

## PROJECT Governance

# THE WEEK'S INSIGHT

15 April, 2024



Attorney Generals and Legal Office representatives from 14 Pacific Island Countries and Territories at the Regional Writeshop for Pacific Island Submissions to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Proceedings for Climate Change, led by the the Government of Vanuatu and hosted by Fiji with support from SPC, Nadi (2023)

## Support to Pacific Island Countries on International Court of Justice Climate Change Case Leads to Historic Outcomes

### Multi-year campaign

In the face of pressing climate change challenges, and following a consensus General Assembly Resolution, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has emerged as a significant platform for addressing the legal obligations of states in the climate crisis.

There has been a multi-year campaign for a climate change-related advisory opinion proceeding, and idea that was initially sparked by a group of law students at The University of the South Pacific and mobilised by national and regional civil society organisations as well as youth activist movements.

*The questions posed to the International Court of Justice ICJ will become successful only based on the national submissions of the Pacific countries so it is important that as a collective we work together as a region to make sure that the national submissions are robust. Process-wise, Vanuatu is also encouraging through the writeshops the collective engagements of all member countries to stay focused and where they can, as a collective find solutions to problems they may have to progress the work they are doing for the submissions*

HE Viran Brown, Vanuatu's  
High Commissioner to Fiji

(Continued on page 2)

In response to this, the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) have actively and cooperatively worked together to put forward the strongest case possible in responding to the questions before the Court (paraphrased):

1. What are the obligations of States to protect the environment from anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gas?; and
2. What are the legal consequences under these obligations when States, by their acts and omissions, have caused significant harm with respect to:
  - a. Small Island Developing States?
  - b. Present and future generations?



The Pacific Community (SPC) has played a pivotal role in facilitating this engagement, offering technical support and expertise via Regional ‘Writesops’ to ensure the effective participation of PICTs in the ICJ advisory opinion (ICJAO) process. This engagement has proved instrumental in empowering Pacific nations to articulate their concerns and interests in the context of climate change as a record number of PICs submitted to the Court, the most ever participation of the region with the United Nation’s highest court. These workshops brought together a diverse array of stakeholders, including government officials, legal experts, civil society representatives, and traditional knowledge holders, totalling 14 PICTs’ involvement with over 50 participants from across the region.

The major outcomes of each Regional ICJ Writeshop have been profound. First, these workshops have provided a platform for capacity building, equipping participants with the necessary legal knowledge and skills to engage effectively with the ICJ advisory opinion processes. Second, they have fostered collaboration and networking among stakeholders, facilitating the exchange of ideas and best practices in addressing climate-related legal issues.

Finally, the Writesops contributed to the development of comprehensive legal strategies and submissions, enabling PICTs to assert their rights and interests before the ICJ with clarity and coherence. The Regional ICJ Writesops served as catalysts for raising awareness and solidifying the Pacific region’s leadership in climate justice at the highest levels. By amplifying the voices of the communities at the front lines of fighting climate change and advocating for their rights, this technical support contributes to a broader movement for climate action and accountability.



*Addressing climate change is the greatest challenge of our lifetime and Pacific communities are at the centre of this crisis. Climate change is increasingly recognised as an urgent human rights issue*

Honourable, Siromi Turaga,  
Attorney General of Fiji



Participants during the 2nd Pacific regional writeshop



Vanuatu filing their submission with the  
ICJ Registrar



## So what?

Unprecedented Pacific participation in the ICJAO is a critical step towards advancing climate justice in the Pacific region and beyond. Support to initiatives like this lay the groundwork for holding states accountable for their obligations in addressing climate change.

Moving forward, it is imperative to build upon these achievements and sustain momentum in advocating for equitable and effective climate governance mechanisms. This entails continued capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and advocacy efforts to ensure that the voices of Pacific nations are heard and heeded on the global stage. As the planet navigates the complex climate change challenges, the support provided by SPC and its donors underscores the collective commitment to securing a sustainable future for all.

