

## DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

### TRANSFORMING PACIFIC COMMUNITIES FOR A BETTER FUTURE

#### Executive Summary

Despite the myriad of opportunities for funding and expertise from the international community, people in both urban and rural areas in Pacific island countries are experiencing a range of barriers to reducing poverty, improving quality of life and reaching their full potential. Many villages and informal settlements are not showing any signs of securing adequate basic infrastructure, healthy housing, and local economic growth within the foreseeable future. Even with the millions that are invested annually by the multilateral development banks and friendly sovereigns on research, studies, capacity development, infrastructure projects and diplomacy to help close the socio economic gap, there is still much that needs to be achieved, and quickly particularly in the context of climate change.

Digital Democracy proposes a strategy to transform these communities out of poverty using digital technology. The strategy incorporates information gathering, sharing, and using the information to develop ideas, identify needs, prioritise the needs, develop skills, and all other aspects of capacity needed for communities to reduce poverty and improve quality of life.

The establishment of Digital Democracy would be through a software application that is developed together with the local community, provincial administration, and national authorities. The application will facilitate communication between the members of the community, between people and different levels of government, between the young and the old, men and women, the informed and the uninformed, and different segments of the community. It will ensure that information, needs assessment, and decision making is transparent. The app will facilitate the continuation of the empowerment that will establish the democracy needed to overcome weaknesses in the system that prohibit and discourage development.

This is a model that can be quickly adapted to the existing systems of administration in all countries. It supports, reinforces, and facilitates the effective local development administration by building the capacity of communities who will have the understanding and the skills needed to participate in the development process.

Digital Democracy will establish knowledge, awareness of entitlement and obligation, foundation, and strength for dignity and respect, pre-conditions needed for equity in resource distribution, gender, and intergenerational equity. It will join the household and the community with all levels of government through existing structures via smart technology. It will make the blockages and inefficiencies visible within current structures, reinforce and support government actions through transparency, accountability, and knowledge at all levels. The capacity built through the establishment of Digital Democracy is expected to empower communities and transform their lives from poverty to prosperity.

Digital Democracy will open up and streamline paths to myriad opportunities for the private sector including internet and intranet services, small scale infrastructure projects, maintenance services for infrastructure and housing, small digital devices, micro finance, training services for trades and many other subsidiary and complementary industry and enterprises. These services can be offered in different scales and extents. Some can be initiated within the local community and generate avenues to increase domestic money supply with multiple benefits. Others can promote local business entrepreneurs to generate local employment and manufacturing opportunities.