

# PROMOTING ELECTION INTEGRITY IN THE PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

## BASELINE ASSESSMENT OF OPEN ELECTION DATA

September 2021



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NDI (or the Institute) is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental organization that works in partnership around the world to strengthen and safeguard democratic institutions, processes, norms and values to secure a better quality of life for all. NDI envisions a world where democracy and freedom prevail, with dignity for all. The Institute's work in the Pacific Islands aims to support inclusive and citizen-centered governance by advancing domestic election monitoring efforts, strengthening civil society, enhancing government transparency and accountability, and raising awareness on barriers to women's political participation. NDI began working with civil society and women activists in the Pacific Islands in 2015.

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# I. OVERVIEW OF THE OPEN ELECTION DATA INITIATIVE (OEDI)

Elections are the basis for democratic legitimacy. They give citizens a way to hold their leaders accountable by voting contestants into, or out of, office. A credible election is one that is characterized by inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, and competitiveness. While many observers focus on the specific event of election day, elections are actually a process made up of multiple components. Public confidence in each step of an election process is critical to the integrity of the election. In order for citizens to participate in, understand, evaluate and, ultimately, accept an election process and its outcome as representing their will, election data must be open to citizens.

"Election data" refers to information relating to aspects of the process throughout the electoral cycle. The right to information is integral to electoral rights because it is impossible to participate meaningfully without information needed to make informed electoral choices. Access to information about electoral processes, including government held electoral data, and the steps taken by governmental institutions to establish accountability in the electoral context is fundamental to creating and reinforcing public confidence in the integrity of elections and the government that derives from them.<sup>1</sup> It also enhances voter education, dissuades disinformation, and improves the link between citizens and government. Recognizing its importance to government democratically, many election management bodies (EMBs) around the world are making public not only data about the election underway, but curating online repositories of past election data.

Countries are also increasingly committing to international standards for democratic elections, including the UN's human rights instruments. In particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>2</sup> signed or ratified by a number of Pacific Island Countries (PICs), codifies the rights of all citizens to seek, receive, and impart information related to public life. Open data principles have also been woven into all of the documents that have emerged from the Asian Network for Free Elections at the 2016 Asia Electoral Stakeholders Forum, where the participants endorsed the document "Electoral Transparency: Eight Keys to Integrity."<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Papua New Guinea signed onto the Open Government Partnership,<sup>4</sup> and adopted commitments to open government data.

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1 Open Government Guide, "Elections," <https://www.opengovguide.com/topics/elections/>.

2 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, December 16, 1966, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>.

3 ANFREL, *Electoral Transparency: Eight Keys to Integrity*, August 23-24, 2016, <https://anfrel.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Electoral-Transparency-Eight-Keys-to-Integrity.pdf>.

4 Open Government Partnership, "About Open Government Partnership," <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/>.

As a supporter of the Open Government Partnership, NDI has a keen interest in ensuring that key electoral data is available and in helping stakeholders use that data to enhance the integrity of elections and hold EMBs and other electoral actors to account. Through the Open Election Data Initiative,<sup>5</sup> NDI works to leverage its capacity, experience, and long-standing relationships with citizen observer groups around the globe to help them access electoral data, evaluate the integrity of elections, and advance political and governmental accountability.<sup>6</sup> Since 2015, NDI has provided direct technical assistance to domestic elections observers in over 25 countries to monitor the openness of key elements of the electoral process and has published online resources and practical guides.<sup>7</sup> Drawing on the Open government Partnership principles,<sup>8</sup> OEDI outlines the nine principles that make electoral data open:

Open Election Data Principle	Definition
<b>Availability for free on the internet</b>	Data is readily available online, without any monetary requirement.
<b>Granularity</b>	Data is available to the finest level of detail possible. For example, election results available at polling station level; voters list down to the individual voter; list of polling stations includes the number of registered voters at each polling station and the full address of the polling stations and/or GPS coordinates.
<b>Completeness</b>	Data is available for all items in bulk (e.g., polling stations, candidates, incidents, etc.) at once.
<b>Analyzability</b>	Data available in a CSV or Excel format, as opposed to hard copies, image files, or other formats that are harder for stakeholders to analyze.
<b>Non-proprietary</b>	Data should be in a format in which no organization may have exclusive control of.
<b>Non-discriminatory</b>	No registration requirements to access data; data should be available to anyone and everyone without any limitations such as age, gender, political affiliation, etc.
<b>License free</b>	Data is open for re-use and redistribution for any purpose.
<b>Permanently available</b>	The data should be available for an indefinite period. This can help to evaluate processes that happened back over a period of time and compare with current events and record any instances of progress or retrogress.
<b>Timeliness</b>	The information must be provided as quickly as possible for it to be effective. For instance, voters need timely information about their registration status and where to register, so they can take action before the voter registration phase ends. Near real-time publication of provisional polling station results helps provide transparency in the counting process.

<sup>5</sup> "Open Election Data Initiative," NDI, <https://openelectiondata.net/en/>.

<sup>6</sup> NDI has been providing technical assistance to nonpartisan election monitoring organizations worldwide, assisting over 400 groups in more than 95 countries to monitor more than 300 elections and to mobilize more than three million observers. Read more about NDI's Elections programs worldwide here: <https://www.ndi.org/what-we-do/elections>.

<sup>7</sup> "Open Election Data Initiative."

<sup>8</sup> Caroline Burle, Laila Bellix, and Jorge Machado, "How about defining Open Government principles?" November 22, 2016, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/stories/how-about-defining-open-government-principles/>.

These principles should be applied to a set of key categories in elections including: Legal Framework, Electoral Boundaries, Election Management Body and Administration, Election Management Body Processes, Election Security, Political Party Registration, Ballot Qualification, Election Campaigns, Campaign Finance, Voter Registration, Voter Lists, Voter Education, Polling Stations, Election Results, Electronic Voting and Counting, and Electoral Complaints, Disputes and Resolution. *See Appendix A for more details on OEDI categories.* For the purpose of this assessment, the framework has been adapted to the PICs context.

With support from USAID, between April 1 to September 10, 2021, NDI conducted a baseline assessment of election data in 12 Pacific Island Countries, analyzing official information available to the public on the most recent general elections in Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. As this assessment focused on past data only, the principle of *Timeliness* has not been assessed. The scoring algorithm allocates seven points for availability for free on the Internet, three points each for granularity, completeness, and analyzability, and one point for each of the non-proprietary, license-free, and permanency principles. As a guide, a score equal to or less than 30% classifies data as not open; between 31% and 70% as partially open; and above 70% as mostly open.

The first phase of the research included a desk review of election-related data available online on *official* websites—including those of EMBs, legislatures, political party commissions, judiciary, and governments. The second phase of the research included discussions with government and EMB officials, civil society and political activists, and election experts from the region. References to official statements and articles have been included in this paper for additional context. During data collection meetings with the research team, a few EMBs stated that some of the requested data is available offline on request. Only data received by September 10, 2021, has been included in the assessment. In one instance, the research team was informed that data is available as hard copies in the EMBs archives, however COVID-19 movement restrictions have rendered obtaining these documents unfeasible.

Source of Evidence	Fiji	FSM	Kiribati	Nauru	Palau	PNG	RMI	Samoa	Solomon Islands	Tonga	Tuvalu	Vanuatu
Official websites of relevant institutions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discussions with EMBs and other public authorities	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discussions with civil society, political parties, and national and international experts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The summary of findings below provides comparative results of key data categories across 12 countries, while the narrative analysis goes beyond assessing how usable and practical election-related data is in the Pacific Island countries. It strives to provide context to the baseline metrics and insight into a few common trends, good practices, and challenges related to election integrity in the region. NDI stands ready to discuss its methodology and provide consultations and training to interested domestic election observation groups and EMBs on improving election integrity through better quality data. In addition, subject to availability of resources, NDI aims to update the assessment periodically to measure changes related to the OEDI indicators.



