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	<b>Project Board Meeting</b> <b>UNDP/Vanuatu Electoral Environment Project (VEEP)</b>	
<b>Time/Date</b>	10:00 am – 11:30 am, Thursday 8 October 2020 United Nations Joint Presence Office (UNJPO) Conference Room (Reserve Bank) Port Vila	
<b>Secretariat</b>	UNDP/VEEP	
<b>Attendees</b>	<p><b>Vanuatu:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- H.E. New Zealand High Commissioner Jonathan Schwass</li> <li>- Charlie Mangawai, Programme Manager: Political, Law and Justice Programme Manager</li> <li>- Adham Crichton, First Secretary, New Zealand High Commission, Port Vila</li> <li>- Edward Kaltamat – Chairman of Vanuatu Electoral Commission</li> <li>- Joe Johnson Iati - Principal Electoral Officer – Vanuatu Electoral Office</li> <li>- Gary Tavoia – Deputy PEO - Vanuatu Electoral Office</li> <li>- Benuel Lenge – Director, Civil Registry &amp; Vital Statistics Department</li> <li>- Pierro Willie, Finance Officer of the Ministry of Internal Affairs</li> <li>- Anne-Sofie Gerhard – UNDP/VEEP Project Manager/TA</li> <li>- Wendy Melenamu – UNDP/VEEP Programme Assistant</li> <li>- Maurizio Cacucci – UNDP/VEEP Public Outreach Coordinator</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Revai Makanje Aalbaek (Chairperson)- Effective Governance Team Leader (Pacific Office in Suva UNDP)</li> <li>- Mahezabeen Khan- Monitoring and Evaluation Analyst (Pacific Office in Fiji UNDP)</li> </ul>	
<b>Apologies</b>	Cherol Ala Ianna - Director General, Ministry of Internal Affairs	
<b>Next meeting</b>	N/A	
<b>Summary of Agreed Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Circulate the project document for VEEP Phase II to all board members for review and comments, as well as the draft Grant Funding Agreement to NZ MFAT.</li> <li>✓ Reconvene a Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC) meeting to discuss any comments and feedback, and possible endorsement, between 15 - 28 October 2020.</li> <li>✓ Current VEEP board members will keep the same membership. Briefing to the Council of Ministers could be done on a quarterly basis.</li> </ul>	<p>UNDP/Anne-Sofie Gerhard</p> <p>All board Members UNDP/ Anne-Sofie and Revai</p> <p>All board Members</p>
<b>1. Welcoming remarks from the Chair (UNDP Pacific Office, Suva)</b>		
	<b>Notes:</b>	



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Round of introductions, then the Chairlady opened the board meeting</li> <li>• Introduction of Mahezabeen Khan, quality assurance and monitoring</li> <li>• UNDP extended sincere gratitude to Vanuatu Electoral Commission and Vanuatu Electoral Office for the continued support of democratic governance in Vanuatu.</li> <li>• UNDP conveyed gratitude to MFAT for the continued support and special thanks to New Zealand High Commissioner and team in Port Vila.</li> <li>• The Chairlady congratulated all stakeholders who managed to move forward with nationwide elections despite all the challenges faced (TC Gretel and TC Harold, COVID 19 and border closures, the demise of the former Electoral Commission Chairman during elections)</li> <li>• UNDP congratulated Chairman Edward Kaltamat for taking over late Chairman Martin Tete’s position so efficiently and professionally</li> <li>• UNDP congratulated Vanuatu on the attainment of 40 years Independence 2020</li> <li>• Concludingly, the project was praised for having performed and delivered all planned activities with lots of adaptation and innovation during the year, despite the challenges. UNDP is pleased with the significant results that were archived.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Review of the Agenda</b> <b>3. Minutes of the last project board meeting</b></p>	
<p><b>DISCUSSION</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The Agenda was presented</li> <li>✓ Minutes from the VEEP project board meeting held on 19 February 2020 were unanimously adopted.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Summary of VEEP I achievements 2020, and remaining activities</b></p>	
<p><b>DISCUSSION</b></p>	<p><b><u>The project manager presented the main achievements of UNDP/VEEP project in 2020</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Output 1</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The increased staffing structure was approved last year, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020. Recruitment was however put on hold by PSC in March due to Covid-19 constraints and TC Harold. PEO added that positions were advertised for three positions in three provinces, which were considered by the recruitment panel. Final Submission was with PSC. Recruitment was put on hold due to expense priority, but it is expected that by end of the year the positions should be filled. The Provincial Electoral Officers are an important step in decentralising the on-going registration services and electoral planning and capacity building efforts to the provinces. Data Entry officers have also been recruited to the VEO to support data verification, analysis and clean-up.</li> <li>- The new Electoral Commission Building officially opened in May 2020, formally recognising the constitutionally mandated Electoral Commission with their own mandate. The Electoral Commission now also has formal Administrative Procedures codified in a handbook, as well as formal Operational Handbook developed.</li> </ul>



