UNDP-USP Pacific Digital Democracy Initiative Project

Fiji Workshop, Hotel Peninsula, Suva, Fiji Islands

28 to 31 October 2024

Executive Summary

Pacific Island Countries (PICs) vary considerably in size, population, economic development, cultural and physical resources. They face common challenges, including the lack of economies of scale, limited economic resources, tyranny of distance, lack of human resource and technical capacities, digital divide, ITS infrastructure and poor connectivity. Digitalisation of government systems would greatly promote more inclusive e-government and e-participation helping efficiently and effectively tackling some of these serious challenges.

In the four target countries of this Project – namely, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands and Tonga – each country has some form of national digital strategy. Under the Pacific Digital Democracy Initiative Project, The University of the South Pacific (USP) conducted the workshops in the Tonga and Solomon Islands and building on which this in Fiji was conducted during 28-31 October 2024. The workshop included eight modules targeting specific aspects of digital governance:

1. Introduction to Digital Government
2. Human-Centered Design for Digital Services
3. Agile and Open Ways of Working
4. Building Trust in Digital Government
5. Data Uses, Opportunities, and Risks
6. Managing Digital Technology Risks.
7. Navigating Barriers to Digital Government
8. Leadership for Digital Government

This report will share discussions from the Fiji workshop and how understanding the modules have developed better understanding amongst the participants and their firms.

S kumar

Professor Sushil Kumar
Project Leader and Director Research
The University of the South Pacific

11 December 2024

Attendance

The table below gives the names, firms and departments different attendees represented.

Name	Firm/ Department	Gender
Rokoroko Draunidalo	Fiji Police Force	Male
Savenana Yauyau	Department of Information Technology & Computing Services	Male
Ronish Naidu	Technical Officer- Ministry of Communications	Male
Krishneel Chand	Digital Government Transformation Office	Male
Sanesh Prakash	Fiji Police Force	Male
Losalini Tirikula	Fiji Police Force	Female
Sisa Tuicoro	Fiji Police Force	Male
Khushant Prakash	Department of Information Technology & Computing Services	Male
Shanil Prakash	Digital Government Transformation Office	Male
Tui Kolikeirasea	Fiji Police Force	Male

Note: Most participants were from the IT department from their respective firms.

Opening of the Workshop

The Opening remarks of the workshop were delivered by representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)and The University of the South Pacific (USP).

Opening remarks by Professor Sushil Kumar, Project Leader, USP.

Professor Kumar, stressed upon the transformative potential of digital technologies in advancing inclusive and transparent democratic processes, their critical role in enhancing governance efficiency, promoting inclusive people centered decision making boosting transparency. He emphasized that the path forward is the strategic planning, robust infrastructure development, and enhancing digital literacy at all levels.

Opening Remarks by Sajib Azad, UNDP

Mr. Azad shared stated that digital tools must be leveraged to strengthen governance and civic engagement ensuring no one is left behind in the rapidly evolving digital world. He highlighted importance of digital transformation for improving government efficiencies, community lives and ensuring equitable access to opportunities, especially for remote and underserved communities. He appreciated the USP team for the way in which project has been carried out and USP conducted the workshops depite the tight time.

Team USP: Dr. Kensen, Dr. Appana and Professor Kumar

The workshop was conducted Dr. Kensen and Dr. Appana. They presented introduction to modlues and explained the activities extremely well on which participants expressed the their and their institutional views.

Report Drafted by: Qaayenaat Ali
Report Reviewed and Endorsed by: Prof. Sushil Kumar, Project Leader, PDDI

Workshop Modules and Group Discussions

Module 1: Introduction to Digitalization

The first module explained the concept of digital government. Digital government refers to using ICT to deliver government services to citizens efficiently. It helped participants to understand basics of digital governance, its advantages and barriers to its implementation. The following are discussions from the participants.

Question: *How would you define digital government? What expectations do you have from digital transformation in government?*

Process to improve service delivery to the public through streamlining services, in reliable, affordable manner that is accessible anywhere anytime.

