

PROJECT GovernanceTHE WEEK'S
INSIGHT

27 May, 2024



EWC PROJECT Governance team at the 2022 International Media conference in Honolulu where we convened an expert advisory conference that started the seed of the FIRM

**Five Pacific Newsrooms Selected
as Partners for the Financial
Investigative Reporting and
Mentorship Initiative**

May 2024



The East-West Center and Report for the World are pleased to announce the five Pacific news organisations selected as partners for the Pacific Islands Financial Investigative Reporting and Mentorship Initiative (the FIRM). This new PROJECT Governance initiative supports the establishment and expansion of financial investigative reporting units within local newsrooms committed to public service journalism.

(Continued on page 2)

The selected newsrooms include:

**The
Fiji Times**
(Fiji)

**Islands
Business**
(Fiji)

**Inside
PNG**
(Papua New
Guinea)

**In-depth
Solomon**
(Solomon Islands)

**Talanoa 'o
Tonga**
(Tonga)

Each of the newsrooms receives support to hire full-time, seasoned financial investigative journalists to staff the unit for up to three years. They will also receive specialised and targeted professional development and mentorship services throughout the three years that focus on enhancing financial investigative reporting skills, sharing information on journalism safety, cyber security, and visual journalism, as well as encouraging international collaboration on story design and reporting. These services will be provided by the East-West Center, Report for the World, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)—a global investigative journalism network—and other expert resources as required.



2022 Pacific Media Summit in Honiara where we met with journalists and further developed it

So what?

Independent media plays a key role in promoting sound, just, and responsive governance by demanding transparency and holding leaders accountable on issues that affect public policy and public trust. By partnering with local independent news organisations in the Pacific through the FIRM initiative, PROJECT Governance is boosting their capacity to shed light on financial matters that can have major impacts on a country's economic and political systems.



Miles and Ashley with Pacific Ambassadors, PIFS Ambassador Mere Falemaka and reps from Pacific Missions

Roundtable of Pacific Ambassadors to the United Nations, Geneva

21 May 2024

On Tuesday 21 May, the Pacific Islands Forum Ambassador, Mere Falemaka, on behalf of PROJECT Governance hosted a roundtable for Pacific Ambassadors to the United Nations in Geneva to brief them on the request for a Pacific CEDAW session and other matters of interest. The roundtable was attended by the Ambassadors of Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Vanuatu, and Deputy Mission Representatives of Australia and New Zealand.

All expressed their support for a regional CEDAW session, with Samoa reflecting on the positive outcomes and experience that came from hosting the 84th Extraordinary Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2020. The delegations also expressed support for proposed and future PROJECT Governance activities – support for Treaty Body elections, and capacity building for Pacific negotiators at the Human Rights Council and COP.

So what?

At the roundtable, several Pacific Ambassadors pledged to advocate for the Pacific CEDAW session at the highest levels within the United Nations. Further, agreement was reached to partner with the PIFS Mission in Geneva to coordinate with the Pacific negotiators trained under PROJECT Governance to amplify regional and national messages within the Human Rights Council and in the margins.



Presentation to CEDAW Committee

20 May 2024

On Monday 20 May, HRSD Director, Mr Miles Young, and PROJECT Governance Chief of Party, Ashley Bowe, briefed the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women on the request for a Pacific CEDAW session which arose from the 2023 Women Leaders Meeting. The briefing looked at the urgent need for catalytic change in respect of the rights of women and girls in the Pacific, highlighting the region having around twice the global average rate of violence and the lowest proportion of women Parliamentarians of any region in the world. Drawing on the Extraordinary 84th Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, held in Samoa in 2020, the briefing looked at the possible value of a Pacific session of CEDAW, highlighting how it would enable Committee to engage with hundreds of women through the formal sessions, side events and in the margins, as well as possible country visits prior or subsequent to the session. The Committee could also hear firsthand why, despite gender equality being a regional priority, little progress is being made to end violence against women and girls, and why they are unable to break through the political barriers. In turn this would empower hundreds, if not thousands to become agents of change – maybe to run for office, join an NGO, pursue a career in gender equality or even just talk within their families and communities about the ways to achieve positive change.