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- The project also supported the Electoral Commission in development of 12 draft regulations and 3 Codes of Conduct (for Political Party and Candidate Agents, for Media and for Election Observers) that were submitted to the State Law Office along with a drafting instruction with the objective of formally codifying a set of comprehensive procedures and rules regulating different aspects of the electoral processes. These are the first by orders consistent with the electoral law provisions, presented by the Electoral Commission.
- At the same time, whereas the Electoral Office is now undergoing a major refurbishment and planned to be completed before December 2020, to more suitably accommodate the work and increased staffing of the electoral office (the engine rooms). VEO Polling and Counting manuals, Training manuals and forms have also been updated based on feedback from 2019 local elections and polling staff. Furthermore, Candidate Handbook, Observation Manual, My Election – Week by Week booklet were developed.
- Additional translucent ballot boxes, tamper-evident seals and indelible ink was procured as contributing factors to security measures against fraudulent activities during elections, increasing trust and integrity in the electoral process.
- The first ever nationwide Post-Electoral Review was carried out for all provinces of Vanuatu, interacting with electoral stakeholders all around Vanuatu on both administrative, technical, operational, financial and legal aspects of the electoral process. The feedback received was an important part of the lessons learned consolidation and identification of possible electoral reforms preparations for the coming cycle.
- The post-electoral review was followed by another internal post-electoral Review/workshop carried out in Tamanu with UNDP/VEEP-VEO and VEC staff. A Post Electoral Review report and Post-Election Retreat report have been drafted as documentation and can be shared if any board member is interested.
- Finally, the digitisation project was initialised some months ago with four staff full time engaged on the process of sorting and organising documents, including acquisition of equipment and a specialized consultancy guidance in preparation for adaptation to Saperion document handling system.

### **Output 2**

- The data verification and validation has been done through field teams using tablets configured with KoboCollect forms, mobile applications (Android App) for data registrant data validation, satellite imagery and solar panels, canvassing the field province by province. At the HQ efforts on data analysis, de-duplication and cleaning efforts are on-going and is progressing well. The linking of the Civil and Voter registration databases have slowly started based on the national ID as the unique identifier. This is a result of the Joint Civil and Voter registration that was carried out last year. This support is, has been, and continues to be crucial to efforts of establishing an accurate and trusted national register as well a voter register. The project managed to develop the Web-GVRS system, to migrate data from the old locked voter registration system, the first step in the data merging between the three current databases.