Question: *Does your organization currently use data for decision-making? What challenges does it face in doing so?*

According to the participants, there are no dedicated guidelines or policies in place to ensure all ministries and private sectors prioritize digitalization.
Also, most process are manual - data is not stored or digitized and the risk of data manipulation increases.

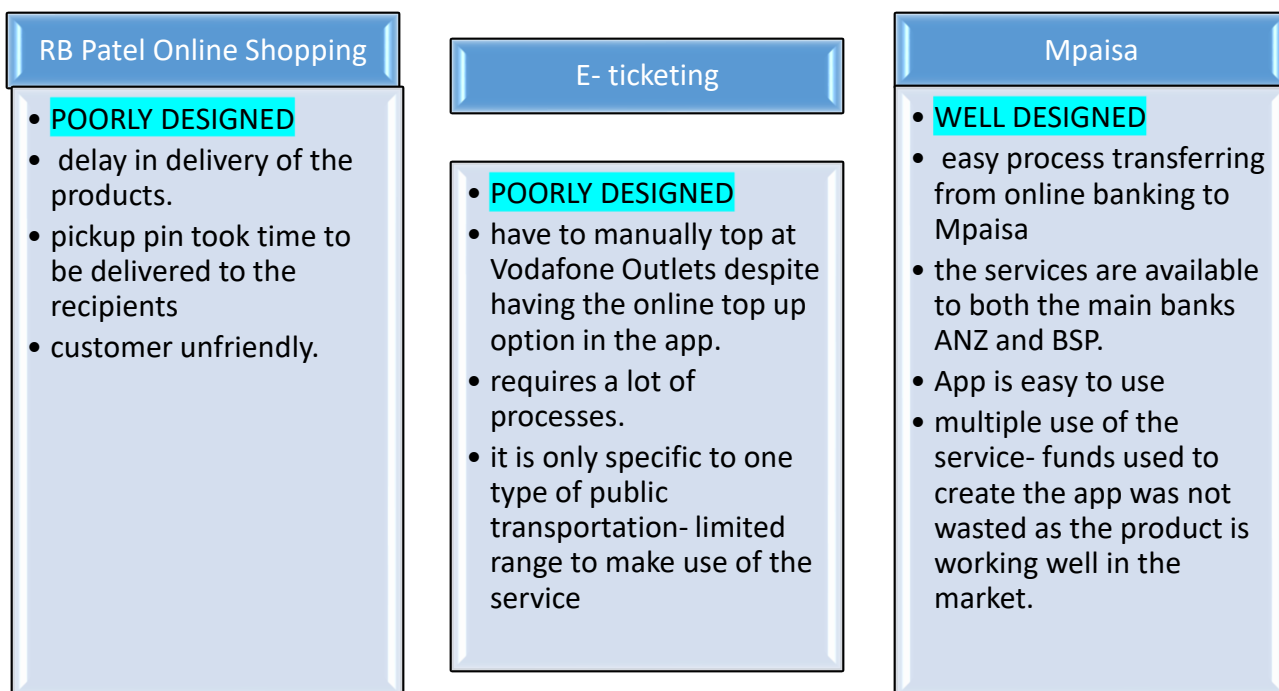This is both for Digital Fiji and Fiji Police Force.

Question: *Has your organization ever used digital tools to communicate with people? What were the benefits? Did it face any challenges?*

Organization	Digital tools used
Fiji Digital	Covid 19 Care Fiji App/ Smart Pay System/ Business Now Fiji
Fiji Police Force	No
Benefits/challenges - Ensure infection rate for COVID was monitored and controlled- some numbers of the public did not use smart phones and it became hard to track. - For the Fiji Police Force, they created awareness to minority groups on use of services like: informing of a crime or sharing a crime related news through their toll-free numbers. It was evident that the elderly and disabled group of people located in the remote and isolated maritime areas made good use of it and cases were reported through digital use of services.	

Module 2: Human-Centered design for Digital Services

This module explained the concept of human-centred design, the value of user research, and introduced the basics of how to conduct user research interviews. Following are some questions and answers to and from the participants.

Question: *Think of an online financial or e-commerce service that you find particularly well or poorly designed. Why*?