*Kiribati is in the very frontline of climate change effects... This is quite important for Kiribati as we are going to make a case to ICJ from this writeshop*

Aretaake Lentaake, Director of  
Kiribati Human Rights Taskforce

## Imabusaine Development Committee on its Way to Addressing its Top Priority Need

05 April, 2024



Members of the Imabusaine Development Committee

On Friday 5 April, the Imabusaine Development Committee held a major fundraising event and raised 114,000vt, reaching well over their target! This was no mean feat. The Central Tanna Area Administrator, John Bill, supported the effort by inviting other development committees who had already been established, and requesting each to make a donation of 5000vt from their development fund savings. The Administrator also encouraged them to purchase food that was prepared and sold by the Imabusaine tribe. Paskal Nimissa, chairperson of the Imabusaine Development Committee expressed sincere thanks and appreciation to all development committees that attended and contributed to their Aid post project.

### Background

CARE International in Vanuatu through PROJECT Governance is strengthening the capacity of 20 development committees to use inclusive governance approaches to facilitate the identification of local (village, community, tribe) development priorities and mobilising resources through fundraising within the community and/or seeking support from other sources.

Geographically, the Imbusaine Tribe is remotely situated resulting in limited access to health, education, and other government services by the people. From 22 to 26 January, the Imabusaine Development Committee's, which is made of 10 women and 3 men attended CARE's Good Governance training, alongside committees from Loukamal, Lenatuan, and Lounaula.

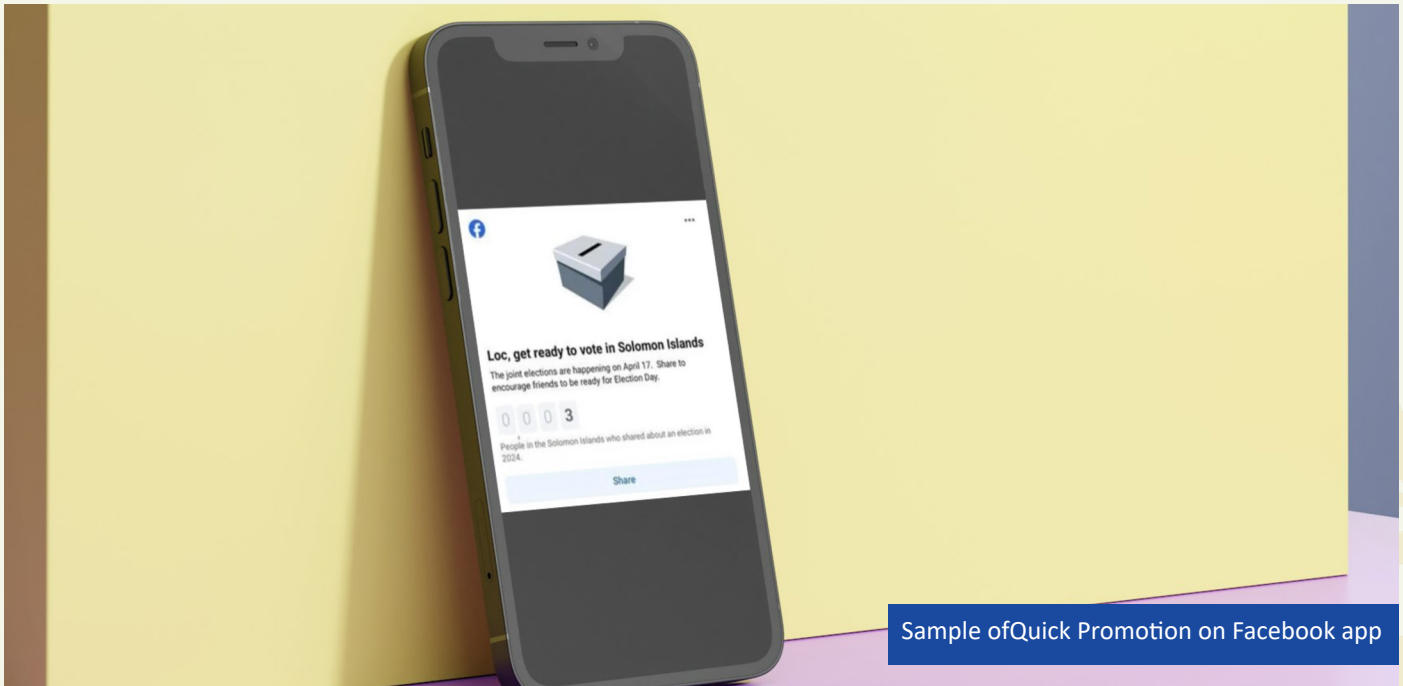
CARE conducted monitoring activities from 12 to 16 February 2024, reviewing the Imabusaine Development Community's progress on their action plan. Despite the short time since training, the PROJECT Governance team was impressed to find that the committee had completed the development planning process, focusing on their priority needs. With 300 residents, women and children must travel long distances for health services. Establishing an Aid-Post was a top priority, with the tribe aiming to raise 100,000vt between March and June 2024.