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- The VEO is however still facing challenges using the national ID for voting purposes for upcoming Ureparapara by-elections as well as provincial elections next year, as the legal framework has only been updated to allow national ID for General Elections (CAP 146), as approved by parliament in June 2020. The approval however, did not cover all types of direct elections as re-drafting by SLO only focused on CAP 146, not CAP 126 and 230 for municipal and provincial elections respectively, and they never consulted with electoral authorities.
- The project supported the EC/VEO to prepare COM papers and concept notes for 'Harmonizing the Use of National ID Cards as Credentials for Voting for All Direct Elections'. Following some frustrations and challenging alignment of different departments, SLO is now working on an EC order to allow for National ID identification for provincial and municipal elections.
- Another COM paper was prepared on 'Comprehensive Overhaul of the Electoral Legal Provisions', which as come back signed by COM paving the way for establishing a legal overhaul working group early 2021.
- Given the provincial elections that will take place next year, the Electoral Authorities now focussing on issuing of National IDs and not Electoral Cards for provincial elections starting to phase these out, however electoral cards are still being issued for local elections this year.
- The project has increased its support to CRVS currently undertaking training on the functionalities and technicalities of both systems (RegisterVIZ, VES and GVRs) and national ID awareness with all local area administrators and area secretaries to build the capacities of staff within and beyond the walls of the main offices in Port Vila and Provincial levels. The ultimate goal is to establish a sustainable system whereby the prospective voter is registered in the electoral register (the electoral roll). The computerised electoral register is based on information already available in the national civil registration system (linked databases), to which the municipal and provincial authorities continuously convey basic, administratively relevant information about citizens, including the acquisition of voting rights, changes of address, and death. The information about citizens is best known by the Local Area Administrators, Local Area Secretaries and Ward Secretaries as the closest GoV rep at local level. In this way, inclusion on the electoral register and changes related to a change of residence, etc. takes place automatically and continuously. As a result, the both registers are permanently updated.
- National ID cards have been added additional security features, including barcodes, ID photo, Fluorescent 2-channel overlay laminaton, Hologram crest, microtext and guilloche. These are still affordable security measures significantly reducing access to black-market copies and dual registrations.
- Support to national registration and issuing of national ID cards for repatriation tracking at quarantine sites was a success until it was put on hold by NDMO and health authorities.
- The first ever help-desk system was implemented (in collaboration with the OGCIO ) to support electoral information and free call line on General Election-day.

### **Output 3**



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- Website and Facebook pages were developed last year and were continuously updated to support awareness and updates on Elections and joint registration efforts in 2020.
- Lots of voter information material was developed, including billboards along the roads in Port Vila and Luganville, Videos/Songs created with Wan Smol Bag, an important Voter Information Booklet: My Election - Week by Week, which was posted on facebook and website as well. A Voters Awareness committee was established and met every Wednesday for coordination purposes, as well as functioned as a sounding board to all discussions and initiatives. A big Public Awareness event was organised at Sea front with a panel discussions starting off the Awareness Campaign and count-down to General Elections. Lots of SMS push messages went out, and several radio tok-bak shows were organised.
- An Observation Handbook including Electoral Maps was prepared to provide more detailed and relevant information to observers, distributed in connection with accreditation and Observation Briefing. The Electoral polling station maps will now be upgrade into advanced and detailed satellite images with breakdown grids based on the essential work currently undertaken in collaboration with UNITAR and UNDP Crisis Bureau.
- The General Election 2020 saw a strong voter turnout even if it cannot be publicly proved with official statistics and the massively inflated register – and it is believed it is a result of much increased visibility and key messages continuously going out.
- A Civic Education Handbook has been developed in collaboration with MoET curriculum taskforce, and is currently being translated into three versions – Bislama, French and English. This booklet is an important contribution to the school curriculum from next year.

#### **Output 4**

- Only very few activities were carried out under output 4 and the political reform process in 2020. Most of the work was undertaken in 2019 with Political Party bills presented to Parliament last year and now awaits if someone will take that up again. If taken up, a draft procedures have been developed to set up political parties' registration function within the Electoral authority and can be embedded into VEEP phase II to be part of bigger Electoral Legal reform.
- Important knowledge products were similarly developed in 2019 but still requested in 2020 on party thresholds and financing.
- COM papers on harmonisation of the national ID for voting purposes and on proposed Electoral Legal reforms - Policy paper and concept noted submitted to DCO and COM and approved. The follow up on this electoral reform will be a big part of VEEP II.
- A General Election Report 2020 was developed and presented by DPM/Minister MoLA to the parliament with a comprehensive outline of the electoral legal framework, preparations and conduct of general elections, followed by analysis of election turnout, declared candidates, performance of political parties, results etc. and concluding with a summary of recommendations. The report was approved by parliament.



