

EVALUATION BRIEF

EVALUATION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (PACICTA) FACILITY FOR PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES: FINAL REPORT

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION

- The evaluation found the PacificTA to be highly relevant. It is responding to a clear need in many PICs where local government institutions continue to face capacity gaps .
- Those who received assistance were positive about the technical advice and solutions provided.
- Technical advisors reported involvement to be enriching and valuable.
- Uptake of the Facility was lower than expected, leading to underspend. Low awareness and understanding of the Facility appears to be key reasons for this.
- PacificTA has contributed to strengthening capacity in pockets of local government which could be expanded.



ABOUT THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATION

Established in June 2012, the PacificTA provides technical support to local government in Pacific Island countries (PICs) in a variety of service provision areas. The PacificTA was designed to complement the bilateral support provided under the New Zealand Aid Programme to PICs. Eleven countries are eligible, including the Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Samoa, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Tokelau and Kiribati. Fiji became eligible in 2015.

This is a mid-phase review of the PacificTA (2012-2017) providing results to date and informing future decision-making. Objectives include evaluating the design, implementation and resource use of PacificTA and providing strategic learnings for future design and support. The evaluation was mixed-method using document sources, qualitative interviews and group discussions/focus groups and an online survey. The evaluation covered June 2012 to December 2015 focusing on PICs eligible for PacificTA.

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS WERE MADE?

The evaluation recommended retaining flexibility of the PacificTA design and improving PacificTA effectiveness by aligning with NZ Aid Programme priorities and PIC strategic development plans and reflecting these in a results framework.

Other recommendations include developing a communications strategy for the PacificTA and investing in a simple mechanism to share results and lessons with stakeholders. Prioritise efforts to expand PacificTA to fully spend the allocated budget between now and 31 May 2017, and improve efficiency and accountability

OUR RESPONSE

This evaluation is timely and provides valuable insights that can usefully inform the next stage of this Activity. The evaluation also highlighted the benefits of connecting New Zealand expertise with Pacific organisations seeking help in local government service provision.

DETAILS ABOUT THE EVALUATION

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[If you would like more information, read the full report by clicking on this link](#)

FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION

WHAT HAS WORKED WELL?

The PacificTA was highly relevant and responded to a clear need in Pacific local government organisations. LGNZ's management was also considered relevant, given its connections to the New Zealand local government community and ability to source the most appropriate technical advice and expertise.

There was praise for the LGNZ PacificTA manager in the delivery of effective technical assistance via strong connections with New Zealand local government.

Stakeholders felt that PacificTA advisors had the necessary expertise and skills. An online survey of stakeholders found technical assistance to be very or somewhat effective.

Most technical assignments met immediate objectives, but longer-term change was only evident in some assignments. Examples of improved planning and management were identified in several assignments, but were often most evident only where there were highly competent PIC counterparts.

Sustainability is difficult to judge in short time-frames. Development of on-going supportive mentoring relationships between technical advisors and PIC councils has enhanced the sustainability in some cases.

Those directly involved valued PacificTA highly, particularly because of its practicality. Indirect stakeholders in PICs and MFAT at Post also value the PacificTA, but also reported its value could be enhanced via better coordination and strategic delivery.

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE MADE?

Requests for technical support were responded to on a case-by-case basis with no systematic scoping of the scale of need in specific areas across eligible PICs. Such scoping would increase relevance, as would mapping PacificTA's 'offer' against other bilateral and multilateral support. It is important to note, however, the evolving nature of the Activity over 2012-2015 and that PacificTA managers did not initially know the scope of demand.

The Activity was underspent representing part of overall PacificTA technical assistance delivery. This might be partly due to awareness of the PacificTA being low beyond stakeholders directly involved in technical assignments. A further contributing factor appears to be communication and publication mechanisms having only been partially effective.

Project processes and management systems could be stronger. Technical assistance advisors also expressed a desire for more robust communication and support mechanisms. Some of the challenges technical advisors described reflect some weaker areas of management and administration processes.

IMAGE:

Blair King, Chief Executive of the Tararua District Council shaking hands with Peter Sakita, who at the time, was Town Clark of Luganville Municipal Council.

Source: Local Government New Zealand

EVALUATION INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE FROM THE MFAT WEBSITE: WWW.MFAT.GOV.T.NZ

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