

SAMOA COUNTRY PROGRAM REPORT
PACIFIC REVIEW OF ADVISER POSITIONS FUNDED BY THE AUSTRALIAN AID PROGRAM

Overview

[A Joint Adviser Review Report](#) was released on 15 February 2011, which provided a synthesis of the findings and key recommendations from individual country reviews, including country specific adviser figures and narrative.

Australia worked bilaterally with a large number of partner country governments to review each adviser position. While the underlying Review methodology and the core content of country-specific reports is consistent across programs, in each case the final country-specific Review Report reflects decisions made by the joint Review teams as appropriate for the specific cultural and language context. As a result there are some presentational differences between reports.

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the joint Review process undertaken between the Governments of Samoa and Australia. This Report has been amended to ensure AusAID does not breach its privacy obligations related to individuals and/or relative to information considered sensitive to bilateral relationships.

It is important to note that the Review process involved an assessment of the value and effectiveness of each adviser position – not the performance of individuals in those positions. The Review focused on the role of each position in meeting agreed country program objectives and development outcomes. On the basis of this assessment, the continued funding of adviser positions by AusAID was jointly considered and agreed with partner governments.

1. Executive Summary

AusAID Samoa Post uses short term contracted advisers to conduct analytical work and for reviews of programs. In-house advisers are used whenever available although there is a preference for using short term local advisers. AusAID also has an established local Period Offer database of consultants to facilitate this process.

Currently the only long-term Advisers deployed to Samoa are the Legal Adviser for the Public Trust Office and the Investment Department Adviser for the Samoa National Provident Fund (SNPF). These advisers were engaged through the Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism (PACTAM) and are contracted employees of the local government organisations within which they are placed.

The Government of Samoa was unable to recruit these two positions locally and sought assistance through PACTAM. The Legal Adviser position was locally advertised twice with no suitable applicants responding. Candidates lacked the background and in-depth knowledge/skill set combination required and none were willing to undergo additional training by a Legal Consultant placed with the Public Trust Office at the time.

The Investment Department Adviser post required more specialised expertise on international opportunities specifically in the Australian investment environment with established networks and credibility in that context. None of the local candidates qualified and the search was extended through PACTAM.

The Government of Samoa and the host organisations support the PACTAM programme being used to meet technical assistance needs in special cases such as to these two organisations. The flexibility to respond to the particular needs of each placement to ensure that selected advisers are the best “fit” is regarded a particular strength of the PACTAM mechanism.

Within the host organisations, senior counterparts work closely with the advisers to facilitate capacity building and knowledge transfer. The Chief Executive officers of both host organisations remain closely involved with tracking the advisers work through regular advisory consultations. Both placements are a high priority and have been timely. The Government of Samoa oversees adviser performance through their role on the management Boards of each organisation.

Any other ad hoc requests for long term advisers from the Government of Samoa to AusAID outside agreed priorities under the Partnership for Development or the Government of Samoa’s own development strategy, are either considered at the annual high level discussions or dealt with at senior levels if considered urgent or critical.

2. Introduction

Australia’s aid program to Samoa is governed by the Samoa-Australia Partnership for Development (the Partnership). The Partnership between the Government of Australia and the Government of Samoa establishes our shared vision to work together in close cooperation to meet our common challenges and to raise the standard of living for the people of Samoa, in particular to advance its progress by 2015 to Samoa’s development vision of ‘improved quality of life for all’ as articulated in the *Strategy for the Development of Samoa (2008-2012)* (SDS).

Under the Partnership six priority outcome areas are identified for Australian support:

1. Private Sector Growth and Employment
2. Improved Health
3. Improved Education
4. Improved Governance: Improved Public Financial Management, Strengthened Statistics and Public Sector Capacity Development
5. Improved Governance: Law and Justice
6. Climate Change

There are currently only two long term advisers funded under the bilateral aid program for Samoa. Australia agreed to recruit and fund the two adviser positions after attempts by the Government of Samoa to recruit the positions locally proved unsuccessful.