### So what?

Community Development Committees have adopted a collaborative fundraising approach to support priority projects, fostering ownership and cooperation among villages. This empowerment model enables communities to address their needs and attract government support.

In early May, CARE's PROJECT Governance team will host meetings between government agencies and committees to discuss priority needs, assess community initiatives, and plan for government support. This approach accelerates project funding, strengthens community bonds, and sets a proactive tone for sustainable development in the region.





Sample of Quick Promotion on Facebook app

## Facebook Promotions Motivate Solomon Islanders ahead of Election Day



10 April 2024

On April 10th, IFES launched a new initiative in the Solomon Islands as Quick Promotions (QPs) in partnership with Facebook. This collaboration aims to support information advocacy for the upcoming elections in the Solomon Islands, scheduled for April 17th. The QPs will play a crucial role in boosting awareness about Election Day and encouraging voter participation.

IFES and Facebook have joined forces to design and schedule these QPs, which will appear on the feeds of all Facebook accounts registered in the Solomon Islands. The first QP, launched on April 10th, reminded voters of the upcoming joint elections and urged them to prepare to vote and encourage their friends to do the same. A second QP is scheduled for April 17th, prompting Solomon Islanders to go to the polls and cast their votes.

IFES has played a pivotal role in shaping the QPs, ensuring they are accurate, clear, and non-partisan. The collaboration between IFES and Facebook has been productive, with Facebook readily accepting IFES' advice and revising the QPs accordingly. IFES will continue to engage with Facebook to monitor the reach of the QPs and explore opportunities for further collaboration in other Pacific Islands countries with upcoming elections.

### So what?

With Facebook being a widely used platform among Solomon Islanders, especially young people, these QPs have the potential to reach a vast audience, helping ensure that voters across the country are informed and motivated to participate in the upcoming elections. By using clear and neutral language, the QPs also help highlight the importance of voting for all Solomon Islanders, with minimal risk of being compromised by the politically charged and conspiratorial rhetoric emanating from the election campaigns.

Moreover, this initiative has the potential to open up further opportunities for collaboration between Facebook and IFES in other Pacific Islands countries with elections on the horizon.



## Debbie Akane, a PROJECT Governance Fellow from Papua New Guinea, discusses life-changing experience attending the 28th UN Climate Change Conference

05 April, 2024



Last December, I was fortunate enough to travel to Dubai for the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP28, as part of a team of environmental law students from the University of Hawai'i Richardson School of Law. The COP, which stands for Conference of the Parties, is a massive annual meeting of countries who have ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)—a commitment to prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system that has near-universal membership.

