

# VAITELE URBAN GOVERNANCE PILOT PROJECT

VUGPP 2008-2012

URBAN GOVERNANCE STRATEGY

Final

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the required outputs of this project is to produce a strategy or a roadmap to advance urban governance in Vaitele through the proposed institutional urban governance framework. This task relates to objective (vi) of the project document (contract and project tender document).

The hallmark of a good strategy in the public sector is its feasibility, workability and political acceptability by the relevant authorities and stakeholders. These are the criteria that guide the proposed strategy. In following this set of criteria, several strategic assumptions are used in order to generate a strategy that is feasible and workable:

- i. Peace and harmony is critical to implementation of the SMP.
- ii. Respect for the rule of law is critical to the implementation of the SMP.
- iii. Effective implementation of SMP depends on the acceptance of the proposed governance framework by the Vaitele community.
- iv. Effective implementation of the SMP depends on the acceptance of the SMP by the Vaitele community.

The strategy tends to be broad in scope and design in order to draw a clear boundary with the implementation side of the project, while at the same time providing a clear link of activities when the framework is implemented.

The strategy is divided into three main parts in the effort to produce a clear roadmap. The first one is an overview of the strategy's objectives and outputs that constitute the pathway or the roadmap toward the establishment of the urban governance framework. A detailed analysis and explanation of activities and actions that linked the strategy's objectives and outputs are provided in Attachments 1 and 2.

The second part of this report gives an analysis of stakeholders and key players of the strategy; the risks involved; and how such risks should be managed.

The last component provides a brief view on the feasibility of the strategy to Apia urban areas.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

In following the project document, the urban governance strategy serves the following objectives:

- i. To develop a strategy to advance urban governance through SMP in Vaitele.
- ii. To develop a strategy that incorporates human rights and governance fundamentals that are related to the processes of land-use planning.
- iii. To provide a practical approach for governing Vaitele with consideration of Vaitele-tai's traditional village.
- iv. To provide an approach that could be replicated for the other urban areas.

### **3. STRATEGY ASSUMPTIONS**

#### **3.1 Peace and harmony and the rule of law**

A peaceful and harmonious Vaitele community is the key to implementing the SMP. Without this fundamental of governance, PUMA and those supporting the implementation of SMP will face many problems. Good neighbourhood relations lead to respect and consideration of the others welfare. This means the use of one's land for any development purpose is contingent and mindful of the adverse impact on neighbouring households. This is the spirit that keeps harmony and peace in traditional villages.

Unfortunately this is not the case in many of Vaitele's neighbours as detected in the consultation. The thought that it is a freehold land and that no one has an authority over the use of one's land seems to be the dominating consideration. This results in poor attitude when it comes to developing one's freehold land. The setting up of a pigsty or a septic tank close to a neighbour's residence is the usual practice that associates with such behaviour. These are in fact matters relating to SMP.

The proposed urban governance framework is the key to creating peace and harmony amongst neighbours in Vaitele. Its design and underpinning principles mirror the governance structure in traditional villages. Once this is in place, PUMA and supporting stakeholders will be in a better position (and so as the community of Vaitele) to implement the SMP. For instance, any household that is not cooperating in following the SMP, the respective urban council will counsel members of this household in order to provide support to the SMP. This is the routine and practice in traditional villages and it will be the same for Vaitele.

In addition, the proposed strategy is in line with the Ministry of Police and Prisons' Neighbourhood Watch program which launched in May last year. This initiative gives prominence to the strategy while at the same time supporting the role of another government agency.

### **3.2 Acceptance of the SMP**

It is also important that the SMP is understood and to some extent accepted by the vast majority of the Vaitele community. The qualification for the SMP to be effective is to rally the support of the locals living in Vaitele. They need to know what the SMP is and what good SMP brings to them and the impact of SMP on their everyday lives.

There have been some consultations conducted earlier in Vaitele about the SMP. It is assumed that the SMP is well received by the Vaitele community. This is supported by the increasing complaints from residents of Vaitele on externalities like noise and unhygienic conditions. A sign that residents are aware of their rights with respect to such issues.

The strategy is to have the proposed urban governance framework in place first before the SMP is rolled out. In doing so, a formal institutional governance mechanism in the form of an urban council provides the forum for PUMA and the Vaitele community to discuss and find ways where they can work together on implementing the SMP. It should bear in mind that the driving force behind the SMP is not just PUMA and the supporting stakeholders; the Vaitele community also plays an enormous role in driving the SMP but this is contingent on their understanding of the benefits of SMP. The urban council provides the opportunity for the Vaitele community to participate and to be inclusive in PUMA's implementation plan. Such an approach generates support from the community.