An Investments Adviser supports the objectives of Priority Outcome Area 4: Improved Governance through improved public financial management and public sector capacity building. A Legal Adviser supports objectives in the law and justice sector under Priority Outcome Area 4: Improved Governance.

2.1 Overview - Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism (PACTAM) in Samoa

Both long term advisers currently funded by AusAID in Samoa were recruited through PACTAM.

PACTAM was established by AusAID in 2006 as a way to respond to small scale urgent or emerging development needs in Pacific countries enabling the provision of human resources and equipment procurement aligned to Australian Government and development partner priorities. PACTAM is managed on behalf of AusAID by Australian Volunteers International (AVI). This includes management of selection, recruitment and pre-departure arrangements, management whilst in-country and repatriation arrangements.

In Samoa, PACTAM deployees are contracted employees of the local government agencies within which they are placed. Their primary accountabilities and reporting responsibilities are to these agencies. Their local salary and local employment conditions are supplemented through AusAID bilateral funding.

Prior to advertising, AVI undertakes a comprehensive remuneration assessment for each adviser position where the specific requirements of the role are benchmarked against a similar role within the Australian Public Service. The remuneration for the role is then reviewed and approved by both AusAID and the development partner.

2.2 Country Specific Context/Issues

Technical advisory support in Samoa is usually provided through Government of Samoa systems. An example of this is the use of curriculum writers in the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture as part of the AusAID funded Education Sector Program II. The Ministry selects and contracts the curriculum writers from the National University of Samoa using Government of Samoa procurement systems. These advisers are supplemented by short term international specialists as needed (also recruited using Government of Samoa systems).

Post also uses short term contracted advisers to do analytical work, and for reviews of programs, often in conjunction with other donors. AusAID in-house advisers are used when

available. The Samoa program has a preference for using short term local advisers where available and has established a local Period Offer data base of consultants to facilitate this process.

The two long-term Advisers in Samoa are the Legal Adviser for the Public Trust Office and the Investment Department Adviser for the Samoa National Provident Fund (SNPF). Following a formal request for assistance from the Government of Samoa both positions were filled via a competitive selection process carried out by AVI in accordance with the PACTAM contract. Part of the selection process included a value for money assessment by AVI.

Legal Adviser – Public Trust Office (July 2010 – June 2011)

This twelve month assignment aligns with Partnership Priority Outcome 4: Improved Governance and contributes to improved public financial management through improved estate administration and a trust management system that maintains the confidence of trust beneficiaries. At present, the Public Trust Office is heavily dependent on Government funds to service its outstanding liabilities. The Public Trust Office's long-term financial plan is to move away from its dependency on Government funds, while trying to clear its debt, as well as managing its estate administration work. The position is contributing to this reform process.

The position also contributes to public sector capacity development through training of local personnel.

The key objectives for this assignment include:

- Reviewing the legislative framework to expedite and streamline the administration of estates and to enhance revenue generated from estates administration work;
- improving section personnel skills and knowledge through formal and on-the-job training;
- reviewing and revising current operational policies, practice and procedures of the Estates and Trusts Division with regard to the administration of estates;
- identifying and seeking solutions to common problems hindering estates administration work (existing "old" estates).

Investment Department Adviser – National Provident Fund (August 2010 – July 2011)

This twelve month assignment is also aligned with Partnership Priority Outcome 4: Improved Governance (Improved Public Financial Management). The Samoa National Provident Fund (SNPF) is a compulsory savings scheme for all employees. The core function of the Investments Department is to ensure the sustainability of maximum returns, security and growth of members' funds.

Reporting to the CEO, the objectives of the Investments Department Adviser include;

- Reviewing and revising existing Investment Policy;
- Researching and making recommendations on available and viable strategies for the Fund to undertake for its investment portfolio (both local and overseas);
- Providing training and mentoring for the Manager Investments and Assistant Manager so that the improved knowledge, skills and methodologies can be passed down to other officers;

- Providing advice to the Board and the Investments Department of current issues affecting investments that require attention for improvement.