Following the briefing, the Chair of the Committee requested a follow-up meeting to discuss the practicalities of holding such a session, and indicated the Committee's support for the initiative. This will now be taken by the Chair to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for final approval. Should it get this, the session is likely to happen around June 2025.

So what?

Should the Pacific CEDAW session get the go ahead, it will be a truly historic occasion. Only once before, in the history of all the United Nations Treaty Body Committees, have any of them sat outside New York or Geneva. This would be the second time in history and would be an opportunity for PROJECT Governance to invite Pacific Heads of State, the United Nations Secretary General and High Commissioner for Human Rights and other leading dignitaries. Most importantly, it would be an opportunity to empower many Pacific girls and women, and drive the realisation of their rights forward.



Debbie and Solomon after the Graduation Ceremony

PROJECT Governance Fellows Graduate from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

11-12 May 2024



Over 11 to 12 May, the East-West Center wished their second cohort of PROJECT Governance graduate degree fellows a fond ho'omaika'i (congratulations) as they earned their degrees from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Debbie Akane of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Yeo of the Solomon Islands both earned their Master of Laws (LLM) degrees from the Richardson School of Law, while Tuitala Lasifo of Tuvalu earned his Master of Science in Information Systems from the Shidler College of Business.

In graduating, they join Alice Areori and Charles Olovikabo of the first cohort in the alumni network of 70,000+ individuals who have graduated from East-West Center programs, in addition to the massive alumni network of the University of Hawai'i. These three graduates are currently on their capstone trip to Washington, DC, meeting with legislators, USAID, the State department, and various organizations involved in Pacific governance. Ahead of returning to their home countries, they will also support their respective country delegations to the Festival of the Pacific (FestPac) as well as helping organize the University of Hawai'i FestPac conference, "Protecting Oceania."

Now we have the knowledge of Hawai'i and more connections through the East-West Center, we have more connections with other Pacific Islanders and young Pacific leaders, which benefits not only our own countries but the whole Pacific region, and also the relationship between the Pacific Islands and the United States

So what?

In earning their degrees, this second cohort of PROJECT Governance graduate degree fellows builds on the success of the first cohort, demonstrating both the effectiveness and importance of the PROJECT Governance graduate degree fellowship. Through the fellowship, PROJECT Governance not only grants promising individuals the opportunity to advance their knowledge and skills, but also empowers them as young leaders to promote sound, just, and responsive governance in their home communities across the Pacific.



PROJECT Governance farewells Jill Aru, a strategic thinker and leader



17 May 2024

Jill Aru, who began her journey with CARE International in Vanuatu in August 2020, has been instrumental in the success of the Inclusive Governance project in Central Tanna Area Council, Tafea Province. Initially joining as the Tropical Cyclone Harold Recovery Manager for Pentecost, she swiftly moved through various roles, ultimately becoming the Inclusive Governance Portfolio Manager in July 2023.

A single mother of two, Jill is a trailblazer for Ni-Van women in leadership. Her strategic foresight was pivotal during Cyclones Judy, Kevin, and Lola, where she managed response activities effectively. Under her leadership, CARE's Inclusive Governance project achieved remarkable success, earning accolades from both subnational and national government agencies.

Jill's efforts led to the establishment of village development committees, promoting inclusive governance and women's leadership at the community level. Over 170 activities, including governance training and strategic meetings, were supported by the project, which aided the Tafea Provincial Government in developing their Five-year Strategic Plan (2023-2027).

On 17 May, Jill transitioned to a new role as a Gender Equity, Diversity, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) advisor for the Government of Vanuatu's Ministry of Climate Change. Her legacy at CARE continues through the strong team she built, ensuring the project's ongoing success. We wish her well in her new endeavors.

So what?

The PROJECT Governance supported Inclusive Governance project has opened up a massive opportunity for CARE to expand its inclusive governance programming footprint in Vanuatu. There is appetite within different agencies of government for focussed systems strengthening support that results in better alignment and coordination of government and development partner support to provinces, area councils, and communities across Vanuatu. To respond to this, CARE is repositioning itself to demonstrate clear alignment to relevant government plans, policies, and strategies from Area council to Provincial and national levels; and report on what it is doing to the government. Strengthened program design and implementation approaches will also ensure that ownership, sustainability, and impact are at the core of all CARE projects.