RB Patel Online Shopping

- POORLY DESIGNED
- delay in delivery of the products.
- pickup pin took time to be delivered to the recipients
- customer unfriendly.

E- ticketing

- POORLY DESIGNED
- have to manually top at Vodafone Outlets despite having the online top up option in the app.
- requires a lot of processes.
- it is only specific to one type of public transportation- limited range to make use of the service

Mpaisa

- WELL DESIGNED
- easy process transferring from online banking to Mpaisa
- the services are available to both the main banks ANZ and BSP.
- App is easy to use
- multiple use of the service- funds used to create the app was not wasted as the product is working well in the market.

Question: *What do you think can prevent or make it hard for people to use digital services? And what can governments do about it?*

Lack of knowledge browsing knowledge online etiquette and network coverage in Fiji considering the rural and outer islands.

The government of the day can invest more in infrastructure and equipment – satellite to be government owned and operated

Question: *Who do you think or say it's our representative users are, and how can we reach out to them? (Online business registration services)?*

Information gathering profiling template, for instance the elderly – most awareness needs to be conducted during mass gathering most in churches, village meetings and home visitations.

Module 3: Agile and Open Ways of Working

This module aimed to delve into the service development cycling aiming to understand how agile and open ways of working can enhance service delivery and contribute to digital transformation initiatives in Fiji.

Question: *Do any of these 4 values resonate with you? Can you share an anecdote of a time when it would have made sense to apply one of them in your work or a project you were involved in?*

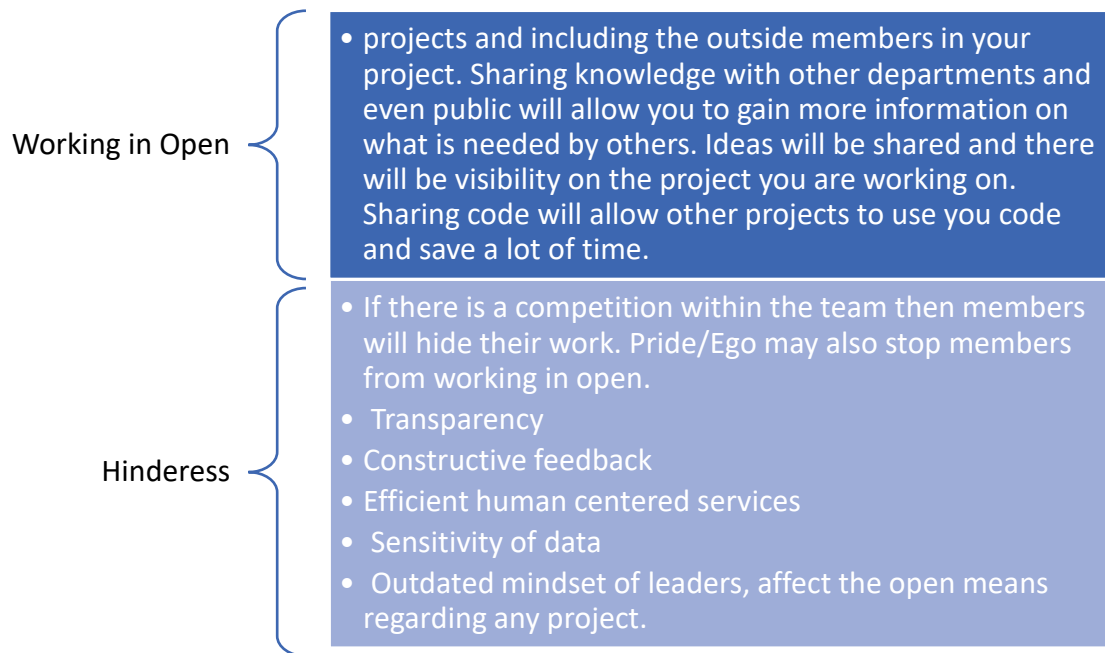|	
# Digital Fiji	Customer collaboration over contract negotiations. We built a software for NFA which will allow them to receive calls when there is a fire, and they will then dispatch a truck with all the resources. The Fireman then at the scene of fire records the incident on a tablet. After the incident, a report is created, and other reports are generated by the software. This software was built in accordance with what the consultant had gathered and given to us to develop. Upon deploying the software, there were a lot of misunderstandings from the firemen as they were not able to figure out what the software wanted them to do. Their SOP was different from the software as well. Collaborating with the Firemen and NFA staff would have created a better system.
# Fiji Police Force	In 2020 the Fiji Police Force IT Unit developed a Human Resource Software to assist HR Department, it was rejected by our former senior officer due to financial constraints and information stored on the particular software revealed sensitive information of an officer (they were worried the information could been leaked and used against a particular officer). The customer (Fiji Police) wanted certain fields to be removed when the project was ready to go live and eventually the project did not initiate because it lacked collaboration with the customer, we focused on the end result rather than taking the necessary steps to ensure each step was communicated clearly to the Fiji Police Force

