group agreed to explore and work on were:

- streamlining the application process for the Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Worker Programme;
- enhancing pre- and post-orientation for workers;
- conducting research on the existing Scheme and Programme; and
- strengthening communities to provide support and encourage workers to return.



Dialogue participants brainstorm innovative ideas for Vanuatu

Details of projects

Streamlining the application process for the Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Work Programme

The group are continuing work via Slack to develop a project plan to digitise the application process with the following objectives identified:

- develop a flexibly managed, better enabled and professionalised application underpinned by modern technology;
- assist with digital literacy by ensuring the process is streamlined and easy to use;
- implement a new technology platform and data capability;
- create an innovation echo system within the process and stakeholders, resulting in cost savings and efficiencies;
- establish key strategic partnerships, and develop the commercial capability and capacity required to manage engagement with industry and government partners.

Enhancing pre- and post-orientation for workers

The group identified the mission/objective as: To train workers to participate in overseas work recognising that this must respect and support workers, their families and community. The training will provide leadership, literacy and support skills to workers and support staff. Modes of delivery would be structured/step by step face-to-face and digital/online. Outcomes of the training included: orientation tools; digital literacy; financial literacy; team leadership training; improved pastoral care; self-confidence; transparency; and career development.

Conducting research on the existing Scheme and Programme

The group identified existing issues including: lack of information collection and sharing between stakeholders and no central database; different perceptions of the scheme objectives that lead to differing expectations of participants; lack of longer term strategic planning at government levels; illiteracy rate is still high. Needs identified included: database that links to national database; human resources and infrastructure required to manage the database; understanding the context in relation to economic status, geographic background and other factors contributing to the perception of the scheme (what applicants want to achieve); is the scheme achieving its objectives i.e. a worker returning and contributing to the whole ecosystem.

Strengthening communities to provide support and encourage workers to return

The group are continuing work via Slack to develop a project funding proposal to strengthen agriculture in communities using ICT & blockchain. Objectives identified include:

- using ICT and blockchain in farming for seasonal workers and their respective communities to apply to export crops;
- opportunity of connecting those working overseas to niche agricultural & other high-end products: handicrafts, vanilla – commercial level; kava (pharmacy), sago palm, coffee, pandanus, pineapple juice, etc.

Outcomes being explored include building an app to connect overseas workers to news/activities from home.



Project group presentation

Feedback

Following the Dialogue, all participants were asked to complete a Post-Dialogue survey administered by the University of Technology Sydney. **All 21 participants completed the survey.** A summary of the survey raw data is provided in the attached Dialogue Findings Report.

The key findings from the Dialogue are outlined below.

- **90% (19)** of participants agreed with the statement that *'Pacific Connect is a program that cultivates meaningful enduring relationships between Australia and Pacific individuals.'*
- **85% (18)** of participants agreed that *'Pacific Connect is a program that expands and strengthens Australia-Pacific connections by developing new networks'*
- **95% (20)** of participants agreed that the dialogue helped expand their contacts/networks.
- **86% (18)** of participants *'believe future joint projects with other participants will emerge as a result of my involvement in Pacific Connect'*
- **86% (18)** agreed that they would be committed to attending a future *Pacific Connect* event and believed that future joint projects with other participants will emerge
- **Over 70%** of participants indicated that they were able to leverage their contacts and networks as follows: brainstorming ideas (16); and get advice & support (15) with 4 respondents indicating that they had contracted one or more of their contact's services.

There were no phone interviews conducted for this dialogue, therefore key findings are based solely on the online survey completed by participants.

Continued collaboration – Slack group

Participants were linked post Dialogue via a dedicated Pacific Connect Slack online channel, where they also have access to the broader Pacific Connect Community. This platform is utilised to work on the project funding proposals through sharing documents, having specific conversations and exploring ideas.

Workshop – 12 March 2019

Summary of Outcomes

After the dialogue closed, ICDP convened a workshop with eleven current and emerging Ni-Vanuatu and Australian leaders to discuss potential topics under the digital theme for another dialogue in July 2019. The group benefited from the attendance of Jenny Da Rin, Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu who provided some ideas for topics that could potentially attract funding through various channels. A broad number of topics were also raised by the group which provide a rich choice of themes for convening another dialogue in Port Vila. This type of consultation assists ICDP to build and strengthen relationships between Ni-Vanuatu and Australians through topics suggested and support by key stakeholders and potential sponsors in the country.

The following topics will be the basis to further consult with stakeholders and to narrow down the theme for a future dialogue:

- primary education – access to services by rural areas;
- financial management – access to better services by rural areas;
- access to an online marketplace by rural producers;
- e-waste & recycling opportunities; and
- opportunity for a Hackathon on these topics.

Below is the list of participants who attended the workshop.

VANUATU WORKSHOP ATTENDEE LIST – 12 MARCH 2019

Dr Ian Watt AC

Chair
ICDP, Australia

Fred Samuel

Director
Pacific Group, Vanuatu

Taholo Kami

ICDP Pacific Partnerships, Fiji

Simone Pensko

CEO, ICDP, Australia

Professor Ian Young AO

Director
ICDP, Australia

Jenny Da Rin

Australian High Commissioner
Vanuatu

Francis Herman

CEO
Vanuatu Broadcasting & Television Corporation

Geoff Toone

Managing Director
National Bank of Vanuatu

Andy Cottam

Chief Financial Officer
National Bank of Vanuatu

Chris Sampson

Founder
Digital Society Foundation, Australia

Dan McGarry

Media Director
Vanuatu Daily Post

Astrid Boulekone

General Manager
Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce & Industry