The Government of Samoa pays each Adviser a local salary. AusAID funds salary supplementation, accommodation and living allowances, insurances, management costs as well as a small procurement fund to support assignment objectives if required.

In 2010/11, less than two percent of AusAID's overall 2010/11 bilateral budget for Samoa of AUD26.4million will be spent on AusAID supported long term advisers.

This is a slight increase from 2009/10 when approximately 0.5% of AusAID's bilateral program was spent on long term advisers. This is because in 2009/10 there was only one long term adviser working in Samoa. Costs associated with her input during 2009/10 were comparatively low because the upfront costs of recruitment and mobilisation were incurred in 2008/09.

Monitoring and Evaluation

At the time of the review, the two advisers in Samoa had only been in their current placements for 6 weeks and as such had not had adequate time to demonstrate full impact value. However in the time they had been in Samoa both advisers and host organisations reported full engagement with counterparts, and management and executive committees/boards. They used the time to get to know the business of the organisations, the legislation under which they are mandated, outstanding issues that impact the services they provide and refining the objectives of their placement taking into account the expectations on them and the terms of their placement.

Monitoring of PACTAM deployees is undertaken by AVI. AusAID receives Consolidated Country reports which provide progress updates on the advisers' placements. The report gives a detailed position summary and analysis of the placement including any identified and potential emerging issues. In addition, current information on AVI management activities, assignment support, procurement fund information and a financial summary for advisers ensure that AusAID is kept informed.

On arrival in Samoa, AVI has sub-contracted Matuaileoo Environment Trust Incorporated (METI) a local NGO, to greet and provide orientation services as well as manage advisers' initial settlement in the country. Any other related issues and their resolution at this initial stage are all communicated through to AVI via this mechanism. In terms of ongoing performance, AVI retains an oversight role relying on key contacts such as the host organisation's head person and immediate work counterpart to the adviser for daily supervision, monitoring and reporting against placement objectives. This contributes to the success of the placements as advisers are given the space to get to know their immediate environment and key working colleagues without the distraction and intrusion of AVI. Likewise AVI receives information on performance at all stages via the host organisation's key contacts, which is provided to AusAID in the six monthly Consolidated Country reports as referred above.

2.3 Outline of methodology used to conduct review

The methodology used included a data collection exercise completed on 1 October 2010, in which information about the PACTAM programme and details about the two advisers currently deployed to Samoa through this mechanism was summarised.

A document review followed which included discussions with key personnel in the Government of Samoa and from the organisations in which the advisers are placed. Given that the two advisers have only been in their placements for six weeks, there is scant monitoring and evaluation information available to indicate how effective the placements have been. However we were able to conduct an interview with the Assistant Chief Executive Officer of the Aid Coordination Division of the Ministry of Finance, who is the key liaison between the Government of Samoa and the Government of Australia in terms of donor assistance. In addition we sought the views of the Chief Executive Officer and the main counterpart to the Investments Adviser based in the Samoa National Provident Fund. We also sought the views of the Public Trustee and the main counterpart to the Legal Adviser currently based in the Public Trust Office. A joint interview was also held with the two advisers to gauge how they view their placements. A list of pre-drafted and agreed questions was used as a guide to conduct the consultations (see Annex 1).

3. Review Findings

3.1 Relevance

Both positions are not strictly in-line positions in the sense that these were not established posts prior to the decision by the requesting organisations to request advisers to these posts. The Government of Samoa is utilising the advisers to undertake a mix of capacity supplementation and development.

The Government of Samoa advised that neither position could be recruited locally:

- The Legal Adviser position within the Public Trust Office was locally advertised twice with no suitable applicants responding. This was due to the lack of a graduate with the requisite background and in-depth knowledge and skill set combination required.
- The Investment Department Adviser position required someone who could provide independent advice on international investment opportunities. Market testing indicated local expertise was not available. The requesting organisation required an adviser with investment experience and exposure specifically to the Australian investment environment (given Australia will be the investment focus of the Provident Fund), and who had the appropriate networks and credibility in that context.