Question: *You think that a website for companies to access and bid for public tenders will*

allow more of them to compete. What would an MVP look like?

Yes, the MVP can be a dashboard which shows all the tenders available. The user can click on the tender and view the full tender. The MVP can also include users to apply for the tender by uploading their documents. Login portal can be integrated, the admin portal can be created. History viewing for users can be integrated once the login starts working.

Question*: What do you think working in the open means? How it can facilitate digital transformation in Government? What might stop you from working in the open in your team?*

Working in Open

- projects and including the outside members in your project. Sharing knowledge with other departments and even public will allow you to gain more information on what is needed by others. Ideas will be shared and there will be visibility on the project you are working on. Sharing code will allow other projects to use you code and save a lot of time.

Hinderess

- If there is a competition within the team then members will hide their work. Pride/Ego may also stop members from working in open.
- Transparency
- Constructive feedback
- Efficient human centered services
- Sensitivity of data
- Outdated mindset of leaders, affect the open means regarding any project.

Module 4: Building trust in Digital Government

The main objective of this module was to equip participants with the knowledge and skills to understand and address common barriers to trust, effectively categories data, navigate privacy regulations, implement cyber hygiene practices, and integrate security by design principles into digital government initiatives.

Question: *What are the risks associated with the increased use of data in public sector? What do you think are the barriers to trust?*

Data Security Challenges

- Limited cybersecurity infrastructure and expertise in Fiji's public sector, vulnerability to data breaches, especially given Fiji's growing digital transformation

Digital Literacy Gap

- Varying levels of understanding about data use among citizens
- Limited awareness of data rights and privacy implications
- Digital divide between urban and rural areas
- Communication Challenges
- Insufficient public engagement about data collection purposes
- Language barriers in communicating data policies

Question: *Locate your organization's data on the ODA data spectrum. What is your own assessment of how your organization is protecting these different categories of data?*

The Open Data Institute (ODI) under Data Spectrum classifies data into six categories based on accessibility, from closed to open. Each category has distinct requirements for data protection, especially as it moves from restricted access (highly sensitive) to widely available (less sensitive). Here's how organizations often approach protecting their data at each level of the spectrum.

Group-Based Access Data

- Protection Techniques:
  - Access Control: Strict permissions, role-based access, and multi-factor authentication
  - Encryption: End-to-end encryption, both at rest and in transit
  - Network Segmentation: Limiting access through firewalls and virtual private networks (VPNs)
  - Monitoring & Auditing: Regular audits, logging, and real-time monitoring for unusual activity

Public Data

Data accessible to anyone but not widely distributed; organizations may still control its primary distribution

- Protection Techniques:
  - Limiting Access Rate: Protecting systems from abuse by limiting data access rates
  - Terms of Use: Establishing and enforcing usage agreements to prevent unauthorized redistribution
  - Integrity Checks: Ensuring the data is accurate and has not been tampered with by verifying through checksums or hashes
  - Publishing Protocols: Using stable platforms and secure APIs to release data consistently

Open Data

Data freely accessible to the public, without restrictions on usage or redistribution