### **3.3 Acceptance of the urban governance framework**

What has been discussed in 3.1 and 3.2 depends largely on the acceptance of the proposed urban governance framework for Vaitele. This strategy places considerable weight on this aspect. That said, there are indicators that positively support the acceptance of the urban governance framework:

*i. Design of framework follows what the Vaitele community wants*

The structure and design of the framework reflect the views and inputs of the community following two rounds of consultations. They demanded a design that

has similar features to the traditional governance setting. The framework and its components as explained in the framework proposal largely reflect traditional governance system with some variations based on the unique situation of the Vaitele community.

*ii. Framework is culturally sensitive*

As explained earlier, the framework incorporates cultural beliefs and principles of traditional governance. The Vaitele community finds it easier to identify themselves with the framework as well as adopting its principles and practices.

*iii. Inclusive*

The framework is inclusive compared to the traditional governance model. There is consideration for women and youth representations. This is the strength of the model. It provides a good blend of traditional and modern forms of governance.

*iv. Government support*

Government support in the form of legislation provides an incentive for the community to support and accept the framework. People often lend their support to a cause that has legitimate and legal backing.

#### **4. STRATEGY OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS**

In putting together a strategy that is feasible and workable in advancing urban governance and land use planning, objectives and outputs are clarified to show direction and sequence of actions and activities that need to take place.

The discussion in this section gives a broad overview of the strategy's objectives and outputs. The main focus is to provide a snapshot of the main idea underpinning each objective and output.

For clarity purposes, Attachment 1 provides a detailed of activities that need to be undertaken in order to achieve the objectives and the expected outputs discussed in this section. This is a better option of presenting such detailed information in order to follow the contents closely and not to lose some of it due to information overloading.

Attachment 2 presents a complete picture of how objectives are linked to activities and outputs as well as the risks involved. The intention is to make sure that those responsible for putting the strategy into action could easily see the big picture and follow it closely.

With respect to actions of priority, the order is determined by the sequence of objectives and outputs. For instance, objective 1 and output 1 represent the first actions of priority. In reality, it is possible to have a few objectives and outputs put into action simultaneously. There is no problem with such decision as long it is clear what should be in place first according to the sequence recommended in the strategy.

##### **Objective 1:**

*To put in place an institutional framework to support proposed urban governance framework*

This is an essential component of the roadmap. Legislation needs to be put in place first in order to give institutional recognition to the establishment of urban councils. As mentioned earlier, the urban councils provide the formal governance mechanism that represents the interest of the community in Vaitele. PUMA and other supporting

stakeholders will meet with each urban council to discuss better ways of dealing with the SMP.

**Output 1:**

*A legislation legalising the establishment of urban councils and their roles in Vaitele.*

**Objective 2:**

*To formalize the establishment of urban councils*

Following the passing of a new legislation, urban councils for the three urban divisions in Vaitele need to be formed. This task involves several activities and can be challenging too. For instance, one of the activities is to call a meeting of all households allocated to one *auaiga* (extended family) and coached them on how to go about selecting a representative to the council and how to function as a unit. There is a possibility that some of these households are not on good terms or have had frictions in the past. It will be a challenging task for the mediator to iron out differences and to bring those households together – but it is not impossible.

In the case of Vaitele traditional village, its traditional council is already in existence and its authority is recognised under the *Village Fono Act 1990*.

**Output 2:**

*Establishment of three urban councils in Vaitele.*

**Objective 3:**

*To build the capacity of council members*

This is the opportunity for government agencies (and other stakeholders) to assist in building the capacity of council members with respect to numerous topics. For instance, UNDP in partnership with a government agency can conduct capacity building workshops and trainings on human rights and governance principles like participation, inclusiveness, equity and rights of women and children. PUMA on the other hand will

concentrate on informing councils on the essence of SMP and its benefits to the whole of Vaitele.

At the end of this process, council members will have a clear and good understanding of the SMP and good governance principles and practices. This is the pathway to the effective implementation of the SMP and any other government project intended for Vaitele.

Capacity building is undoubtedly an ongoing process. However there is greater emphasis on this aspect of the strategy in the initial stage of setting up councils.

**Output 3:**

*Vaitele council members well versed with basic governance concepts and SMP benefits.*

**Objective 4:**

*To establish a network between councils and PUMA and other stakeholders*

As stressed earlier, the successful implementation of the SMP largely depends on the support and cooperation of the community residing in Vaitele. Support and cooperation are forthcoming when the community is recognized and inclusive of the discussion on the SMP. It is these reasons why networking is an important part of the strategy. Very often the communities are left out of the big picture when it comes to policies that have an immediate effect on them. Networking is a good strategic move to get the community in Vaitele closer to the SMP implementing and supporting agencies.