Being a Master of Laws student specializing in environmental law, this was such a pivotal learning experience for me as I was able to observe firsthand how climate negotiations occur at the global level and sit in on high-level discussions, presentations, side events, and information sessions throughout the conference. With my background as a Legal Officer for the Papua New Guinea Forest Authority, I wanted to learn more about the shared challenges developing countries face in implementing international treaties like the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

As a Pacific Small Island Developing State with the third largest tropical rainforest in the world, Papua New Guinea is already experiencing the effects of climate change and is at a crossroads of how best to foster true sustainable development that not only supports its economic aspirations, but also protects its vast land and ocean resources and contributes to the climate goals of the global community.

I was particularly interested in issues of just transition and access to finance for small developing countries to meet their goals of developing climate resilience with strong adaptation and mitigation strategies, while also transitioning away from non-renewable sources of energy. During negotiations, numerous developing countries cited ongoing challenges with access to development funding, and it was encouraging to see organizations such as the Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility announce that they would review and streamline their processes to allow for greater accessibility in response to these concerns.

*I was particularly interested in issues of just transition and access to finance for small developing countries to meet their goals of developing climate resilience with strong adaptation and mitigation strategies, while also transitioning away from non-renewable sources of energy*

Debbie Akane, PNG

Going forward, I now have a better understanding of COP negotiations and the complexities of climate issues, especially for small developing countries. I hope to use what I have learned to do more research around issues including conservation, carbon markets, and how all stakeholders—especially Indigenous peoples of the land—can benefit. This is of huge relevance to my career in Papua New Guinea’s forestry sector and how this sector can be molded to have a focus on conservation and just transition. I hope to contribute further to this space after returning home, potentially in the areas of suitable governance mechanisms and regulations.

As a first-timer to a global UN event and a COP meeting, it was a very eye-opening experience and I am grateful to the environmental law program of the William S. Richardson Law School, especially Professor Wallsgrove and Professor Forman, and our sponsors for this memorable trip. I am also indebted to PROJECT Governance for the opportunity to study here at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa, without which I would not have had the opportunity to attend a COP meeting and have this life-changing experience.







## Leadership training influences more than government officers



**Tsitalato Community Government Executive Committee member Steven Harek and wife Reina Harek.**

27 March 2024

The implementing team for CARE International in Papua New Guinea's PROJECT Governance recently encountered an inspiring story during a 27 March mentoring visit with the Tsitalato Community Government Executive Committee. The team introduced a session about managing change, focusing on "What is change, the process of change, and challenges of change."

During this session, Ward Member Steven Harek shared the changes he and his wife Reina had experienced since he began attending PROJECT Governance sessions. Reina Harek expressed, "How we stay in the family, we discuss about today and tomorrow and this is how we stay in the family." She highlighted her increased confidence and involvement in various community activities, including assuming roles in a cooperative and speaking on behalf of women at meetings.

Steven Harek, once a reluctant public speaker, now advocates for women's empowerment, acknowledging the strength and support he receives from his wife. He stated, "Having an empowered wife strengthens me." He highlighted the positive changes in their village and expressed pride in his wife's newfound confidence and support.

*When I attended CARE's training, they promoted the contribution of women and the kind of change that can come about from involving women. CARE spoke about men and women working together, and how men need to help women to be strong. Having an empowered wife strengthens me. She encourages me and gives me the confidence to attend trainings ...What you are now seeing is a lot of improvement. Our village is improved.*

Steven Harek

### So what?

The Harek's experience exemplifies the positive impact of male and female collaboration. Their story underscores the success of PROJECT Governance in fostering champions of change among the executives of the eight Community Governments in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.



## Snapshots.



Gerado joined the PROJECT Governance team for Brian's 'Sota Tale' (see you later) farewell



Debbie at COP-28



ICJ Writeshop in Nadi, Fiji

## MARK THE DATE

### 17 April:

IFES Team deployed to support the first nationwide joint elections - Solomon Is

### 29 April-3 May:

Pacific Youth Council Convening, Fiji

### 8-9 May:

CARE: Two interface meetings between community/village development committees and sector agency representatives of government - Tanna Island, Vanuatu