Within the host organisations, senior counterparts at the Assistant CEO level were identified and have been engaged for both positions to facilitate capacity building and knowledge transfer. The Chief Executive officers of both organisations are also closely involved with tracking the advisers work through regular advisory consultations.

In the Samoa National Provident Fund, the adviser provides technical advice to the CEO, the Investments Board and when requested the SNPF Board of Directors. Within the next two months, the adviser will be making a presentation to the Investments Board which will also include a training/mentoring component on the role of the Board members. In addition the

adviser is learning the business of the organisation at all levels so that there is an understanding of the whole entity when he is giving technical guidance. The adviser is also helping to review parts of the SNPF Act to maximise the application of its authority to its fullest potential (which under some clauses has remained untapped until now).

In the Public Trustee's office, the adviser is providing technical advice to the Public Trustee when requested and on a day to day basis with the designated counterpart. Because this office has been relying mostly on the government recurrent budget for resourcing, the adviser has initiated enforcement of some parts of the Public Trust Act which will allow recovery of debts to fund other operations. As in the case of the SNPF adviser, enforcement of some clauses in the Act had also remained untapped until now.

In both cases, the advisers are providing an advisory role as well as a training and supervisory role. This is a particular strength of the PACTAM programme which allows enough flexibility to respond to the particular needs and objectives of each placement. In addition the method of selection and utilisation of this programme ensure that the advisers located are selected for the best "fit" to avoid mismatches with placements.

It is not clear whether the two positions currently occupied by the advisers will be filled by in-line personnel when they leave. The Government of Samoa has stated that each organisation must first make an effort to recruit locally. At the same time the organisations also need to ensure that adviser inputs will contribute to the development of their human resources for longer term sustainability and ability to meet these specific needs locally. In the meantime there is positive support for the PACTAM programme being used as a legitimate form of meeting technical assistance needs in special cases such as these.

3.2 Efficiency and effectiveness

Under PACTAM, applications are sent directly from the requesting organisations to the CEO of the Aid Coordination Unit of the Ministry of Finance (MOF). Following endorsement from MOF, applications are forwarded to AusAID with a recommendation to consider the request, if it is in line with the national planning objectives outlined in the Samoa Development Strategy. The MOF have oversight of adviser performance through their role on the management boards, via information provided by the CEO. This process ensures strong Government of Samoa ownership and commitment to adviser positions.

The involvement of the requesting organisation in the selection process is actively encouraged and their preferences are usually supported by the Government of Samoa. Before the request is sent to AusAID for consideration, issues of clarity, accuracy and relevance will have been addressed directly between the government and the host organisation. This does not preclude further consultations between PACTAM, the adviser and AusAID before the final appointment is made. As a result the request is clear and focused when AusAID receives it. In the case of the SNPF adviser, the requirement for a combination of specific experience in the Australian investment environment with an established professional network targeted a very small and specific pool of applicants. It also meant that SNPF had very specific outcomes for the adviser to meet.

One of the issues raised in this review is the need to have earlier access to the Procurement Equipment Allowance which is a mechanism under the PACTAM contract that allows for equipment and materials to be provided to support the work of the adviser within the host

organisation. Usually it is only after the adviser arrives in country and makes an assessment of the needs that it is recommended the equipment/materials be procured. There is a suggestion that equipment such as a computer, desk and chair could be purchased at more competitive prices overseas and would avoid undue delays if it arrived before the adviser. However a case can also be made for the need to have the adviser in place and on site first in order to make a more accurate assessment of the needs before any procurement is made.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Commitment to adviser positions

The two current PACTAM advisers are not recruited into projects or programmes. They are independent advisers who are engaged to deliver specific objectives against their contracts, which in turn are based on the articulated and agreed needs of the requesting organisation. The review confirmed the relevance and high importance the Government of Samoa attaches to both positions.