## II. SUMMARY OF OPEN ELECTION DATA ASSESSMENT IN THE PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

 Mostly Open
  Partially Open
  Not Open

CATEGORY / Country Openness	Fiji	FSM	Kiribati	Nauru	Palau	PNG	RMI	Samoa	Sol Islands	Tonga	Tuvalu	Vanuatu
Electoral management body and administration												
Election management processes												
Electoral boundaries												
Electoral security												
Political party registration		N/A									N/A	
Ballot qualification												
Election campaigns	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Campaign finance												
Voter registration												
Voter list												
Voter education												
Polling stations												
Election results (official final)												
Electoral complaints, disputes and resolutions												
Electoral legal framework												

### III. OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

Most of the Pacific Island Countries in this assessment did not meet some minimal standards for open election data, with limitations from geographic, historical, political and social constraints that underpin the region. The Pacific Island Countries cover numerous islands, atolls, and large expanses of ocean with a significant percentage of their population living dispersed in remote communities. The geography of these countries, as well as limited communications and transportation infrastructure, continues to hinder access to public services and information of public interest, especially for those living outside the countries' capital cities. Various COVID-19 travel restrictions<sup>9</sup> imposed by governments across the region to limit the spread of the virus have largely contributed to keeping these countries virus free, but have produced long-term socio-economic effects, including limitations to access to information. Across the region, the COVID-19 pandemic has also hampered electoral reform processes including electoral commissions' plans to improve data collection and community outreach. It has also exacerbated internal country inequalities, with citizens living in remote areas or out-of-country voters having even less access to election-related data.

**Leveraging the improving Internet connectivity<sup>10</sup> in the Pacific Islands, a few EMBs have started to facilitate real-time access to key election data, although some still struggle to provide minimal information online.** Leveraging the improving Internet connectivity in the Pacific Islands, a few EMBs have started to facilitate real-time access to key election data, although some still struggle to provide minimal information online. Data available for free on the internet is the easiest, fastest, and most open way for the public to access information. While five out of the 12 countries included in this assessment—namely Kiribati, PNG, RMI, Tonga, and Tuvalu—did not have fully functional and secure EMB websites at the time the assessment was conducted, a few have been setting up online platforms to make more data available to the public, including voter registration look-up systems, lists of polling stations, and constituency boundary maps. To overcome challenges related to access to information, exacerbated by the pandemic, and to better serve out-of-country and remote-living voters, election officials are gradually realizing the need to maintain effective websites in order to improve electoral transparency. Most EMB representatives consulted as part of this assessment stated that they are in the process of setting up new websites ahead of their countries' next general elections.

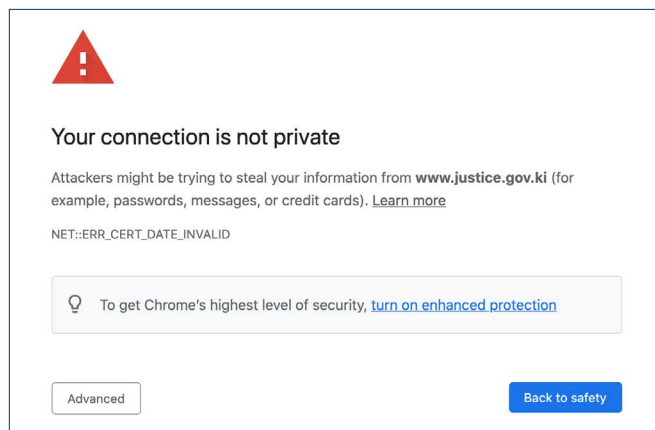
Meeting the OEDI transparency principles does not require particularly complex websites and online data that can be downloaded in simple machine-readable file formats is more accessible and user-friendly

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9 Allen and Clarke, *Synthesis of COVID-19 impacts on the Pacific*, 2021 [https://spccfpstore1.blob.core.windows.net/digital-library-docs/files/77/778233de8c963f0fd52e892b776e857c.pdf?sv=2015-12-11&sr=b&sig=MUWZRn7Kr8WNc4O-QtnnN3zCBeqArbyyjTnc%2Bv88kM6s%3D&se=2021-11-30T08:03:45Z&sp=r&rscc=public,%20max-age%3D864000,%20max-stale%3D86400&rsct=application/pdf&rscd=inline%3B%20filename%3D%22AC\\_Phase\\_2\\_report\\_\\_\\_synthesis\\_of\\_COVID\\_19\\_impacts\\_on\\_the\\_Pacific\\_Phase\\_2\\_\\_\\_30April.pdf%22](https://spccfpstore1.blob.core.windows.net/digital-library-docs/files/77/778233de8c963f0fd52e892b776e857c.pdf?sv=2015-12-11&sr=b&sig=MUWZRn7Kr8WNc4O-QtnnN3zCBeqArbyyjTnc%2Bv88kM6s%3D&se=2021-11-30T08:03:45Z&sp=r&rscc=public,%20max-age%3D864000,%20max-stale%3D86400&rsct=application/pdf&rscd=inline%3B%20filename%3D%22AC_Phase_2_report___synthesis_of_COVID_19_impacts_on_the_Pacific_Phase_2___30April.pdf%22).

10 The World Bank, "Individuals using the Internet (% of population)—Pacific island small states," <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=S2>.

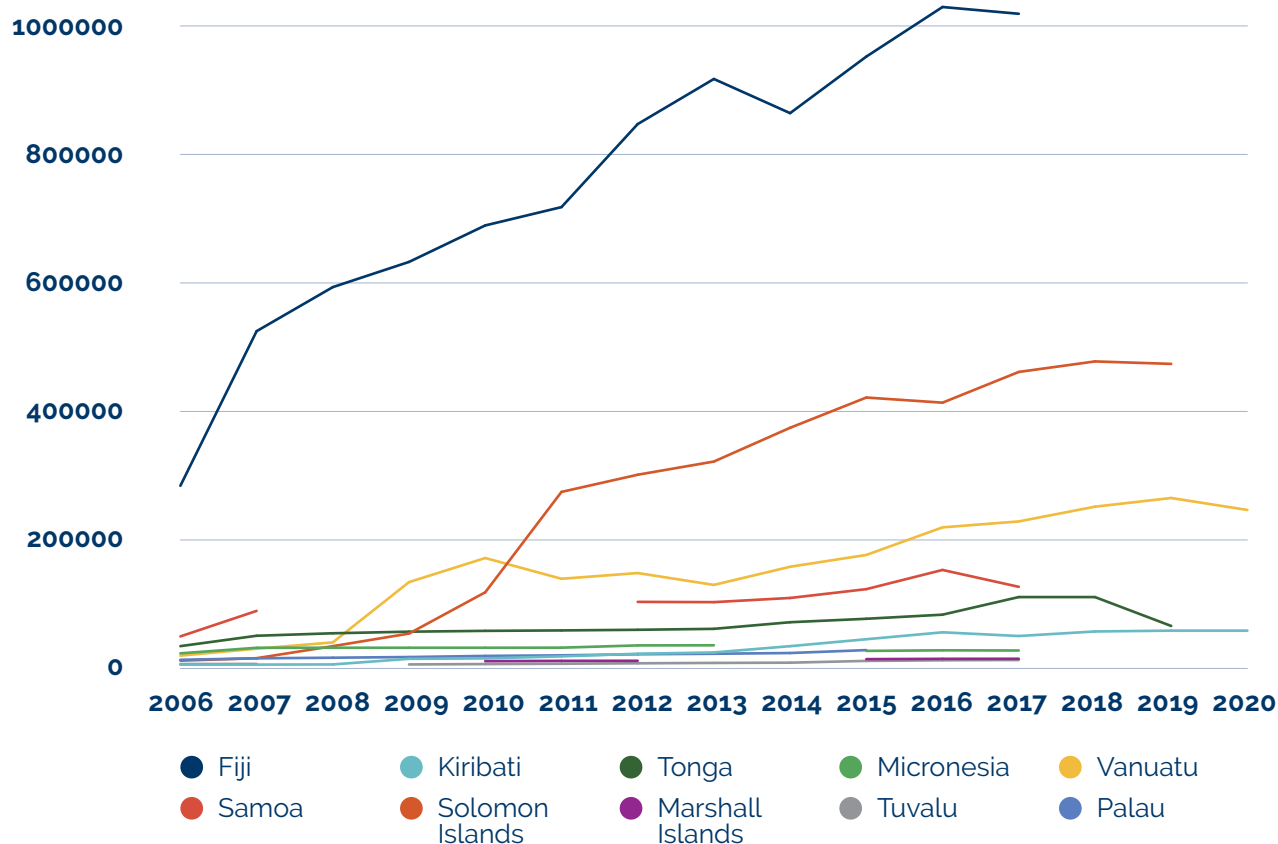
**Figure 1: Warning messages suggesting that proceeding to the website is not safe can dissuade visitors from accessing the page.**



to low local capacity to maintain them. This can limit the opportunity for continuity, sustainability, and institutional memory. Finally, the assessment found that in a few instances, EMB websites display errors suggesting that pages are not secure, which can prevent visitors from accessing these official websites.

than, for instance, embedded HTML tables on a website that are difficult to extract. A few activists shared concerns that flashy design features such as pop-ups and high-resolution images built into EMB or government websites take over functionality. In other cases, new websites do not retain data from past elections, thus rendering institutional memory and public records inaccessible to the public. Additionally, some criticism is directed toward international development partners for sometimes developing complex websites, as part of their technical assistance programs, but once the funding ends websites are no longer used and "pass out" due

**Figure 2: Mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions by postpaid/prepaid in the Pacific Island Small States**



Source: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>

Permissive legal frameworks in place since the early 2000s and the proliferation of submarine cables have allowed private enterprises, including foreign firms, to expand digital technology and the internet in the PICs.<sup>11</sup> As many mobile data plans offer free-of-charge or cheaper rates for social media access, Internet users in the PICs disproportionately use their mobile phones to get online. While this may facilitate easy and affordable access to information, it also raises concerns about overexposure to a medium propitious to spreading misinformation.