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### Risk Log and preventative measures

**Social Media** – The use of social media is new for VEO. The project has prepared a best practise guideline and briefing on the use of facebook. The IT officer and the compiler monitors the comments made online as a preventative measure to avoid wrong use of the page.

**Training of Polling Station officials** - a comprehensive cascade training methodology and material was developed so polling staff could be well prepared for the 2020 election, with electoral operations implemented coherently throughout the country despite many new features introduced such as ballot boxes, seals, indelible ink, training manuals, new PS booklet and reconciliation forms with carbon paper etc. These new measures required proper training for polling staff and registration officers in order to feel comfortable with new forms and use equipment correctly. There was a training of trainers organised at central level before trainers were sent out to train provincial officers, who would then train next level. PowerPoints and videos were created as supporting material along with role plays and mock material.

**Data Quality Assurance/Voter Register Accuracy** - Due to limited time for data cleaning and de-duplication before the election, additional security measures were introduced to prevent election fraud and multiple voting, including the use of indelible ink to mark all voters' fingers with a silver nitra solution leaving a mark for minimum 72 hrs. There is an immediate plan to start data verification and validation in the field following the elections, along with de-duplication teams in Port Vila. A team of 25 graduate students were recruited to undertake data analysis and data cleaning, starting mid 2020. There are still a number of challenges with the registers, including the list of village names, districts and area councils that need to be corrected and updated, names, locations and birth details of citizens that need to be corrected etc. The national civil register will be the main mother database in the future, and the voter register will be derived from the national registration database.

#### **COVID 19 Impacts**

Electoral observation did not happen as expected, as most of the observers could not travel to Vanuatu due to travel restrictions, border closures and precautionary measures. Electoral observers are however essential in ensuring transparency of the electoral process and to enhance its integrity and credibility. Therefore, accreditation was extended till last minute for in-country diplomats as 'special guests' in addition to MSG observation. Furthermore, electoral authorities arranged for online streaming through VBTC and Facebook of the results verification and recounting of votes where necessary for the first time in Vanuatu, which was a great achievement and with technology, innovation and much increased public access, the results process was massively enhanced with transparency and trust.

The project delivery was challenged due to the impact of the pandemic, especially in terms of international procurement and planned consultancies. Most material was



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instead identified in the local market and consultancies were converted to remote advisory. The project tried to purchase PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for electoral authorities but due to limited supply in Vanuatu, the project innovatively reached out to other UN agencies (WHO, UNICEF) and Min of Health, the Covid Taskforce, private clinics to come up with solutions. Subsequently, handwashing stations were set up in all urban centers on polling day with Dept of Water resources and UNICEF, PPE equipment donated from private clinics and procured from hardware stores, an agreement was made with a local rum distillery using their alcohol solution to make hand and material sanitiser following a recipe from WHO. Sanitizers were also used to sanitise ballot boxes coming from the field.

### **Overview of the Major Propositions for overhauling the legal Framework**

- To have all legal provisions currently dispersed into many unharmonized Acts to be integrated into one single law. Limit the detailed nature of the laws, making it easier for authorities to regulate changeable details.
- Review legal provisions regarding registration of voters. In the future, the Civil register dept. will undertake the main registration, based on birth registration, and will work closely with the Vanuatu Electoral Office. Meanwhile during the transition period, joint registration between Civil and Electoral Offices will continue.
- Legal provisions regarding the national IDs will need to be harmonised so that it is relevant to all direct elections. Harmonisation COM paper of national ID cards already passed.
- Amend provisions for registration of voters so they can now use the national ID card or the electoral cards for the transition phase. After two years it will be national ID cards only.
- Modify responsibility of the electoral authorities in establishing and maintaining the voter register.
- Modification of the ballot designs from booklets to the one-page ballot paper
- Explore out of country voting and (limited) out of constituency voting, and cancel of proxy voting as this has been a major cause of petition
- Review the length of the electoral campaign period – code of conducts now developed to enforce penalties
- Introduce basic campaign financial disclosure
- Empower the Electoral Commission to carry out their mandate.
- Clarify procedures for nominating Candidates
- Break up of mega polling stations into polling centers with smaller polling stations of max 800 voters to make sure all voters can vote within the given time for voting.
- Adapt the legal framework to reflect reality, as it is very outdated in many ways.

