

REGIONAL INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

Please complete each section below.

1. Contact Details

Please provide the following contact details:

Name of individual or group submitting initiative	Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA)
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2. Name of Initiative

Good Recordkeeping for Good Governance

3. Background and Rationale

You may consider: What is the issue being addressed by this initiative? What are the causes of this issue? Are there relevant studies that have been carried out to support the issue? Are there links to national, regional or international goals/policies?

Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

GOOD GOVERNANCE and SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Authentic, accurate, accessible records are a vital factor to achieving demonstrable levels of evidence based governance. They provide the necessary foundation for conducting business whether for profit, government administration, international development work, or at community level. Unfortunately recordkeeping regimes in the region are very weak. This constitutes a significant "gap" in Pacific Islands development practice.

On the strategic front poor records hamper efforts to formulate sustainable and effective plans for economic growth and societal development. There is often wastage and re-work resulting from unrealistic goals based on bad or incomplete information. Operationally, performance management and impact assessment become problematic and inconclusive, making reporting to funding agencies and the public difficult. This erodes faith in governance structures and can create long standing ill will, with a further impact on investor and market confidence.

In terms of accountability and transparency, poor records are a double-edged sword which enables fraud or mismanagement to occur, then prevents oversight bodies from establishing the culpability of those involved, and suffocate any efforts to secure the return of diverted resources. This is repeatedly demonstrated by auditor generals who consistently site poor records as a core feature of

inefficient and ineffective administration, and as a factor undermining their audits.

The ability of authorities to guarantee the rights and entitlements of the public is also at stake. Numerous citizens have been prevented from exercising their “inalienable” right to vote through inaccurate electoral records, others are deprived of their pension entitlements, and justice is denied in the courts when yet another evidence file goes “missing.”

There is also a cultural dimension. The loss of recorded culture very often means the total devastating loss of that portion of Pacific heritage. Once a cultural practice stops being observed, the only hope for revitalizing it in the future depends entirely on its recorded form being managed long term. Such recordings are going to disappear at an exponential rate and new recordings occur in an ad-hoc manner, destined for the same fate.

These problems highlighted above are deep and wide spread. Their prevalence in our region is matched by the ubiquity of poor recordkeeping systems in all Pacific jurisdictions. There is a correlation.

The need for good recordkeeping as a critical enabler of good governance has already been raised with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). In 2009 Nauru presented a case for the Forum to formally acknowledge this need with a regional initiative to address it. This was declined as it was felt that existing PIFS mechanisms were adequate to deal with the problems arising from poor recordkeeping. It is not evident that this thinking has brought any improvement.

This year the governments of Tuvalu and Kiribati have also flagged poor records management as a critical area in need of improvement, seeking assistance through the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Fiji Public Service Commission administered South-South Cooperation programme.

These findings are backed up by the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA) which collects information from its members on the status of recordkeeping in their jurisdictions through biennial Country reports. National archival institutions in the Pacific are consistently reporting that improving recordkeeping effectiveness in Pacific Island public sector organisations is their main priority but that they are not resourced to do so. These biennial reports establish the common challenge and PARBICA is eager to investigate ways that we can harness shared strengths and work with PIFS to find a solution.

4. Description

Please provide a brief overview of this initiative. Try to address the following: Does this initiative contribute to a positive change to the region? What makes this initiative of importance to the Pacific region as a whole? Who would implement this initiative? Who are the main beneficiaries? Are regulatory or legislative changes required at the national level to implement this initiative? How would the initiative be funded? Has this initiative been carried out previously? What are the key risks in implementing this initiative? Are there any complementary projects and programmes currently active? What is the proposed timeframe for this initiative? How would the initiative be sustained over the proposed timeframe?

Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

Regional Recordkeeping Strategy

What is required is a regional approach prioritising the role of good recordkeeping in supporting good governance and sustainable development. PARBICA is run by volunteers and has a vibrant network of archivists and records management professionals in the Pacific region to work in partnership with the Good Governance section of the secretariat to draw up a Regional Recordkeeping Strategy (RRS), and provide guidance with securing technical expertise to support its implementation. A preliminary estimation of time/framing would be around 3-5 years. This should be enough to be able to gather enough data to assess targeted milestones and determine trends.

Implementation

We envision that PIC's be responsible for the improvement of their recordkeeping systems in accordance with the RRS which would be driven at the regional level by the secretariat's Good Governance section, with technical input from PARBICA.

Consultations and a benchmarking exercise would confirm current capacity levels and determine the most effective regional groupings for maximum improvement.

In the longer term legislations will need to be reviewed, and jurisdictions will need to establish recordkeeping frameworks to suit their own unique circumstances. These frameworks would guide and compel local authorities to manage their information assets. They should be enforced and reviewed by local archival bodies. This is in accordance with international norms and is usually required

under legislation. Low awareness of the need for good recordkeeping, chronic under resourcing, and the absence of recordkeeping frameworks have curtailed the ability of PIC national archives from operating at this level.

Funding

Funding is always an issue, especially for recordkeeping which is not perceived as "sexy" or eye-catching. Formal identification of recordkeeping as a key development priority on the Forum's agenda would bring more stakeholders to the table and enable the secretariat to obtain buy-in of development partners. Here again, we feel that the secretariat should take the lead in managing how the funds are to be used in accordance with the RRS, also with the input of PARBICA.

Risk

Reform fatigue is a very real factor. Numerous programmes have been launched previously, and many have not delivered as expected. Failure to provide tangible improvement over a five year period may hurt the cause (good recordkeeping), and trust once lost is hard to regain.

There is also a risk of being overly prescriptive. Consultation and collaboration are key to the entire programme. This is also why we recommend that jurisdictions develop their own recordkeeping framework, in accordance with principles established in the RRS. Developing the RRS itself needs to be a very collaborative process or it runs the risk of being just another document taking up shelf space.

Complimentary Programmes

The South-South Cooperation Programme offers assistance in areas raised by small island developing nations, by sourcing training from Fiji. However this is limited in scope (number of countries) and has a very low ceiling in terms of impact, because it is only targeted at short term training. However willing Fiji stakeholders may be able to assist, this cannot drive mid to long term impact because of very low resourcing, and the programme does not have a means to encourage the adoption of recordkeeping frameworks of legislation, policies, and guidelines that can spur agencies to take action on the recordkeeping front, and enable national archives to have a benchmark to monitor these agencies.

5. Alignment to Regional Vision, Values and Objectives

Briefly describe how your initiative supports the vision, values and objectives set out in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. These can be found in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism document or in the submissions guideline document.

Please limit your response to no more than 500 words

Developing and implementing whole of government recordkeeping policies and systems that allow for ready recall of trustworthy records can demonstrate the value of embracing "good governance, the full observance of democratic values, the rule of law, the defence and promotion of all human rights, gender equality, and commitment to just societies".

It serves to meet the objective of "Strengthened governance, legal, financial, and administrative systems;" because accurate, authentic, and accessible records are a fundamental enabler of evidence based decision making and provides the only means to achieve demonstrable levels of accountability and transparency.

6. Additional Information

Please provide or attach additional information in support of this initiative.

Please limit your response to no more than 5 pages.

With assistance from AusAID and NZAid, PARBICA developed a suite of recordkeeping guidelines in the "Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit". These guidelines have been developed by groups of Pacific based experts. It is anticipated that this existing work would provide key input to any initiatives to improve recordkeeping and information management in the Pacific.

PARBICA has been taking action to build recordkeeping capacity in the public sector and the Pacific in general with subsequent training and skill building opportunities whether through hands on regional and international workshops, information sharing through our website (http://www.parbica.org/parbica_home.html), and newsletter or through advice and consultations over email and teleconferencing.