Accessing official websites requires using mobile data, especially websites that are over-designed and have features that require a significant amount of bandwidth to load, so access to official information comes at a higher cost compared to social media. A lack of transparency around some infrastructure projects—such as Huawei's attempted submarine cable construction in the Solomon Islands or possible Chinese support to develop mobile telecommunication infrastructure for Digicel in PNG—and service providers pushing Huawei and mobile devices whose security features have been questioned, have drawn the attention of regional development partners to potential cybersecurity vulnerabilities of the information environment in the South Pacific.<sup>12</sup> As technology evolves, so do its risks. Despite growing Internet and mobile uptake worldwide and in the Pacific region, the gender digital divide is growing globally and the 5G technology is expected to lead to even more pervasive disinformation.<sup>13</sup>

**The traditional kinship system present in the Pacific Island Countries is largely viewed negatively in the context of election data transparency.** This informal reciprocity system, also known as *wantok*, is seen on one hand as providing a network of support for those family or clan members who need it most; on the other hand, when associated with public positions or funding, it can be perceived as an unfair system that supports the interests of certain individuals through nepotism and the use of one's personal connections to gain access to public resources or jobs. Assessment interviewees across the region expressed concerns about a well-established political culture that feeds into voters' expectation to receive direct benefits for supporting a certain candidate. The traditional kinship system is seen as playing a significant role in electoral politics when it comes to vote buying, cross-constituency registration,<sup>14</sup> election monitoring, and election results collection.

A particular shortcoming identified by the present assessment is the lack of data on election results at the polling-station level. For instance, in Solomon Islands and PNG, election results are aggregated at the

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11 CNA, *Mapping the Information Environment in the Pacific Island Countries: Disruptors, Deficits, and Decisions*, 2019 [https://www.cna.org/CNA\\_files/PDF/IRM-2019-U-019755-Final.pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/IRM-2019-U-019755-Final.pdf)

12 Asia and the Pacific Policy Society, *Are telecommunications in the Pacific at risk?*, 2021, <https://www.policyforum.net/are-telecommunications-in-the-pacific-at-risk/>.

13 NDI, *5G and the future of the Internet. Implications for Developing Democracies and Human Rights*, [https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/5GWhitePaper\\_CorrectedVersion.pdf](https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/5GWhitePaper_CorrectedVersion.pdf).

14 James Batley, Colin Wiltshire, Joanne Ridolfi and Athena Rogers, "The Voter as Commodity: The Phenomenon of Cross-border Voter Registration in Solomon Islands," *Australian National University Department of Public Affairs InBrief* 21 (2019), [http://dpa.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2019-11/dpa\\_ib\\_2019\\_21\\_batley.pdf](http://dpa.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2019-11/dpa_ib_2019_21_batley.pdf).

polling-teams<sup>15</sup> level—the former being a condition to satisfy the OEDI principle of granularity—for fear that candidates might be able to identify which villages voted for whom and then, once in office, retaliate against those who supported an opposing candidate. In Solomon Islands, a long-criticized practice is that the members of parliament channel money and goods to their own voters through the discretionary Constituency Development Fund, thus perpetuating a clientelist system to ensure re-election.<sup>16</sup> In PNG, elections are often marred by the specter of violence, including the hijacking of ballot boxes.<sup>17</sup> The vote secrecy concern is shared by election stakeholders in Tuvalu, a country that has around 7,000 registered voters. While there are no independent domestic elections monitors in Tuvalu, “everybody knows everybody,” so there is an issue of the secrecy of who casts a vote and for whom. Often, aggregating polling results is seen as an operational decision to ensure the confidentiality of the process and avoid punitive actions against certain voters. Nevertheless, as much of the data is lost in the process since ballots from several polling stations are mixed together, it does create the risk of having insufficient information to investigate fraud cases and can undermine voter confidence that their ballots are actually counted.

“... solar, boat, fridge, engine—only voters receive this assistance. But I think when you are the member you represent everyone in your constituency, you must help those who vote and did not vote for you, because you are their leader now... When we were boarding the ship to return back to Gizo, when the ship was about to leave, some people were escorted out because they did not vote for the winning candidate and it is very sad to see this.”—woman, Western Province focus group discussion. Source: “Solomon Islands’ Road to Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic,” NDI, 2021

Additionally, experts have been drawing attention to the issue of cross-constituency registration in Solomon Islands, where citizens can opt to register to vote in a different constituency than the one they reside in, to receive benefits from the winning MP and to the issue of “artificial wantok political units”<sup>18</sup> being established as wards, provinces, and constituencies to leverage a certain candidate’s support in that area. To improve the transparency and integrity of the electoral process, with support from development partners, Solomon Islands has drafted an *Electoral Reform Strategy Framework* for 2019–2023. The document proposes establishing subnational electoral offices that will be tasked with conducting voter registration continuously; cleaning out the electoral roll; conducting voter awareness and/or vote education programs in the provinces and constituency level; and helping prepare the constituency in the province for future elections. The document also suggests re-defining the term “ordinarily resident” to address the issue of cross-border registration. While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has impacted its progress, in 2021 the Electoral Reform Task Force has resumed its meetings and prioritized working on next year’s

<sup>15</sup> Polling teams are itinerant and cover several polling places on different days during the voting period.

<sup>16</sup> NDI, *Solomon Islands’ Road to Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic*, August 10, 2021, <https://www.ndi.org/publications/solomon-islands-road-recovery-covid-19-pandemic>.

<sup>17</sup> Nicole Haley and Kerry Zubrinich, *2017 Papua New Guinea General Elections: Election Observation Report*, 2019, <http://dpa.bellschool.anu.edu.au/experts-publications/publications/6884/2017-papua-new-guinea-general-elections-election-observation>.

<sup>18</sup> Gordon Nanau, “The Wantok System as a Socio-Economic and Political Network in Melanesia,” *OMNES The Journal of Multicultural Society* 2, no. 1 (June 2011), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260002701>.

operations budget. Discussions about potentially deferring elections to 2024<sup>19</sup> may, however, impact the initial timeline of implementing these reforms.

**Election-related legislation is generally available to the public,<sup>20</sup> but insufficiently developed legal frameworks and understaffed, underfunded electoral management bodies remain key structural barriers to open election data in Pacific Island Countries.** The assessment shows that legal frameworks, including election laws, constitutions, and political party laws are generally readily available to the public. A number of 10 out of 12 countries have made election-related data available online. The most frequent shortcomings are related to broken links in the text of documents, and the information being uploaded in a format that makes it difficult to be analyzed, such as image files rather than text. Traditional systems, colonial history, and post-independence politics have shaped current constitutional regimes, electoral management models, and the environment for political parties in the Pacific Islands.<sup>21</sup> Overall, legal frameworks could be better articulated to require transparency of key election-related data, as this recommendation shows: "There is no clear indication of the electoral campaign period in any of the laws. It is recommended to make explicit the length of the electoral campaign period, and include obligatory codes of conduct for political parties and candidates."<sup>22</sup> —Vanuatu Election Commission. This assessment found that, among other items, most PICs did not have sufficiently detailed campaign regulations, such as if and how contestants are allocated public resources for campaigning, making that data metric impossible to evaluate.