### **NZ High Commission**

The High Commissioner congratulated EC/VEO, VEEP project and other stakeholders for the successful holding of the election during challenging times. Even though observers



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were reduced, NZ managed to provide a report after the observation with observations and recommendations.

The NZ were impressed to see how people with special needs (both mothers with children and people with disabilities) were attended to at the polling stations on polling day NZ agreed that there is a need for VEEP II to continue capacity building efforts, reform measures and consolidate the many good achievements made so far.

First Secretary Adham Chricton formally acknowledged that EC will be included in the VEEP Phase II and will make sure that the Electoral Commission is supported and strengthened in their mandate.

### **PEO**

Thanked UNDP and NZ for support on building the new Electoral Commission office, now Martin James Tete Building, and for the preparations of the Electoral administrative booklets, operational handbooks, civic education booklets, training manuals, operational procedures, EC regulations etc. that have been developed and documented and is now used by the office staff when required. So many great achievements have been made with the project after 40 years independence.

### **Director CRVS**

Acknowledged VEO and VEEP for supporting the training of area administrators/secretaries in all provinces and for the strong collaboration and joint registration activities over the last two years. The director has also mentioned that they are looking much much forward to more support from VEEP phase II. Apart from the national ID card, there are plans to review the entire database system, which also include support from UNICEF. This is to document the system, and to improve the functionalities, use and access of the system to other users. Looking forward to the working relationship with both UNICEF and UNDP for mutual better results and ultimately a more accurate population database.

The chairlady thanked all for the cooperation to achieve all the outcomes presented and especially for the progress of the national ID.

## **5. Discussion of VEEP Phase II – Preparations, ProDoc Formulation, formal Processing**





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The Chairlady opened this discussion by sharing the good news of the confirmation from UNEAD HQ that the VEEP project has been extended to run in phase II from January 2021 through to June 2024.

Handheld tablets were displayed and shown to all board members.

Use of the tablets was briefly explained by Gary Tavoia who further explained the forms installed in the tablets. Tablets were then further illustrated by Wendy Melenamu and tablets passed around for board members to view.

NZ High Commission asked on data protection and the Project Manager explained some of the forefront steps taken to protect data such as the MOU signed between entities using the data, and staff signing non-disclosure agreements but that the bigger data protection and data privacy policy work lies ahead and is a priority in VEEP II.

### **MFAT Milestone Commitments**

#### **VEEP I**

Third Quarterly report will be shared soon.

Completion/Final report will be submitted in Dec 2020. VEEP I will operationally close by end December 2020, although financial closure will be in Jan/Feb 2021 when final December commitments have been reconciled. It was agreed that there will be no fourth quarterly report, given the Completion report, and no evaluation report is required, as confirmed by NZ High Commission.

#### **VEEP II**

A Desk Review was undertaken instead of the usual Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) due to COVID 19 pandemic travel restrictions. Following the approval and recommendations of the desk review, the project document has been developed for VEEP II.

As mentioned by Revai the project has been extended to June 2024.

The 'final' draft of the Project Document is ready to be circulated for comments and subsequent finalization.

### **Major Components and Challenges for VEEP II**

VEEP II will be the continuation of VEEP I. It will continue to support and strengthen the electoral authorities, particularly the Electoral Office and Electoral Commission, and now increasingly also the CRVS dept.

Support integrity and accuracy of Civil and Voter Registry, including data privacy and data protection at both policy development and legal drafting level.

Work on the data cleaning and merging strategy of the three databases, including database review, utility updates and maintenance – and capacity building on database management.