Deputy Chairman Mr. Igei Wama and CGEC member Mrs. Jubitha Kisu doing their presentations on defining change

Change and Planning for Change session at Hagogohe



9 May 2024

On 9 May, ward members and executive of the Hagogohe Community Government participated in a mentoring session on the topic “Change and Planning for Change”. The session was aimed at equipping leaders with the knowledge and tools to identify both positive and negative change; understand them enough to properly define them; manage their effects; and address their root causes.

As part of this leadership capability strengthening activity, the problem tree/solution tree analysis tool was introduced. Participants found the thought process quite enlightening and actively participated in the practical exercise to actually use the tool.

So what?

The mentoring visit is a key activity implementation approach for the PROJECT Governance funded, ‘Leading Together with Respect’ project implemented by CARE International in PNG. Mentoring visits are focused leadership and inclusive governance capability strengthening activities that are conducted with individual Community Government Executive Committees and interested ward members. They facilitate one-on-one support to ward members on different topics.

Meet Tuitala Lasifo, PROJECT Governance Fellow



Tuitala Lasifo has accomplished much as an IT entrepreneur over the last several years, working on numerous important technological initiatives with businesses and the government in his home country Tuvalu. It's even more impressive to consider his first introduction to computer science wasn't until he started his foundation studies for university, as he didn't have access to computer courses in his high school.

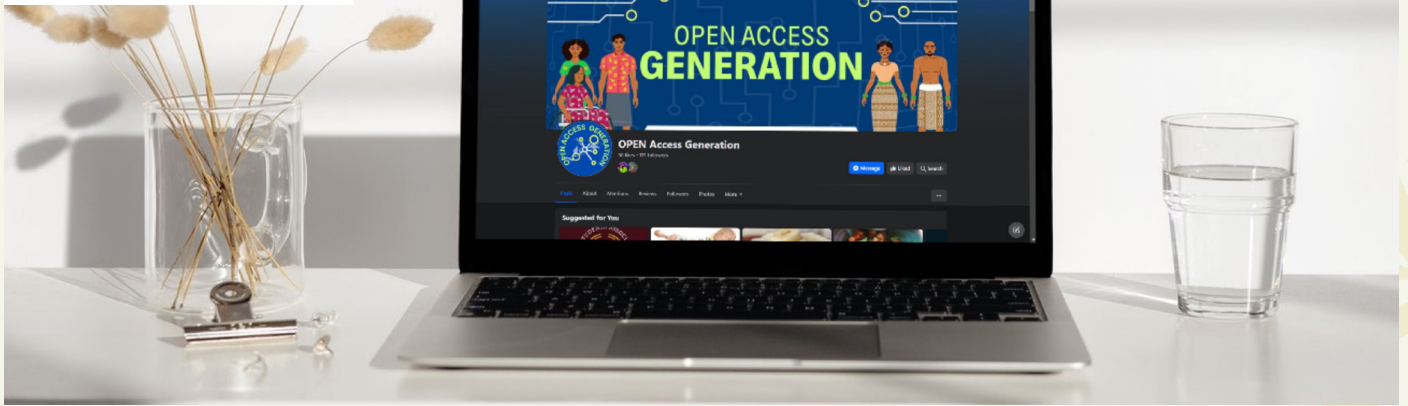
"I found out that I love IT, especially software development, because I can help in developing things that do not currently exist," said Tuitala. "It helps me to be more innovative and creative, so I can build software, challenge myself, and solve some real-world problems."

Since then, Tuitala has actively engaged with numerous organizations and projects that contribute to sound, just, and responsive governance in Tuvalu. He has led the development of important websites and databases, including the national Civil Registration database and the Tuvalu Overseas Medical Referral Scheme (TOMRS) database. He has also consulted on national projects related to digital transformation, cross-border paperless trade, climate change, education, and e-commerce, including the development of an e-wallet app for Tuvalu with plans to expand to Nauru in the future.

Through PROJECT Governance, Tuitala is now hoping to build on these successes by pursuing a Master of Science in Information Systems at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. He is hopeful that this experience will allow him to amplify his impact when he returns to Tuvalu, inspiring young entrepreneurs like himself.