A minority of countries in the assessment follow a government model of election management.<sup>23</sup> In meetings with NDI, EMBs and government officials have mentioned instances in which candidates and voters questioned the current electoral processes, including the appointment of the Executive as the main organizer of elections, thus raising the need to have an independent election commission. Most of the EMBs in the assessed countries are independent institutions by law, but often lack the financial and human resources to function and perform at a level of efficiency, transparency, and inclusiveness comparable to more advanced EMBs in countries such as Australia or New Zealand. Some EMBs' tem-

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19 "Solomon MP says a public backlash could halt plans to extend parliament," April 21, 2021, <https://www.abc.net.au/radio-australia/programs/pacificbeat/sols-extend-party/13311366>

20 Freedom of Access to Information is enshrined in the Fiji, Palau, and PNG constitutions. For example, the PNG constitution provisions that laws should be adopted to further guarantee freedom of access to information and committed to the adoption of a right to information law and a national action plan under the auspices of the Open Government Partnership in 2016. Other countries have introduced freedom of information laws (Fiji, Palau, and Vanuatu) or policies (Solomon Islands and Tonga); also, right to information bills have been drafted in FSM, Kiribati, and Solomon Islands. For more information, see Jeff Smith, *Discussion Paper: Freedom of Information Legislation in the Pacific Region*, 2018, <https://pacific-data.sprep.org/system/files/Discussion%20Paper%20on%20FOI%20180906%20-%20FINAL.pdf>; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Status of the Right to Information in Pacific Island Countries*, February 2020, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific//pacific/2020/UN-PRAC\\_Paper\\_-\\_Status\\_of\\_Right\\_to\\_Information\\_in\\_Pacific\\_Island\\_Countries.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific//pacific/2020/UN-PRAC_Paper_-_Status_of_Right_to_Information_in_Pacific_Island_Countries.pdf).

21 *Political Parties in the Pacific Islands*, eds. Roland Rich, Luke Hambly and Michael G. Morgan (ANU Press, 2008).

22 Republic of Vanuatu, Election Report 2020, [https://electoral.gov.vu/images/PDFs/General\\_Election\\_Report\\_2020.pdf](https://electoral.gov.vu/images/PDFs/General_Election_Report_2020.pdf).

23 Elections are organized by the Secretary or the Government's Office in Tuvalu. In Kiribati, election administration should be independent by law, but elections are currently administered by the Ministry of Justice, and election management is expected to return under the portfolio of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In FSM, the National Election Director is appointed by the president, with advice and consent from the Congress. Similarly, in RMI, the EMB is a branch of the bureaucracy.

## Samoa Office of the Electoral Commissioner

### Principles and Values (excerpt):

- Maintain the confidence of electors/voters, candidates, political parties and parliament in the integrity of the electoral process;
- Make information on our activities readily available to the public and the media;
- Have transparent and fair procedures in place to deal promptly with complaints of impropriety;
- Maintain a commitment to ensuring the integrity of the electoral process in accordance with the law;
- Respond promptly and accurately to requests for information about electoral matters;
- Keep up to date with best information democratic electoral practice.

*Source: Office of the Electoral Commission, <https://www.oec.gov.ws>*

porary character and employment of part-time staff hinder the supply of public interest election data on a continuous basis. For instance, in Vanuatu, by law the EMB is an independent institution composed of two separate but interrelated bodies: the Electoral Commission, a policy-making, oversight body, and the Vanuatu Electoral Office (VEO), a corresponding executive, operational arm, staffed by civil servants. The Chairman is the only full-time employee of the Electoral Commission, while two other members work part time.<sup>24</sup> In fulfilling their duties, the commissioners depend on VEO resources. In Kiribati, there are five electoral commissioners who work on a part-time basis during the election period with two staff members. These shortcomings are also shared by most political party commissions with the responsibility of overseeing political party registration and transparency of campaign funding.

**Official records of historic data on voter registration, turnout, and election results are lacking across the region.** Most countries included in this assessment do not maintain public records of the number of registered voters, voters that turned up and casted a vote on election day, spoiled ballots, invalid/blank votes, or contested votes. This can limit public scrutiny of the electoral process and lead to questions about election results and integrity of the electoral process. Only a small number of countries<sup>25</sup> maintain official records of the official results of the last general elections on their websites. However, only in a few cases does the data meet the OEDI standards for granularity and completeness. As an illustration of how some EMBs use social media to make election data more open, the RMI EMB manages a Facebook page and a group as its main public communication outlets. RMI has a significant number of out-of-country voters, with approximately 30,000 voters living currently in the United States. In an effort to provide key

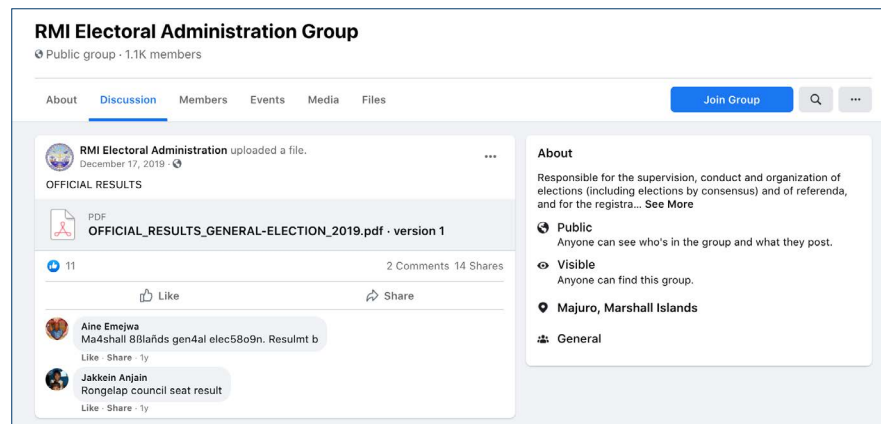
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<sup>24</sup> Kizzy Kalsakau and Anita Roberts, "Electoral Commission needs to be more independent: Kaltamat," *Daily Post*, April 7, 2021, [https://www.dailypost.vu/news/electoral-commission-needs-to-be-more-independent-kaltamat/article\\_e0c7a064-9728-11eb-98e7-c375aa006b9c.html](https://www.dailypost.vu/news/electoral-commission-needs-to-be-more-independent-kaltamat/article_e0c7a064-9728-11eb-98e7-c375aa006b9c.html).

<sup>25</sup> This includes Fiji, Nauru, and Vanuatu.



**Figure 3: In the absence of functional official websites, for some EMBs Facebook has become the main public communication outlet.**



election data to the public, it publishes comprehensive, granular, and analyzable data on valid votes for each contestant in each constituency, as well as an election calendar, and even some information on election staff recruitment.

To support voter registration, the Australian Election Commission has created and de-

livered a cost-free software to the members of the Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators Network (PIANZEA).<sup>26</sup> Since it was developed a decade ago, the Generic Voting Registration System (GVRS) has been updated to allow biometric data processing. Similarly, the Solomon Islands EMB has built a voter registration look-up system into its website, and voter lists are publicly accessible. In Tuvalu, consulted officials believe that introducing a national ID card would contribute to enhancing the quality of voter registration and the electoral roll.

**Campaign financing—referred to as all contributions and expenses, monetary and in-kind, made to and incurred by political parties and candidates for electoral campaigns—remains one of the most opaque types of public-interest data in the Pacific Islands.** While some countries' legal frameworks obligate political parties to report on their annual and/or campaign expenses, such as Solomon Islands,<sup>27</sup> fewer require that these reports be made available to the public. In Fiji, political parties have a legal obligation to report annually on their funds received, including assets and liabilities no later than 30 days prior to an election, but there is no specific requirement to report separately on election campaign revenue and expenditure. The funding information is published in the Official Gazette and the media, at the expense of the party. In contrast, countries like Kiribati have no legal limitations on the amount of money to spend in a campaign, or any requirements to disclose the source of funding. There is, however, some awareness of the risk this poses to the integrity of elections.

<sup>26</sup> PIANZEA members are: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Republic of Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands. Its mandate is: "The participants at the South Pacific Electoral Administrators Conference hereby unanimously and collectively declare that it is indeed our joint commitment to continue and maintain in the Pacific spirit, a close association of Pacific Electoral Administrators with a view to establishing a networking arrangement to facilitate and encourage the free flow of electoral information among member countries and to provide assistance where possible."

<sup>27</sup> The Solomon Islands Political Party Integrity Act does not require political parties, candidates, or the Political Parties Commission to whom they report, to publish any information about political parties or candidates' finances. The Political Party Integrity Standards, which were issued by the Political Parties Commission pursuant to Section 72 of the Political Parties Integrity Act, state that political parties and its candidates must not conceal assets, benefits, contributions, or donations, including loans. However, it does not require parties or candidates to publicly reveal such information.