Networking between the four councils also feature in this part of the plan. It is also important for all councils to cultivate a good working relationship in order to work together.

**Output 4:**

*Good working relationship between Vaitele councils and PUMA (and the rest of stakeholders)*

**Objective 5:**

*To monitor the progress of each component of the plan towards its objective and output.*

This task belongs to the monitoring agency/agencies. It is important that each objective and output of the strategy are met following the implementation of operational activities attached to this report.

**Output 5:**

*Achievement of strategy objectives and outputs*

**Objectives 6:**

*To assess the feasibility of transferring the same urban governance framework to other urban areas in the country.*

Part of the strategy is to look at ways of transferring the same governance framework to other urban areas in the country. This is an attempt to formulate a standard approach of addressing urban governance problems in other urban and sub-urban areas.

**Output 6:**

*A blueprint of how to transfer the same governance framework to other urban areas.*

## **5. STRATEGY STAKEHOLDERS AND RISKS ANALYSIS**

In supporting the details of the strategy provided in Attachment 1 and Attachment 2, a strategy analysis is provided here in order to give a realistic overview of the strategy. In doing so, the focus of the analysis is on the key players of the strategy; the risks involved and how to manage such risks.

### **5.1 Strategy supporting actors and stakeholders**

#### *Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment – PUMA*

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) and in particular its PUMA division is expected to provide a leading role in the strategy. Its role in educating and raising awareness of urban council members on SMP matters and any other matter under the jurisdiction of the Ministry is critical in the process. In addition, this is a good opportunity for PUMA to confirm the members of urban councils that it is the focal point and the leading agency in any issue relating to the SMP. Importantly, there is capacity in PUMA to fulfil this role.

#### *Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development*

The role of MWCSO is also significant to the strategy. Its division of Internal Affairs is expected to take a leading role in the initial stage of the process of forming up *auaiga* and eventually the urban councils. The CEO of the Ministry has given her reassurance of her department's support to the strategy. She also confirmed the availability of capacity in her ministry's division of Internal Affairs to deal with the proposed activities.

#### *Ministry of Police and Prisons*

The ministry has lent its strong support to the initiative following a meeting at its headquarter on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012. One of the pulling forces is the fact that the framework goes hand in hand with the ministry's Neighbourhood Watch program. The ministry during the meeting confirmed its support to the strategy and in particular during the implementation phase of the project.

## **5.2 Risks analysis**

There are risks anticipated for the proposed framework and its strategy. This is to be expected considering the scope of the change and the normal reaction of people to something new. In supporting the strategy, several high level risks are highlighted here, while the management of the same risks are discussed in the next section.

### *Residents' reaction*

This is a risk that is difficult to work out. While the support from consultations was overwhelming, it is a reality in Samoa that people do change their minds over night. It is a factor that needs to be kept in the minds of key players involved in the early stage of the implementation process.

In addition, there has been a suggestion from some residents during consultation to use the church as the forum to select council members. This group, which also includes some church ministers, is most likely to be causing resistance at the initial stage of implementation although their proposal was outnumbered during the consultations.

### *Time factor*

The time span between consultations and the actual implementation of the institutional framework is anticipated to be extensive. When the actual implementation of the framework is in effect, residents might have a different view of the principles underpinning the framework or might have ran out of patience. Moreover, it should be noted that a substantial number of households are not the landowners. They are mostly relatives of the landowners who are residing abroad. This means that some residents are residing in Vaitele on a temporary period. It is therefore highly possible at the time of implementation that residents that would be present may not be those who attended the consultations.

### *Capacity of key players*

The tasks prescribed in the strategy are not simple. It requires in-depth intellectual knowledge of the culture. For instance, one of the major activities is the development of the extended family concept amongst neighbours living in the same block. This task itself requires proficient skills in negotiation and good knowledge of cultural protocols. The

response from the MWCSO (which is assumed to be the Ministry with the authority in this area) is positive with respect to having the right capacity within the division of Internal Affairs. However, it is noted that one of the division's senior officers (Vaifale Tevita) who was involved in the project has left the ministry.

*Government rejecting the proposal*

This is the main concern. While government has showed interest in urban governance recently, it is still difficult to predict its level of commitment to urban development and governance. For instance, in its Strategy for the Development of Samoa launched recently, not much is said about the direction of urban governance in the country.

### **5.3 Risk management**

In light of the high level risks discussed in 5.2, a number of strategic options are discussed in this section to manage and to control such risks in order for the strategy to be effective practically.

*Residents' reaction*

One of the benefits of the consultations conducted with the Vaitele community was the presence and support of influential individuals who are residing in Vaitele. This group includes former parliamentarians, retired church ministers and senior public servants. In the event that there is a significant resistance from the residents of respective divisions of Vaitele, the assistance of this group of individuals should be enlisted to push the change through.

