



Jason is one of eight national UN Volunteers serving with the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission. He is a Media and Public Relations Assistant under the UNDP-UNV Graduate initiative.

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UNDP-UNV Graduate Initiative offers fresh approach to electoral work in Solomon Islands

William, Samantha, Peter and Jason are UN Volunteers serving under the Graduate Initiative of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and UN Development Programme (UNDP) in the Solomon Islands. They have been serving with the Electoral Commission since 2021. United by their belief in governance and peace, they contribute to the Commission's efforts to uphold democracy within the electoral processes in the country.

The UNDP project, Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands, supports national authorities to conduct credible and inclusive electoral processes, and is

implemented with financial support from the Australian Government. It has the overarching objective of strengthening the link between elections and other key governance processes and institutions contributing to social cohesion and the development of a pluralistic society.

The project incorporates volunteer-based solutions through the mobilization of volunteers to support the work of these institutions. They conduct research and raise awareness, and deliver on communications, advocacy, procurement and event logistics.

Eight UN Volunteers are serving as part of the UNDP-UNV Graduate Initiative. Of these, four are engaged with the Electoral Commission Office, while four others serve with the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties.

Commenting on the work of the UN Volunteers, Ms Taeasi Sanga, one of the Commissioners of the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission, describes their engagement as a "fresh approach to electoral work" and key to "long-term involvement of youth in the country's development."

“ By opening the Commission’s doors to the youth, we are automatically getting closer to the voters. Thanks to the innovative ideas of the volunteers, we have increased our interaction with communities, which also increased the turnout of people in the recent provincial elections. --Ms Taeasi Sanga, Commissioner with the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission

Jason serves as a Media and Public Relations Assistant, writing press releases, developing social media content and interacting with the media. Jason’s work supporting many awareness and advocacy events for the Commission has enabled the volunteer family to inform the public about elections.

“ Volunteering with the United Nations is a lifetime opportunity, and the value of volunteering is essential. We are strongly committed to reinforcing the [electoral project] mandate. --Jason, UN Volunteer Media and Public Relations Assistant

"Our experience with UNV contributes not only to our career development, but also helps us see the bigger picture and the future we want for our country," he adds.

This is also true for Samantha, who serves as a Civic and Voter Awareness Assistant with the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission Office. Samantha advises electoral stakeholders about the challenges of boosting access to information and building the bridge of trust between voters and candidates.

One of the biggest highlights for her was helping the Commission organize the celebration for the International Day of Democracy on September 15. The open-air event hosted a number of tent towns, where people could engage in activities to learn more about the history of Democracy Day and its connection to the Electoral Commission, the Office of the Political Parties, and electoral processes. Participants included government and ministry officials, partners from civil society organizations, women, youth groups and persons with disabilities. Samantha used the opportunity to boost people's knowledge about the Commission's role.

"We created a space where students could have a dialogue with representatives from the Commission and the Office of the Registrar," Samantha explains. "This was a special scenario, where young people interacted with the government to learn more about elections and the electoral processes taking place in the country."

William Osifooa supports the Electoral Commission in the planning, development and execution of procurement plans in alignment with the mandate and priorities of the Electoral Commission and the Solomon Island Government Procurement Rules and Policies.

William strongly believes in effective, accountable and transparent institutions that promote democracy. He believes that his role would be greatly enhanced with the equal participation of women and men in the procurement process, including vendor registration, selection of vendors and procurement of assets.

"Participation builds a better future," says William.

“ Even though procurement staff are the behind-the-scenes heroines and heroes, we have the power to change and build a more equal world by engaging diverse sectors of the population, including civil society organizations, the private sector and academia in every procurement request we work on. --William Osifooa, UN Volunteer

According to Mr Michael Burke, UNDP Chief Technical Adviser and Project Manager for Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands Project, the UN Volunteer Initiative is providing UNDP with a "unique opportunity to change public perceptions about the abilities and participation of young people in the development processes of the country."

“ Mr Burke also believes that the active and visible involvement of youth in the public sphere "lays the foundation for their increased positive engagement, their social and economic integration in the communities across the country."

UN Volunteers like Jason, Samantha and William are highly qualified, motivated young professionals committed to serving provinces and communities in promoting peaceful elections for a peaceful Solomon Islands.

This story has been edited from the original published by [UNDP](#) in the Solomon Islands.



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