The 2019 General Elections in Solomon Islands were largely peaceful, although observers noted that some shortcomings present in the previous electoral cycles were still present. That included the influence of constituency development funding in electoral politics, cross border voting, and vote buying. Tension loomed in the community before the last elections which fueled politically-motivated riots.<sup>28</sup> At the time, a number of elections officials and analysts across the region expressed concerns that unregulated and untransparent campaign finance not only perpetuates a clientelist relation between voters and candidates, but opens the door to interference from foreign companies and countries whose funding for certain candidates may alter election results and the sovereign voice of voting citizens. Perceptions of foreign powers meddling in elections can lead voters to reject the outcome of elections whereby resentment can swiftly turn into social unrest jeopardizing a country's political stability and social cohesion.

**Figure 4: While some websites are structured to provide key election data, they are outdated. For illustration, the page of the Office of the Electoral Commission, Samoa**

ELECTION RESULTS		ABOUT US	
FAIGA PALOTA AOA		PALOTA AOA 2001	
BY-ELECTIONS		FAIGA PALOTA AOA 2006	
		FAIGA PALOTA AOA 2011	

Acknowledging the need to strengthen the legal framework to improve electoral integrity, EMBs such as Vanuatu have proposed a way forward to better regulate campaign finance: "Vanuatu is one of the few countries in the world without any provisions to regulate campaign financing. Monitoring and control of money in elections has become a major feature around the world to maintain the integrity and credibility of the electoral process. It is thus advised to introduce provisions in the legal and regulatory framework for basic campaign financing disclosure, improving oversight of campaign contributions (contributions and donations) and expenditures in order to provide for greater transparency and accountability."<sup>29</sup>

**The level of data openness on submitted electoral complaints, disputes, and their resolution varies greatly among Pacific Island countries.** A positive example is Vanuatu, where the judiciary operates an online database of all cases, including election petitions and their resolutions. The platform<sup>30</sup> is searchable by case name or number. In Tuvalu, the Attorney General receives petitions and complaints about the electoral process, and the High Court adjudicates. Petitions are usually solved amicably, especially those that stem from misunderstandings, as the country's governance system "mingles" law and cultural ways to settle disputes outside the court. However, more serious petitions get referred to the court. Currently, there are a number of petitions still waiting to be heard, as the High Court has not been sitting since the beginning of the pandemic, according to elections stakeholders. While formal, official transpar-

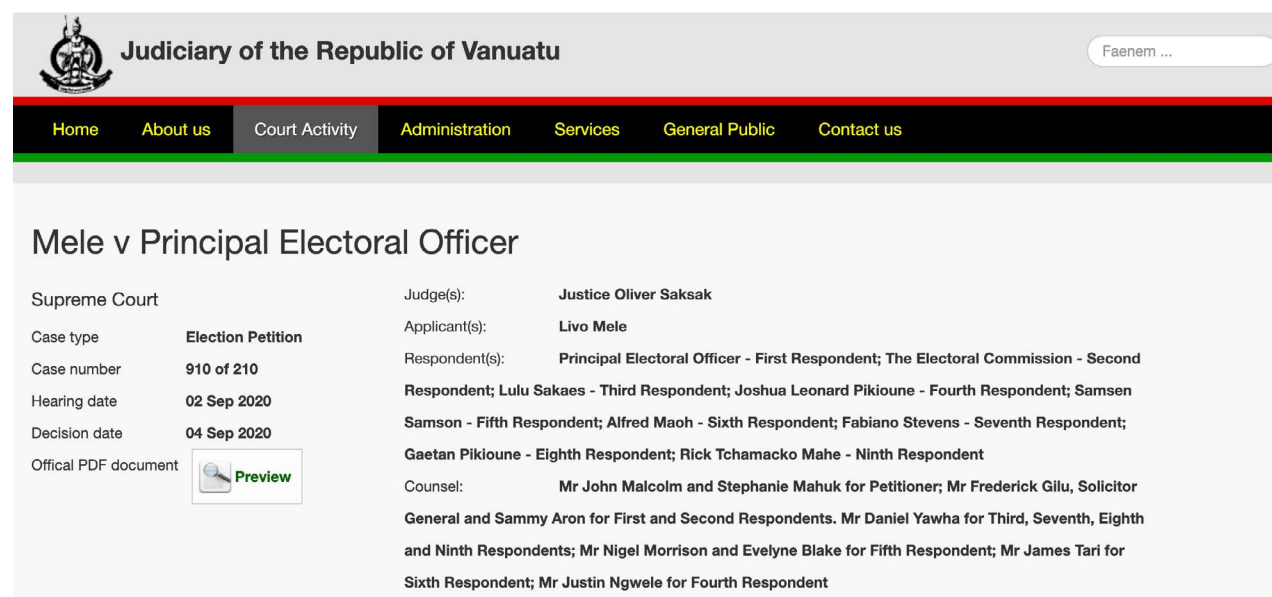
<sup>28</sup> Jon Fraenkel, The politics of riots in the Solomon Islands, East Asia Forum, April 30, 2019, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/04/30/the-politics-of-riots-in-the-solomon-islands/>. See also Grant Wyeth, Riots in the Solomon Islands Greet Returned Prime Minister, The Diplomat, May 1, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/riots-in-the-solomon-islands-greet-returned-prime-minister/>.

<sup>29</sup> Republic of Vanuatu, 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Judiciary of the Republic of Vanuatu, "Judgments - Supreme Court," <https://courts.gov.vu/bi/court-activity/judgments/supreme-court?start=250>.

ency in these areas is lacking, there is also limited public demand for opening up this data to the general public and allowing for an evaluation of the integrity of the process. In Vanuatu, “no penalties are established for committing electoral offences leaving little ‘teeth’ to the authorities to enforce their mandate in that regard.”<sup>31</sup> Elections officials across the region have also recognized the prohibitive cost of access to justice and information related to electoral disputes due to fees and logistics costs.

**Figure 5: Online database of court cases and decisions, Judiciary of the Republic of Vanuatu**



The screenshot displays the official website of the Judiciary of the Republic of Vanuatu. The header features the national emblem and the text 'Judiciary of the Republic of Vanuatu' alongside a search bar containing 'Faenem ...'. A navigation menu includes links for Home, About us, Court Activity, Administration, Services, General Public, and Contact us. The main content area is titled 'Mele v Principal Electoral Officer' and provides detailed case information:

- Supreme Court**
- Case type:** Election Petition
- Case number:** 910 of 210
- Hearing date:** 02 Sep 2020
- Decision date:** 04 Sep 2020
- Official PDF document:** A 'Preview' button is available next to a document icon.
- Judge(s):** Justice Oliver Saksak
- Applicant(s):** Livo Mele
- Respondent(s):** Principal Electoral Officer - First Respondent; The Electoral Commission - Second Respondent; Lulu Sakaes - Third Respondent; Joshua Leonard Pikioune - Fourth Respondent; Samsen Samson - Fifth Respondent; Alfred Maoh - Sixth Respondent; Fabiano Stevens - Seventh Respondent; Gaetan Pikioune - Eighth Respondent; Rick Tchamacko Mahe - Ninth Respondent
- Counsel:** Mr John Malcolm and Stephanie Mahuk for Petitioner; Mr Frederick Gilu, Solicitor General and Sammy Aron for First and Second Respondents. Mr Daniel Yawha for Third, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Respondents; Mr Nigel Morrison and Evelyne Blake for Fifth Respondent; Mr James Tari for Sixth Respondent; Mr Justin Ngwele for Fourth Respondent

**Political parties in the Pacific Islands need significant effort to become vehicles of genuine political representation, articulate sound public policy options, and promote fair political competition in a transparent manner.** Given structural, legal, and historical issues, political parties in the Pacific Islands face considerable obstacles in developing and publishing cohesive political programs and election platforms. Globally, political parties offer citizens a choice in governance by competing in elections and, while in opposition, they can hold governments accountable. Coherent and effective parties remain essential to overall democratic functioning; however, many political parties around the world are increasingly criticized for a lack of accountability, efficiency, and inclusiveness. In the Pacific Islands, globally shared shortcomings of political parties meet specific challenges rooted in the unique history of the region. The development of systems of governance in the region was broadly influenced by colonial models, but distinct identity markers—such as linguistic, ethnographic, and geographic variations, as well as leadership cultures—remain key factors that coagulate political interests and groupings in the Pacific Islands.