Investment Department Adviser – National Provident Fund

Currently the SNPF has a unique role in the Finance sector. The placement of the Investment Adviser is a high priority because of a lack of local expertise and exposure to international investment settings. The placement builds on the capacity building successes from a previous legal adviser placement in the SNPF, also funded under PACTAM.

Recommendation: With high level support from the SNPF and Aid Coordination Unit of the Ministry of Finance, the role will be continued in the short term. If this position can not be filled locally, AusAID is receptive to further requests from GoS for support.

Legal Adviser – Public Trust Office

The Public Trust office is not well resourced and as a result stands to benefit substantially from the training opportunities that will be made available through the present adviser. Previously the office had an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD) volunteer placement but with low success due to the AYAD's limited experience. Enforcement of previously untapped clauses in the relevant legislation will ensure collection of long outstanding debt that will contribute to the income of the organisation. As the office is the government's key body for management of trust estates, properties and wills, its function is important to the effective maintenance of livelihoods and care of the community, especially so in view of the high importance attached to land and property in the Samoan culture and identity. For the Public Trust office the current placement is a high priority and very timely.

Recommendation: As above, with high level support from the Public Trust Office and Aid Coordination Unit of the Ministry of Finance, the role will be continued in the short term. If this position can not be filled locally, AusAID is receptive to further requests from Government of Samoa for support.

4.2 Implications

In sectors where the Government of Australia is providing assistance through the bilateral Australia Samoa Partnership for Development, regional projects/programmes, or joint funding arrangements with other donors, there are alternative mechanisms and funds for

engaging technical advice. In others where there is no direct assistance, the PACTAM programme has been used to access advisers to provide this assistance. The PACTAM programme has a selection and recruitment process which complies with AusAID standards saving time and effort and leaving routine management tasks to the contractor to deal with.

Any other ad hoc requests from the Government of Samoa outside the context of established programmes are either considered at the annual high level discussions or decided at senior levels between the two governments if requests are urgent or critical e.g. the case of tsunami emergency assistance requested in 2009.

4.3 Agreed process/mechanism for discussing and managing future requests for advisers

Existing processes as described in 3.2 (i.e. through PACTAM based on endorsement by MOF and in line with the national planning objectives outlined in Samoa's national development strategy) will continue to be used in response to requests for advisers, especially for specialised technical expertise not easily sourced or available locally.

5 Next Steps

5.1 Timeframe and process for implementing review recommendations

Since there are no changes from the recommendations, there is no timeframe and process required.

Annex 1

Key questions for Partner Government and Host Organisations of PACTAM Advisers

- What are the key challenges and capacity constraints facing your organisation? What role do advisers play in helping to address these?
- Is the PACTAM adviser effective in building capacity in your organisation and are there clear examples of this?
- What are the factors that make advisers effective or ineffective in achieving results and outcomes?
- Given that each adviser could cost up to SAT\$450,000 per year, is this a cost-effective way of addressing the constraints and challenges facing your Department? Are there other ways that might be more cost-effective and have these been explored?
- How much ownership do you have over advisers – how involved have you been in designing their inputs, selecting them and managing their day-to-day work?
- What is your view of using advisers in inline positions, for examples as contract officers on the GoS payroll with possible supplementation by AusAID?
- What key results have been achieved to date as a result of the advisory position (consider both outputs and capacity building outcomes as appropriate)? How is this monitored and reported?
- What key results are expected to be achieved and in what timeframe (include both short and long term)? How have these been defined and by whom?
- What are the long term plans for the Legal/ Investment Department Adviser? Will this position eventually be taken on by a local person, is it a one off input or will there always be a need for an International Adviser?
- Do you think engaging advisers is a legitimate form of obtaining technical assistance? If not what suggestions do you have for a future process to get technical assistance in specialised areas?