

GOUVERNEMENT DE LA REPUBLIQUE DU VANUATU

Autorité de Régulation des Services Publics
Ministère des Finances et de la Gestion Economique

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Utilities Regulatory Authority
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URA Supports Education in the Workplace

Regulation is a new area for me: I have a background in IT and work as the Authority's Office Manager.

Every year the Utilities Regulatory Authority (URA) sponsors training in Port Vila and overseas. The objective is to build the staff's capacity in regulation but also to develop other skills so that we are productive employees and educated citizens.

The Authority also delivers trainings and organizes public forums to increase people's knowledge and understanding.

Learning about Regulation

In October 2011 I attended the East-Asia Pacific Infrastructure Regulatory Forum (EAPIRF) where I enlarged my understanding in regulation.

EAPIRF takes place every year and we are a member of the organization. Members come from the following infrastructure sectors: energy, water and sanitation, telecommunications and transportation.

Last year's forum was held in Bangkok, Thailand. I had the privilege to participate in two sessions: Knowledge Sharing and Core Training.

I really enjoyed the Knowledge Sharing session because representatives of the member countries were exchanging information and experience in infrastructure and regulation. Their inputs have helped me understand the role of regulation.

During the Core Training session, we were split into groups and we had to solve real regulation issues.

I went to Thailand with the Authority's Chairperson Johnson Naviti and the CEO Carmine Piantedosi. Other colleagues attended the forum the year before in New Zealand, including Commissioner Paul Kaun: "I learned a lot from the training sessions but the exchange with regulators from the Pacific region was just as important."

The Authority's local staff and commissioners must also attend a two-week training organized by the Public Utility Research Center (PURC) at the University of Florida to better understand how regulation is done.

URA Project Manager Terry Mael participated in both the introductory and advanced courses: "I learned problem-solving techniques in a course on utility regulation and strategy, which was very useful. The whole program was an exciting opportunity to participate in an exchange of ideas and experiences with utility regulators and service providers from all over the world."

URA Project Manager Maureen Malas is currently on secondment with the Australian Energy Regulator (AER): "This experience is a great opportunity for me in terms of capacity building. It is more hands-on than EAPIRF and PURC: I am fully involved in an AER tariff reset project for three months. I am learning about regulation from my peers, in the workplace. I was also asked to share how we do tariff reviews in Vanuatu."

Learning about Other Topics

The Authority sponsors training on subjects other than regulation. My colleagues and I had the chance to attend a course called Winning Presentation, which helps participants make presentations in a more professional and credible manner. We learned to control our voice, body language and nerves.

The awful part was when each participant had to present on a topic for three minutes in front of the class and a camera. The video was played at the end of the presentations and we commented on each other. It is difficult to understand how well we address our audience unless we seek specific feedbacks. This training has helped me to be confident, do away with my shyness.

Terry Mael attended a media training offered by VBTC in Port Vila. He learned about how the media works, the opportunities they offer and their constraints in delivering information to audiences: "What I have retained from the VBTC workshop was how to write a focused media release, give effective interviews and fronting television cameras. "

Some of the courses that the Authority staff take also aim at developing their career. For example, Manager Regulation Lizzie Taura and Project Manager Romney Marum attended a two-day training on leadership with CEOs, Senior Leaders, Line Managers, Supervisors and human resources professionals.

Lizzie Taura said: "This course aims at showing leaders how to successfully coach their staff. To do this, a professional connection should be created in the working area to establish a clear communication line between a leader and his or her team. In general, we hope to develop our skills to perform better for the benefit of the Authority and its stakeholders, like the people of Vanuatu."

Teaching Others

We also help people outside of the URA develop their skills. Every year, the Authority's CEO Carmine Piantedosi gives a two-day training on Project Management in Port Vila, and it has been attended by several people besides the URA staff.

Susan Kaltovei from AusAid's Governance for Growth (GfG) Program said: "The Project Management course introduced me to valuable and practical concepts, principles, skills and techniques to manage a project effectively."

URA Project Manager Romney Marum said: "The training has greatly improved my ability to plan projects properly in order to achieve the project objectives within a given time-frame with minimum variations. I am currently working on a Public Education Program to inform people in Vanuatu on all the issues that we, at the URA, work on. We have held several public forums on specific issues but now we are planning a comprehensive education program for all four concessions. I am practicing what I have learned in that course: planning every aspect of the project in advance."

The Authority's Chairperson Johnson Naviti said: "I have personally benefited from URA-sponsored training. We would like to thank the World Bank and GfG for providing financial support to facilitate these trainings. We believe that strengthening staff's skills will contribute to the Authority's mission as the economic regulator in the electricity and water sectors, but it also helps our nation and citizens. Any Ni Vanuatu man and woman can benefit from extending their education in the workplace."

Written by Belinda Reuben, breuben@ura.gov.vu

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Notes to the Editor

About the URA

The Utilities Regulatory Authority (URA) was set up under the *Utilities Regulatory Authority Act No. 11 of 2007*. It acts independently of the Government and its primary purpose is to increase access to safe, reliable and affordable electricity and water services, and to protect the long term interests of consumers throughout Vanuatu. In the electricity sector, the URA monitors the concessions operated by UNELCO in Malekula, Port Vila and Tanna; and Vanuatu Utilities and Infrastructure Ltd (VUI) in Luganville. In addition, the URA manages consumer disputes and advises the Government on matters related to electricity and water. It also renegotiates tariffs under the rules of the Concessions Agreements and relevant legislation.

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