The strategy also counts on the fact that the four divisions of Vaitele overwhelmingly supported the structure and design of the framework during the second round of consultations.

Further, it is highly recommended that PUMA and MWCSO, should communicate regularly with the community residing at Vaitele on the progress of the project and any plans regarding implementation. This is a good strategy to keep residents informed and it shows PUMA's genuine commitment to urban governance and the SMP.

*Time factor*

Samoans generally have very short patience. It's a behaviour that is experienced in many occasions. One of the solutions to this risk is frequent communication as suggested earlier. Regular communication between PUMA and the Vaitele community keeps the momentum going. An informed community is an empowered community.

Further, it is also recommended that the officers from key ministries involved in the consultation phase should also be the leading figures in the strategy implementation. They have gained the trust of the community of Vaitele during the consultation period. Their heavy involvement in the implementation strategy should erase any doubts amongst the residents.

*Capacity of key players*

While there is assurance from MWCSO regarding the availability of capacity within her ministry to perform the tasks outlined in the strategy, there is always the risk of senior officials in the division of Internal Affairs leaving the ministry. So far, as mentioned earlier, one of the senior officers who represented the ministry to the project has migrated overseas. That leaves one senior officer who is capable of doing the job in the ministry.

In managing this risk, it is important for PUMA to work closely with MWCSO in making sure that proper actions are taken to sustain the appropriate capacity in the division of Internal Affairs when the initiative is implemented.

On the other hand, there is the option of using consultants from consultancy firms in the country or those who are working at the Centre of Samoan Studies, at the National University of Samoa.

*Government rejecting the proposal*

This is without doubt the main concern. As clearly outlined in the framework proposal and this report, political feasibility is one of the main requirements that needs to be thoroughly addressed in order for any proposal to gain the support of government.

One of the selling features of the framework is the extensive consultation conducted with the community residing at Vaitele. In light of government's strong stance on community participation in policy-making, this aspect of the project can be a draw card for the government.

Another important dimension of the framework proposal that needs mentioning (in relation to managing this risk) is the emphasis on using existing institutional mechanisms rather than a complete shift to a new arrangement. The fact that PUMA, an existing institutional authority is recommended as the focal point of the proposed framework with the assistance from MWCSO and other government agencies suggests a minor swing from the existing setting. It is for this reason that the idea of a municipality is recommended as a long-term option under the proposed framework. It was evident from discussions with key government officials like the Chairman and the Chief Executive Officer of the Public Service Commission that the government is reluctant at this stage to implement an initiative that adds more financial burdens to the community in the form of fees, taxes or levies.

## **6. STRATEGY APPLICATION TO APIA URBAN AREA**

In the framework proposal, it is clearly argued that the framework is applicable to the urban areas at the periphery of Apia. This is based on the discussions with the *pulenu'u* of these urban Apia areas. It is evident from the discussion that the concepts and principles embracing the framework are feasible if applied to urban areas surrounding Apia. This is mainly due to the fact that these concepts and principles are closely related to cultural and democratic practices.

There is no doubt that the same strategy can be applied to the wider Apia urban area with minor adjustments due to the following disparities compared to Vaitele:

- i. These areas have been settled a lot earlier than Vaitele. Households of these urban lands are more or less working together with each other for the benefit of their own community. The community spirit is already in existence in these areas compared to Vaitele.
- ii. These freehold lands are located in traditional villages with village councils functioning effectively in comparison to Vaitele. The traditional village council of Vaitele is inactive at this stage due to court cases amongst members of the traditional village.
- iii. Residents of these freehold lands are the actual landowners of such lands. This is in sharp contrast to Vaitele where a substantial number of households consist of the relatives of respective landowners who are residing overseas.

There are in fact two main suggestions made by the *pulenu'u* of Apia urban areas if the same model is to be applied to their areas:

- i. The need to clarify the boundaries of each urban area. This is the same issue with Vaitele and it is now settled.
- ii. The need to maintain the traditional village councils in these areas. This is the same request made by the representatives of Vaitele's traditional village during consultations. The proposed framework and strategy both support such request.

It is evident that the interests of those (*pulenu'u*) representing the Apia urban areas and the community residing in Vaitele are closely related when taking into account the

suggestions made by the *pulenu'u* of Apia urban areas. While the discussion was brief and *pulenu'u* consulted do not provide a good sample of the residents of Apia urban areas, the fact that they raised similar issues as those raised by the Vaitele community suggests a greater possibility of interests overlap in both communities and importantly, the high feasibility of applying the same strategy and framework to the wider Apia urban areas.