Continuous support to raising awareness and voter information.

Focus on establishing partnerships for increasing awareness to involve all people and reach out to the rural communities.



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Introduce the newly developed Civic booklet in the Education national Curriculum from 2021, supported by development of Teachers manual and student handbook.  
Support a massive legal framework overhaul and developing more procedures.  
Focus on registration and regulation of political parties, and increased participation of women in political processes.  
Identify measures to reduce the number of electoral petitions where possible. For instance, the boundary delimitation, canceling of proxy voting, financial disclosure mechanisms, out of country and out of constituency voting.  
Possible change of the electoral system to introduce more proportionality and reduce the number of constant by-elections.

The project document will be shared with all members of the board on October 15 and all members should review and provide feedback. All members are given until end October to review the document.  
The smoother the transition that better the transfer. There will be exchanges meanwhile.

The Project Manager mentioned that in VEEP II aims to increase support to gender mainstreaming across all outputs. Electoral legal reforms and establishment of an accurate credible civil and voter register are the two main priorities starting off in Jan 2021. The data validation and verification teams in the field will continue, along with the data clean up teams in Port Vila.

## 6. Project budget and financial situation

The Project Manager went through the financial Summary.

Outputs	Approved Budget (USD)	PO Commitment (A)	Expense (B)	LOA / NEX Advances (C)	Total (A+B+C)	Balance	% of Total Output
1	385,841	49,333.33	240,466	100,257	390,056.06	3,914.67	101%
2	273,759	6,170.71	215,885		222,056.28	51,702.62	81%
3	258,048	3,699.77	242,870		246,569.95	11,477.80	96%
4	102,060		80,694		80,694.39	21,365.61	79%
5 (Lesson Learned)	16,200					- 16,200.00	0%
<b>Total (USD)</b>	<b>1,035,907</b>	<b>59,204</b>	<b>779,915</b>	<b>100,257</b>	<b>939,376</b>	<b>96,530</b>	<b>91%</b>

All funds have been received from MFAT and now with only three months left, the remaining funds will be able to cater for the team for the rest of the year.



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Details	USD
Total Value of MFAT Funding	3,316,572.00
Contribution received to date	3,316,572.00
Total expenses charged to MFAT funds	3,298,832
Cash Balance	17,740
MFAT funds to be programmed for 2021	-

**Project Expense Summary per year:**

2018	2019	2020
USD 242,363	USD 2,117,393	USD 939,376

There are remaining POs and an LOA that is still open, however they will be processed and closed before the ending of the project.

Chairman Edward Kaltamat stated that there will be by-elections in Torba possibly in December and after the COM sitting there should be a confirmation on the polling date.

**7. Project Staffing**

- The VEEP project team is happily embedded in VEO and supported by external consultants when needed.
- It is aimed for the staff to be transitioned into Phase II.
- After the signature of the new project document, the UNDP Pacific Office will process the administrative work for issuing new contracts to the project team.

**8. AOB**

**DISCUSSION**

NZ High Commissioner remarked that in the past a Minister was sitting in the project board. Then, inquired if it was the case to consider any replacement.

PEO voiced that it is very important to have somebody from the parliament as political will is key for implementation of most electoral activities. If there is need for political will, there is no budget.

The Project Manager agreed with PEO regarding the importance of the political will backing however, stressed the importance of avoiding to politicise the board and keep the actions of the project unbiased.

PEO will seek advice from State Law Office on this issue to avoid politicising the board. While waiting for the advice by SLO, board members are happy to keep the composition of the board composed of civil servants representing the national authorities.

In VEEP II, quarterly briefings to the Council of Ministers should be considered to ensure they are informed about UNDP/MFAT support and electoral activities.

EC Chairman thanked all the present. Especially UNDP for the great support through MFAT.



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NZ High Commissioner shared that NZ is proud of supporting the VEEP project and looking forward to supporting the next phase of VEEP (2021-2024).

**Meeting closed about 12:30 PM**

Signed:

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Revai Makanje Aalbaek  
Chairperson