Reflecting on his year as a PROJECT Governance fellow, Tuitala feels most appreciative of the richness of his experience. In addition to his degree, Tuitala has been able to pursue valuable computer science certifications with CompTIA and AWS through the fellowship. He has been able to do part-time student research work and even found time to pursue some of his personal goals, including running a marathon with friends on the Big Island. As graduation approaches, Tuitala feels optimistic about what lies ahead for him and his fellow classmates.

I believe that this degree will advance my career and ability to further play my part in contributing to sound, just, and responsive governance through the use of technology in the social and economic development of my country Tuvalu and the Pacific region as a whole



Fijian Student Group Prepares to Raise Awareness on Open Data



May 2024

Despite commitments from governments around the world to open government and open data, the Government of Fiji has lagged behind. It is yet to join the Open Government Partnership and Open Data Charter principles.

To address this need for awareness and understanding of these concepts, IFES has partnered with The University of the South Pacific (USP) Student Association to launch the [Open Access Generation](#) initiative. This initiative aims to raise awareness about open data through engaging social media content.

In its early stages, the initiative has established a Facebook page, designed a logo, and planned content. USP students are creating video scripts, while IFES prepares infographics on topics like the Open Data Charter. The Facebook page has been launched, with ongoing efforts to engage university students and civil society organizations. Content includes videos from USP's Suva campus and informative infographics.

So what?

The Open Access Generation, although a small-scale initiative, has the potential to increase awareness about open data and its importance for Fiji, particularly among young Fijians. By sharing information about open data on social media, it can help young people, who are active on social media, understand the ways that open data can be leveraged to hold governments accountable and promote evidence-informed policymaking. This, in turn, could encourage other Fijian as well as Pacific Islands youth to call for more commitments to open data and open government. Moreover, this activity provides an opportunity to directly support civically minded students to build skills and experience in awareness-raising and advocacy, with IFES sharing strategies and good practices for external communications with the group. It is planned to promote this campaign also in other targeted Pacific Islands.

PPAC Capacity Building Workshop in Auki, Solomon Islands



20-23 May 2024

From 20 – 23 May, the Pacific Peoples Advancing Change (PPAC) programme held capacity building workshop in Auki, Solomon Islands with on-the-ground support from PROJECT Governance’s Governance Adviser, Kate Alliot. The event saw nine participants—seven men and two women—from four community organisations involved in Phase 6 and three new ones in Phase 7.

The workshop focused on developing advocacy campaigns for Phase 7. Ideas included training rural school leavers in beekeeping to create economic opportunities, advocating for the implementation of women’s leadership empowerment policies at ward and provincial levels, and initiating a male advocacy campaign on sexual reproductive health and gender-based violence.

Participants praised the PPAC for meeting them “where they were,” highlighting the programme’s regular follow-ups, which have been crucial in building their capacity to apply for larger grants. The workshop not only provided practical skills but also reinforced the programme’s commitment to empowering grassroots organisations in the Pacific region.

So what?

The significance of the PPAC Capacity Building Workshop in Auki extends beyond the immediate training of its nine participants. By equipping grassroots organisations with the skills to develop impactful advocacy campaigns, the workshop fosters sustainable community development. Initiatives such as training rural school leavers in beekeeping and advocating for women’s leadership and male involvement in reproductive health address critical socio-economic and gender issues. The consistent support and follow-up from PPAC ensure these organisations can secure larger grants, amplifying their impact. PROJECT Governance’s on-the-ground support played a crucial role in providing tailored capacity building and reinforced the commitment to inclusivity and empowerment, catalysing long-term positive change in the Solomon Islands and the broader Pacific region.

MARK THE DATE

20-26 May:

ProGov fellows DC capstone trip

3 - 4 June:

Council of Pacific Arts & Culture and Pacific Ministers of Culture meeting, Hawai’i

6 - 16 June:

13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture, Hawai’i

9 June - 21 July:

Vanuatu PSC Roadshow

10 June:

ProGov Fellows attend FestPac13 and “Protecting Oceania” conference, Hawai’i

12 June:

Workshop on Countering Threats of Disinformation and Other Harmful Speech for Elections in Fiji

23 June:

FIRM journalists attend International Media Conference in Manila