Often, no one party gains power alone, and governments are formed as a result of lengthy and sometimes tense negotiations to form post-election coalitions. Therefore, political parties often change policy

<sup>31</sup> Republic of Vanuatu, 2020.

stands, reflecting constantly shifting political alliances, which leads to public dissatisfaction with the political system. It is also common for members of a legislature to change their political party during their time in office, to vote according to the special interests of their electorate, or for governing coalitions to break down and cause political instability. Differences between a country's provinces or regions can also shape specific political cultures that manifest distinctively—sometimes even in opposition with each other—and can escalate around national elections or in the legislature. For instance, in coastal PNG, clan leaders are “born into leadership roles,” while in the Highlands the *bigman* culture model is prevalent. *Big Men* are defined as self-made leaders who achieve their status by amassing wealth and influence.<sup>32</sup> This source of legitimacy contributes to increasingly opaque, transactional, and leader-centered political systems, rather than open and transparent competitions focused on public policy alternatives.

In most Pacific Island Countries, including PNG, Kiribati, and Solomon Islands, political parties remain loose groupings rather than disciplined blocks. As shifting allegiances are common, parties have little or no internal structures and fluid membership. There are no formal political parties in FSM and Tuvalu; in Palau, parties may establish, but candidates for national elections run as individuals, not through political parties, although political parties may be established and nominate candidates for races; and in Kiribati, the Ministry of Justice is currently working on the regulations for political party registration. Political parties and coalitions across the region seldom operate secure and functioning websites, and very few make their manifestos<sup>33</sup> and election platforms available online. This practice is not conducive to effective political process monitoring, as citizens, CSOs, and the media cannot monitor campaign promises and measure the candidates' and parties' performance against their election platforms. Recognizing a need for political parties to put more effort into articulating distinct public policy options, the Vanuatu Election Commission, in its 2020 election report, stated that parties need to work hard in order to build their membership platform so that people vote on their policies.<sup>34</sup>

In line with OEDI principles, the Fijian Elections Office maintains a register of political parties with granular and comprehensive data about each political party, including the name and symbol of the party, acronym, name of registered officer, address of head office, website (if available), names of office holders, date of registration, number of seats in parliament, and the party constitution<sup>35</sup> However, the register does not include data on political parties that have been rejected or the reasons for rejection. Similarly, the PNG Integrity of Political Parties Commission maintains a register of political parties and leaders, and even publishes monthly updates on party membership of parliamentarians to reflect shifting allegiances<sup>36</sup>

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32 Meetings with PNG officials. See also Grant Walton and David Jackson, *Reciprocity networks, service delivery, and corruption: The Wantok System in Papua New Guinea*, <https://www.u4.no/publications/reciprocity-networks-service-delivery-and-corruption-the-wantok-system-in-papua-new-guinea.pdf>

33 A good example is the Fiji Labor Party. For more information, see Fiji Labor Party, *Labor: Putting People First Manifesto 2018*, <http://www.flp.org.fj/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-manifestio-booklet-A4.pdf>.

34 Republic of Vanuatu, 2020.

35 Fiji Elections Office, “Political Parties Register,” <https://www.feo.org.fj/political-parties-register/>.

36 Integrity of Political Parties & Candidates Commission Papua New Guinea, “Political Parties,” <http://www.ippcc.gov.pg/index.php/political-parties>.

In Vanuatu, following current legislation and common practice, political parties are registered as a voluntary act with the Vanuatu Financial Services Commission (VFSC). However, a VFSC website<sup>37</sup> search for registered parties—by individual names or as a list—did not yield any results. The Solomon Islands Office of the Registrar of Political Parties has four staff members and does not currently have a website. A new Political Party Registrar was appointed at the end of 2020. Following a series of field visits to meet political parties, the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties drafted a Strategic Plan for 2021-2026, which recognizes the need to develop a register of political parties, as required by law.<sup>38</sup> The law provisions that “the Register shall be available for inspection by the public at places and times prescribed in the regulations, subject to the payment of the prescribed fee,”<sup>39</sup> which does not meet the permanency, free online availability, and non-discriminatory OEDI principles.

**Limited voter education drives low demand for election transparency and accountability. Additionally, it creates an environment propitious for misinformation.** There is almost unanimous recognition by EMBs and civil society alike that voter education needs to be improved in order to strengthen the quality of electoral processes across the region. Literacy varies significantly among countries, from 99% in Samoa and 65% in PNG,<sup>40</sup> and internal country discrepancies are even steeper, influencing the way information, including election-related data, is consumed. Interviewees pointed at limited financial and human resources and an overall lacking state capacity as the main barriers to encouraging more efficient voter outreach and stimulating public demand for open data. Voters living on outer islands and in the difficult-to-reach communities are further left behind in direct voter outreach efforts. Reaching voters online and through the mass media, especially radio, for voter education and countering misinformation is seen as essential; however, this seems to be more of a distant goal rather than part of concrete, actionable plans for many EMBs, especially between elections.

Elections officials and CSOs have also expressed frustration with the “mindset” of voters who may expect material benefits for supporting a certain candidate. For instance, in PNG the “campaign haus” is a place where candidates and their supporters can meet and discuss, but the reputation of these places is sometimes questioned, as food and alcoholic drinks are served abundantly. In Kiribati, PNG, and Solomon Islands, there are rumors that political parties bribed voters with solar panels and other goods prior to the last general elections. Despite being against the law, vote buying is seen as a persistent issue in Kiribati, PNG, and Solomon Islands. Ahead of the 2022 general elections, the Fijian Electoral Office (FEO) is setting up a Resource Centre that is anticipated to include previous election data and electoral research, to provide access to historic information to citizens, media, and analysts. Additionally, as part of its public outreach strategy, the FEO has developed a virtual training platform called *eVuli*. In August 2021, the FEO called on social science teachers to register and complete an online training-of-trainers elections course, hosted entirely on the online platform.

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37 Vanuatu Financial Services Commission, <https://www.vfsc.vu/>.

38 Solomon Islands Political Parties Integrity Act, 2014.

39 Solomon Islands Political Parties Integrity Act, 2014, Art. 15.

40 Lauren Dickey et al., *Mapping the Information Environment in the Pacific Island Countries: Disruptors, Deficits, and Decisions*, CNA, December 2019, [https://www.cna.org/CNA\\_files/PDF/IRM-2019-U-019755-Final.pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/IRM-2019-U-019755-Final.pdf).

In conclusion, without public access to data on all key phases of the electoral process, it becomes difficult to assess election integrity and build confidence in the democratic process. Risks associated to opaque electoral processes include:

- **Progressive deterioration of the rule of law.** Unless citizens are assured that they can participate in electoral processes free from the harms of violence, intimidation, and threat of political retribution, they will continue to disengage from the political process. Lacking public data about the types and extent of electoral and post-electoral<sup>41</sup> violence, as well as insufficient transparency about how electoral disputes are handled, may lead to a perception of impunity of perpetrators and perpetuate wrongdoing. Additionally, money politics can perpetuate corruption, patronage networks, and illegitimate use of state resources to the detriment of non-affiliated citizens. Unless leaders can demonstrate that equity and impartiality lead to improved outcomes, citizens will continue to support the patronage relations that underpin *bigman* politics because it is the only way to ensure they benefit from state resources. Finally, the perception of funding of political campaigns and candidates from foreign sources or organized crime can cast doubt about where the interests of political leaders lie, once elected. As the rule of law deteriorates, internal social tension and instability can reemerge in countries with a history of conflict.
- **Growing disinformation that becomes a key catalyst in undermining election credibility.** In countless countries, rumors take root in a vacuum of reliable or easily referable data. This is often the case around issues like voter registration statistics, quality of the voters list, or election results. In the absence of accurate, timely data, political polarization and a lack of confidence in EMBs can lead some to violently reject the outcome of elections. Cyberattacks on EMBs, civil society organizations, and other election stakeholders can make personal data and confidential information vulnerable to malign forces who then can falsify and manipulate it to disrupt election management or observation.
- **Increased vulnerability to democratic backsliding.** In the absence of strong commitments to open and transparent government, democratic institutions and processes remain challenged both in states in formation—such as PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, where the consciousness of nationhood is nascent—and in countries that analysts describe as “strong states but weak democracies.”<sup>42</sup> Unclear legal frameworks, a lack of administrative impartiality, and limited space for domestic election observation can affect citizens' effective political participation and public oversight of the integrity of elections. Similarly, unless electoral competitors are assured that they benefit from a level playing field, including registration, campaigning, and effective remedies for violations of their political rights, they may choose not to participate. This can lead to authoritarian practices and domination by one political group and challenge democratic resilience.