- Protection Techniques:
- Licensing and Copyright: Using open licenses (e.g., Creative Commons) to establish legal guidelines for use.
  - Data Quality Controls: Ensuring data accuracy and updating it periodically.
  - Metadata Provision: Providing metadata to ensure transparency, traceability, and proper usage.
  - Access Monitoring: Tracking download rates and API usage to assess impact and prevent misuse

Closed Data

Data that's only accessible to specific individuals or teams within an organization, often due to its high sensitivity

- Protection Techniques:
  - Access Control: Strict permissions, role-based access, and multi-factor authentication
  - Encryption: End-to-end encryption, both at rest and in transit
  - Network Segmentation: Limiting access through firewalls and virtual private networks (VPNs)
  - Monitoring & Auditing: Regular audits, logging, and real-time monitoring for unusual activity

Shared Data

Data shared between specific organizations or individuals under agreements, typically with some confidentiality requirements.

- Protection Techniques:
  - Data Sharing Agreements: Legal agreements outlining the data usage, sharing, and protection measures.
  - Secure Transfer Protocols: Using protocols like SFTP or API gateways for secure data exchange.
  - Encryption & Tokenization: Encrypting data during sharing, and tokenizing to limit direct access.
  Access Logs and Audits: Ensuring compliance with agreements through logging access and usage.

Named Access Data

Data accessible to certain named individuals or groups, often within controlled environments or specific use cases

- Protection Techniques:
  - Identity Verification: Confirming identities through usernames, passwords, and multi-factor authentication
  - Session Management: Setting session timeouts and monitoring usage per session
  Control Led Access Points: Limiting data exposure through specific apps or platforms only accessible by approved users

Question: *What are the biggest challenges that you foresee in building trust in digital services in context?*

The main challenge is to build a system that cannot be hacked. Once a system is hacked then it will be hard to convince everyone that it will not happen again.

False news by media or public and drop reputation and it will be hard to bring back that reputation. Lack of digital awareness will make it very hard to convince people that their data is secure. Poor perception of government also makes it hard to build trust

Question: *What are the quick wins and the next steps that you can take to make digital services more secure?*

Inform the public about breaches.
-Assure them that their data is secure.
-Inform the public the steps that have now been taken to secure the system.
-Take help

Module 5: Data: Uses, Opportunities and Risks

Module 5 aimed to explore participants' perspectives on data uses, opportunities, and risks, associated with government contexts. The following summarizes they key discussions from the two different groups.

Question: *What data does your department organisation collect? Identify at least one data set that you could release in open data. How could they use this data to create public value?*

Department of Communications has collaborated with other relevant agencies to establish a Taskforce Known as Taskforce to Address Pornography.

The department is in process to gather stats from the ISPs of the total network traffic used for porn searches or views. The total network traffic used for pornography viewing.

To understand the harmful side of porn, which has led to criminal activities such as rape, child abuse etc.

Question: *Now suppose that on the participant registration form, there is a field 'status'. Some of the participants understood the status to be marital status whereas some of them understood it as employment status. What consequences does this lead to*?

The organization that created the form now has access to data about people who are not married or are unemployed. For instance, if this was a form created by an organization holding a sports event and they created the status field so that they can allocate room to people. So married people can have shared rooms. Now that some people have filled their employment status, the organization now knows all the participants who are unemployed. Socially this can risky, as the culture in Fiji is that gossiping will start once somebody finds out you do not have any work.

Question: *As a user of public services, do you have to submit the same data multiple times to different organisations? What data does your organisation collect? How other departments may use this data*?

Often when using public services, individuals are asked to submit the same data multiple times to different organizations or departments. For example, basic personal information like name, address, and contact details might be requested by healthcare services, social services, tax agencies, or educational institutions, even though this information could be relevant across these entities.

Data Collection by Public Organizations: Each public organization collects data specific to its mandate. For example:

Health Services: Collect medical history, personal details, insurance, and emergency contacts

Tax Agency: Collect income, family status, employment data, and expenses

Social Services: May collect information on financial status, household composition, and other welfare-related details

However, data sharing is often limited by privacy regulations and consent requirements, and this is why users may still need to repeatedly provide the same data if different departments don't have shared access. This can lead to inefficiencies and a burdensome process for individuals.