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<sup>41</sup> “Riots in the Solomon Islands Greet Returned Prime Minister,” *The Diplomat*, May 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/riots-in-the-solomon-islands-greet-returned-prime-minister/>.

<sup>42</sup> Lowy Institute, *Instability in the Pacific Islands: A Status Report*, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/instability-pacific-islands-status-report>.

# IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

More open and better electoral data builds public confidence in the electoral process, distributes information equally to different electoral stakeholders, enhances voter education, and improves citizens' trust in the government. In the context of rampant misinformation, more transparent electoral data can also be an effective inoculation for EMBs and governments.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENTS, LAWMAKERS, AND THE JUDICIARY

- Follow through international and regional commitments to transparency and accountability by creating coherent legal frameworks on campaign regulations and disclosure requirements.
- Increase transparency of reported breaches of electoral security, including the timelines and outcomes of police investigations. Responsible authorities should also improve access to public-interest information on the process and timelines for accepting petitions and solving electoral disputes.
- Protect the public-interest election data space by implementing access to information protocols at all levels of government.
- Allocate adequate resources to EMBs to make key data available to elections stakeholders.
- Foster an environment that proactively encourages independent election observation throughout the electoral cycle.

### IV.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMBS

- Improve the quality of data that EMBs provide to make it more *usable* and *practical*. Improve internal data collection practices, for instance better streamlining local-to-national data collection systems, or identify internal weaknesses to data quality that can then be amended and identify data that could easily be made more accessible to the public.
- Maintain an online repository of historic data readily and permanently available. This would not only improve transparency, but will also reduce the need of dedicated staff to manage and respond to offline, in-person information requests.

- Encourage political parties to publish their electoral platforms to allow citizens and other stakeholders to track how well the party or candidate delivers on campaign promises once elected.
- Create websites that are safe, functional, and do not require high-maintenance skills or costs. Structure websites in line with OEDI principles to ensure a feasible avenue for citizens, political parties, CSOs, media, and other stakeholders to access and analyze key election data safely and continuously. Retrofitting data is understandably difficult and can require time and skills. However, in consulting with other elections stakeholders and building on renewed public interest in electoral reforms, EMBs can identify areas that are key to election integrity, such as political party registration, voter education, electoral disputes, and electoral boundaries, to create a permanent electronic archive available to election observers, political parties, and other stakeholders who may want to conduct research that spans multiple electoral cycles.

### **IV.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES**

- Align political will with public interest by moving toward more policy-driven approaches that utilize open communication with voters and refrain from opaque funding, negotiations, and decision making.
- Publish party manifestos and electoral platforms to support voters in making decisions based on ideas that propose solutions to their local and national priorities. Conduct ample voter education campaigns.
- Commit to campaign finance transparency by publishing detailed and complete funding and expenditure information.

### **IV.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITIZEN OBSERVERS AND DOMESTIC ELECTION MONITORING GROUPS**

- Foster a culture of open data. Citizens and civic groups can work with EMBs and other government bodies to promote and expand the availability of official electoral information and ensure datasets are available in the most useful formats. Increasing a demand for—and expectations of—more and higher quality open data can improve transparency throughout government and help socialize the public about how to interpret and assess official data. In addition, by using electoral data that originates from official sources, civic actors, and voters can operate with the same assumptions and facts as stakeholders and institutions in the process.
- Seek to use open election data for election observation. Open election data offers monitoring organizations data sets that they do not have to physically collect through active observation. While collecting and analyzing open data may take some staff time, and in some cases, data analysis software, it



typically does not require the large-scale training and deployment of observers, thus minimizing the number of resources needed for the effort. Groups with resource or funding limitations can use open election data to participate in aspects of the electoral process they otherwise may not address. Open election data is also a cost-efficient way to bolster more traditional observation efforts by adding additional layers of analysis and sophistication. In addition, using data provided by government bodies creates an accountability link to those institutions and protects monitoring groups from accusations of anecdotal or inaccurate information.

- Use open data to promote greater engagement throughout the electoral cycle. Open election data is generated throughout the electoral cycle, which means that groups can be active early in the electoral process. Even if formal observer recruitment, training, and deployment is unlikely to occur until closer to election day, core staff can be collecting and monitoring open election data months and even years in advance. Providing such analysis can help establish or boost an observer group's reputation as a credible voice citizens can turn to for information.
- Use open election data to support other election observation exercises. Open election data can support broad citizen monitoring objectives by supplementing and expanding upon traditional observation findings, and ensuring open election data is understood in a credible and impartial way. Election observation activities, particularly those that involve the training and deployment of observers, require information and planning. Some open election data, such as polling station lists or voter registration information, can be critical to these exercises. By obtaining this information—and conducting thorough analysis of any trends or deficiencies within the data—as early as possible, citizen election monitors will be better positioned to develop deployment plans and observation forms in a timely fashion. In addition, information like polling station-level and precinct-level data can be built into election day reporting databases early, thereby improving analysis and easing staff workloads closer to election day.

## **IV.5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND REGIONAL BODIES**

- Regional and bilateral partnerships can be conducive to consolidating democratic practices including strengthening the right to information of public interest. Donor countries, especially OGP members, should put transparency and integrity at the heart of all technical assistance programs and create verification mechanisms to assess follow through.
- To address the states' limited financial and technical resources, a regional body could serve as a sustainable repository of some public election data.
- Development partners could support PICs to create and maintain EMBs websites, prioritizing safety and functionality in a multitude of languages, over design.



# APPENDIX. OEDI KEY CATEGORIES

CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTION OF SUB-CATEGORIES	PRIMARY UNIT OF ANALYSIS	DATA LEVEL
<b>ELECTORAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK</b>	Election Law	The election law is published in full, including appendices.	Law	National
	Other Election-related Laws	Legislation providing the "rules of the game" for all political parties and candidates running for office, including registration, restrictions to campaign activities and finance including campaign "black-out" days, bans on donations from certain sources and use of state resources, procedures for the filing of electoral complaints, etc.	Law	National
<b>ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODY (EMB) AND ADMINISTRATION</b>	Location (Full Address)	The full address of the electoral commission; it may include a link to Google Maps and a functional website.	Full address	Institutional, National
	Specific Contact Information	Contact information of departments within the EMB, including the name of the department, the name of a point of contact within the department, a phone number, and email address. Detailed information can facilitate the public's direct access to relevant departments for specific enquiries.	Name of department, name of point of contact for the department, position, phone number, email address	Institutional, National
	EMB Mandate	Description of the mandate of the EMB. It may include functions of its internal departments and subordinate units and organizational charts indicating the hierarchal structures and chain of command.	Description of functions	Institutional, National
	List of Electoral Commissioners, Senior Management and Bios	Detailed information about the EMB commissioners and senior management officials including names, job positions, and resumes.	Name and bio	Institutional, National

CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTION OF SUB-CATEGORIES	PRIMARY UNIT OF ANALYSIS	DATA LEVEL
<b>ELECTION MANAGEMENT PROCESSES</b>	Meeting Minutes	Official meetings of the decision-making structures are documented and meeting minutes are easily accessible on the EMB website. Access to meeting minutes enhances the transparency and accountability of the EMB to stakeholders and citizens.	Meeting minutes	Institutional, National
	Decisions and Directives	A repository of all decisions, regulations, and instructions adopted by the EMB board and management.	Decision	Institutional, National
	Procurement	Data about procurement processes, such as the decision-making procedure and the timeline to submit bids and file grievances; tender documents; names of all vendors and bid amounts, as well as the name of the company that received the contract and the contract amount.	Decision	Institutional, National
	Budget	The EMB budget is shared publicly. The budget allocations are published at a granular level, broken down into specific line items, not lumped up in categories.	Budget line item	Institutional, National
	Expenditures	All expenditures of the EMB are shared publicly. How money is actually spent is shared at a granular level for transparency and accountability.	Spending line item	Institutional, National
	Public Recruitment Data	Information about recruitment processes of elections officials, including job descriptions.	Job descriptions	Institutional, National
	Training Materials	The EMB publishes the polling station manuals designed for election officials.	Polling center training manual	Institutional, National
	Election Observation Organizations Registered	The names of all domestic and international organizations registered or accredited to monitor elections. Ideally, a deeper disaggregation of data is publicly available. It may include additional detail about groups who requested, were rejected, or received accreditation, as well as the total numbers of observers accredited per group. Information about media entities that sought, received, or were rejected for accreditation is also made available. Election observation reports from accredited observer groups could be posted on the EMB's website.	Name of organization	Institutional, National

CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTION OF SUB-CATEGORIES	PRIMARY UNIT OF ANALYSIS	DATA LEVEL
<b>ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES (DISTRICTS)</b>	Electoral Boundary Names and Hierarchy	Availability of information detailing names, numbers, and hierarchy of tiers of administration (e.g., polling precinct, electoral district/constituency).	List of all constituencies and hierarchy	National, Constituency, Lowest level of administrative units
	Shapes/Map Files	Downloadable maps showing the delimitation of electoral districts to the lowest tier of administration.	Constituency map	National, Constituency, Lowest level of administrative units
<b>ELECTORAL SECURITY</b>	Reported Incidents	Repository of incidents of election-related violence and/or attacks on electoral infrastructure. Incidents can range from physical violence to security of election materials to intimidation of officials to hacking or manipulation of election technology.	Incident report	Individual incident
	Reported Incident Outcomes	A repository of how reported security incidents have been addressed in the first instance, including dismissed, resolved, and referred to other institutions. Election security institutions should be effective, transparent, and unbiased. Election stakeholders should be able to evaluate the responsiveness and impartiality of security institutions during the election period.	Report of outcome	Individual incident
<b>POLITICAL PARTY REGISTRATION</b>	Parties Registered	Names of political parties that have fulfilled all the legal requirements and were registered by the EMB or another responsible entity, e.g., the register of political parties.	Name of party	National
	Parties Rejected	Names of political parties that were denied registration. In more advanced systems the authority may specify the reasons for refusing registration to these entities so that stakeholders and the public can assess whether the rules are applied fairly to all who apply for registration.	Name of party	National
	Party Leadership or Membership	List of party leaders or members that is required for political party registration.	Name of individual	National

CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTION OF SUB-CATEGORIES	PRIMARY UNIT OF ANALYSIS	DATA LEVEL
<b>BALLOT QUALIFICATION</b>	Contestants Accepted	Detailed list includes the candidates' names and party affiliations. Publishing only the total number of candidates does not amount to being granular.	Name of candidate and political affiliation	Constituency, National
	Contestants Rejected and Reasons	Detailed list includes the names of contestants who were denied permission to contest in elections, their political affiliation, and the justification of their rejection to allow the public to explore whether the rules were applied correctly and without discrimination.	Name of candidate and political affiliation	Constituency, National
<b>ELECTION CAMPAIGNS</b>	Media Allocation	The distribution of the public broadcast air-time or print media coverage given to political parties and candidates during the campaign period. Relevant data includes information relating to the decision-making process (the system used for the allotment, such as a lottery) and outcomes (i.e., who has which slots).	Airtime/party or candidate	National
<b>CAMPAIGN FINANCE</b>	Party Campaign Funding	Data covers all revenue from public and private campaign financing, including donations and in-kind support. Granularity implies itemized information for each donation, contribution, or allocation from the public budget; disclosure data should include the identity of donors and the dates, amounts, and types of contributions.	Budget line item (individual donation or income)	Political Party
	Party Campaign Spending	Data covers all campaign expenditures. The public should be able to evaluate this data against spending limits and rules for reporting and disclosing contestants' financial information. Granularity implies itemized information for each expenditure.	Expense line item in spending report	Political Party
	Candidate Campaign Funding	Data covers all revenue from public and private campaign financing, including donations and in-kind support. Granularity implies itemized information for each donation, contribution, or allocation from the public budget; disclosure data should include the identity of donors and the dates, amounts, and types of contributions.	Budget line item (individual donation or income)	Candidate
	Candidate Campaign Spending	Data covers all campaign expenditures. The public should be able to evaluate this data against spending limits and rules for reporting and disclosing contestants' financial information. Granularity implies itemized information for each expenditure.	Expense line item in spending report	Candidate
	Political Party Annual Accounts	The annual accounts for the political party in specific line details for both expenditure and donations. Robust analysis of campaign funding and spending reports and political party annual accounts can contribute to improved accountability of political party finance.	Itemised income and expenses	Political party

CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTION OF SUB-CATEGORIES	PRIMARY UNIT OF ANALYSIS	DATA LEVEL
<b>VOTER REGISTRATION</b>	Registration Center Locations	The geo-location data and physical addresses of voter registration centers. A list containing the names of the schools or other buildings serving as registration centers, without the full physical address, does not meet the granularity principle.	Registration center full address	Individual registration center
<b>VOTER LIST</b>	Registration Lookup	Automated platform where registered voters can check their details by ID number, first name and last name. The data is considered granular when an individual voter can search and find information relevant to themselves. To preserve the privacy of the user details, many EMBs allow voters to search using unique identifying information such as national ID or voter card numbers.	Individual voter	Individual voter
<b>VOTER EDUCATION</b>	Electoral Calendar	The electoral calendar has to be specific and include details of all relevant electoral dates and milestones of the electoral process.	Specific electoral process dates	National
	Voting Process Information	To increase voter awareness, information about the voting process includes a detailed description of the process from when the voter walks into the polling station to voter identification, balloting, voting, collecting ID card, and leaving the station.	Detailed description of voting steps	National
	Electoral Platforms	Information on political parties' and independent candidates' proposed policies and programs, which may include budget figures. This allows citizens and other stakeholders to track how well the party or candidate delivers on campaign promises once elected.	Electoral platform by party or independent candidate	Constituency, National
<b>POLLING STATIONS</b>	Location	A list of polling stations including the address of each station. Just the names of stations does not suffice. EMBs may facilitate voters' access by providing geo locations for online map searching options.	Polling station address	Polling station
	Polling Station Workers	A list of all poll workers which includes their names and positions. This is considered public data and allows the public to see the broader make-up of polling staff (e.g., political or tribal affiliation, age, gender, etc.)	Pollins station workers' names	Polling station

CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTION OF SUB-CATEGORIES	PRIMARY UNIT OF ANALYSIS	DATA LEVEL
<b>ELECTION RESULTS (OFFICIAL, FINAL)</b>	Voters Registered	The total number of registered voters. To maximize transparency, results should be published at each stage where they are compiled and scrutinized (e.g., polling station, ward, district, regional/provincial and national results tabulation centers).	Total number of voters	Polling station, Constituency, National
	Voters that Participated	The total number of registered voters that turned out to vote on election day. To maximize transparency, results should be published at each stage where they are compiled and scrutinized (e.g., polling station, ward, district, regional/provincial and national results tabulation centers).	Total number of voters	Polling station, Constituency, National
	Ballots Spoiled	The total number of ballots damaged before being cast. To maximize transparency, results should be published at each stage where they are compiled and scrutinized (e.g., polling station, ward, district, regional/provincial and national results tabulation centers).	Total number of ballots	Polling station, Constituency, National
	Invalid/Blank Votes	The total number of cast ballots that are either left blank, i.e., the ballot paper contains no markings whatsoever, the intention of the voter is not clearly discernible from the ballot paper, the ballot contains additional, surplus marks by the voter, or the ballot paper is intentionally spoiled by the voter. To maximize transparency, results should be published at each stage where they are compiled and scrutinized (e.g., polling station, ward, district, regional/provincial and national results tabulation centers).	Total number of ballots	Polling station, Constituency, National
	Votes Challenged and/or Contested	The total number of cast ballots for which there is a dispute, e.g., the eligibility of a voter is challenged, the security marks on the ballot are missing or unclear, the voter's intention cannot be determined, etc. To maximize transparency, results should be published at each stage where they are compiled and scrutinized (e.g., polling station, ward, district, regional/provincial and national results tabulation centers).	Total number of ballots	Polling station, Constituency, National
	Valid Votes for Each Contestant	The total votes cast for each candidate contesting in an election. To maximize transparency, results should be published at each stage where they are compiled and scrutinized (e.g., polling station, ward, district, regional/provincial and national results tabulation centers).	Total number of votes by candidate and party	Polling station, Constituency, National

CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTION OF SUB-CATEGORIES	PRIMARY UNIT OF ANALYSIS	DATA LEVEL
<b>ELECTORAL COMPLAINTS, DISPUTES AND RESOLUTIONS</b>	Complaints Submitted	A list of all election-related petitions lodged with the dispute and resolution body (e.g., EMB or the justice system).	Complaint case	National
	Complaints Resolved	The list of all election-related petitions that have been resolved and their resolutions.	Complaint resolution	National