Some departments can access data shared by others, typically to improve service efficiency or for cross-verification. For example:

Data Sharing Among Departments

Health services might exchange data with social services to support individuals with special health needs.

A tax agency may share income details with a social services department to determine welfare eligibility.
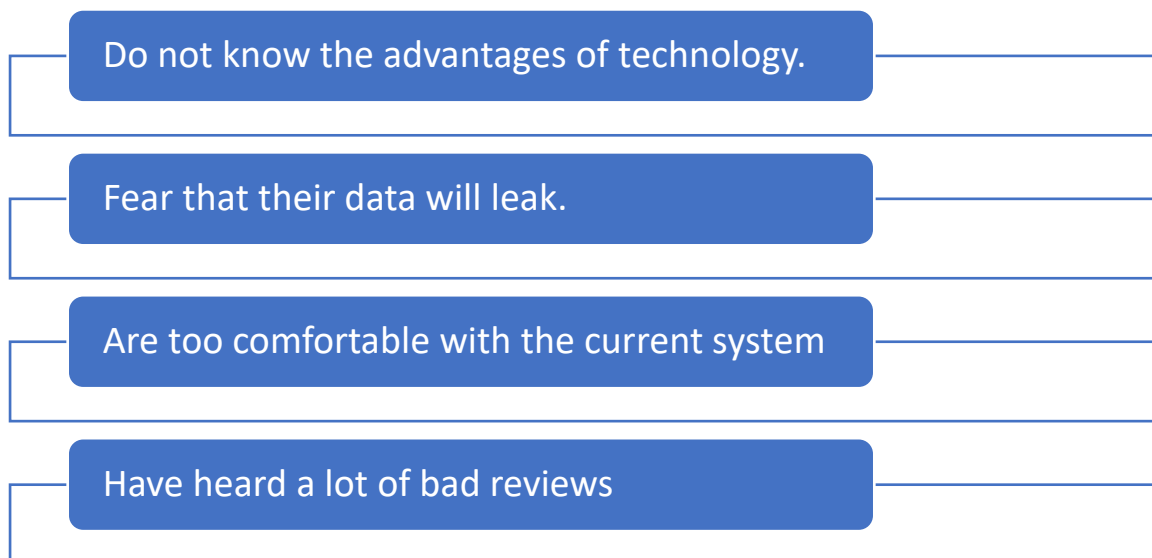
Module 6: Managing Digital Technology Risks

Module 6 focused on understanding and managing digital technology risks in the public sector. The following report summarizes participants' responses to key questions.

Question: *In your experience, why might people fear or resist technology projects in the public sector?*

People resist technology projects because they:

- Do not know the advantages of technology.

- Fear that their data will leak.

- Are too comfortable with the current system

- Have heard a lot of bad reviews

Question: *Think about your organisation. What good technology choices has it made? What do you think could have been done differently*?

Fiji Human Resources Institute (FHRI) had made an online application software. Members of FHRI can now login to the portal and apply for awards. AI can now be integrated to proofreading and checking.

Question: *We have all been part of projects that didn't work. Think about a time when you were involved in a project or initiative that failed or was not as successful as you hoped. Why did that happen*?

Fijian Elections Office (FEO) app did not work out during the last election as there was a downtime on the app after it showed some results that were totally the opposite of the results before. It it was a very crucial app, and the entire leadership decision of the country was made based on this app/glitch.

Module 7: Navigating barriers to digital government

This module focused on identifying and addressing barriers to digital government. The following report summarizes participants' responses to key questions.

Question: *Have you ever experienced challenges with procurement, and particularly the procurement of digital services or products?*

> Governments community telecentre project aims at connecting the unconnected or underserved communities in Fiji. Mainly, remote islands are prioritized. A telecentre in Kadavu is operational but only for limited hours, after 6pm there is no power supply which disrupts the operations. Department of communications has procured solar systems to be installed at the site to better serve the community. However, the hierarchical process is an issue we face. It is time consuming to get the approvals from different management levels and cross-sectional departments.

Question: *How do digital projects get funded in your organization? What are the pros and cons such as funding model*?

> Ministry made full payment for software's to outsourced companies that build the software. Main con of this funding is when the software does not meet all the needs then we have to make the changes ourselves.

Question: ***Have you ever encountered a situation where civil servants showed reluctance to digital change? What were reluctant to change?***

EFL wanted a Recruitment management software. Since they have thousands of employees and they get hundreds of applications, they required an extensive software to suite their business need. They were ready to digitize the whole recruitment process till where the managers/CEOs were involved. As soon as the process reached their level, they wanted the paper process to continue as it was happening before.

Module 8: Leadership for Digital Government

This module focused on the impact of COVID-19 on digital government and the role of supportive leadership in navigating barriers to digital transformation within the Fijian context.

Question: *Think about your experience over the course of the pandemic. How has covid-19 impacted your culture, process and operating model in the delivery of services? What learnings can you draw from that?*

Covid had not impacted the operating process of the software development industry but has introduces new technologies. Now we have ecommerce sites for everything. (Supermarket, clothing, beauty and etc.). Work from home was introduced in my industry which allowed people to work remotely. Now a lot of developers work for overseas countries while living in their country.

Summary

The workshop was officially closed on the 31st of October 2024, by Professor Sushil Kumar, Director Research and Project Leader, PDDI project. He gave the brief summary of what was delivered in this workshop. Digital literacy involves knowing how to access, evaluate, use, manage, analyze, create, and interact with digital resources. He stated that world is advancing in digitalozation and innovations day in and out and it is important to know how the digital world works and progress with it. This report had shown how each module was discussed by participants from different firms, seeing different discusses flowing in from these local organizations sharing their experiences followed by Dr. Kensen's comparison with how things work in Vanuatu. Prof. Kumar thanked the participants for their active participation. He also thanked Dr. Margaret Kensen and Dr. Subash Aparna for delivering the workshop well with a lot of sincerity and commitment.

THE END

Annexure: Some of comments from participants

- Quite interactive and interesting workshop.
- Good content delivery, was able to learn a lot.

- Would suggest to invite or include some higher level staff from the government. & This workshop can help them make better decisions once they have completed the workshop.

- The presentation of the slides were good and informative but we would suggest to involve a software developer or someone from IT industry to explain the modules that have slides that are IT related.

- Krishneel, Shanil, Ronish

The PIDI Project workshop was an eye opening experience, from a person who mostly deals with back end systems.
The workshop made me appreciate the need to work together/collobrate with other agencies and find problem driven solution which impacts individuals on every level. Democracy
Digital does not means IT only but people problems problems that are resolved or minimize by technical solutions. How important it is to for continues updates to senior management.
All together the workshop, coordinator and facilitator was excellent.

Sica Tuicoro.
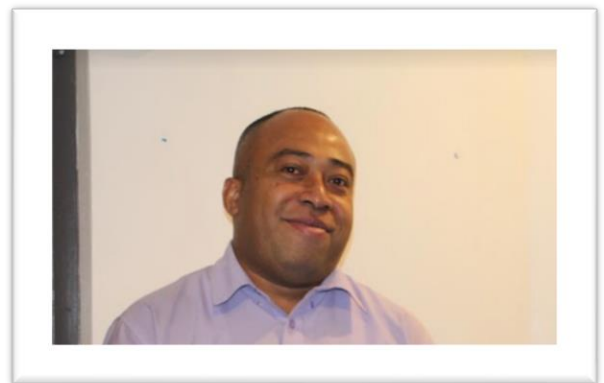
The Pacific Digital Democracy Initiative project workshop was an invaluable experience through my career as a System Administrator (security) at ITC Services. Allows me to look and accept changes, take Risks and improve to become a better outcome and Leaderships.

Love the Team Members and Facilitators. So Empowering and interactive discussion, on the current Issues regarding Digitization. Lectures Presented was understandable and well delivered, whereas Team work exercises was eye opening to some of the changes in our IT world.

Refereshment, Lunch, Tea Break was Awesome.

— Take Aways —

* Understanding How Government, IT's Digitization and Software with cyber Security Can Work together to built a country through Digitize, for the future.

S. Panyan.
3/10/2024