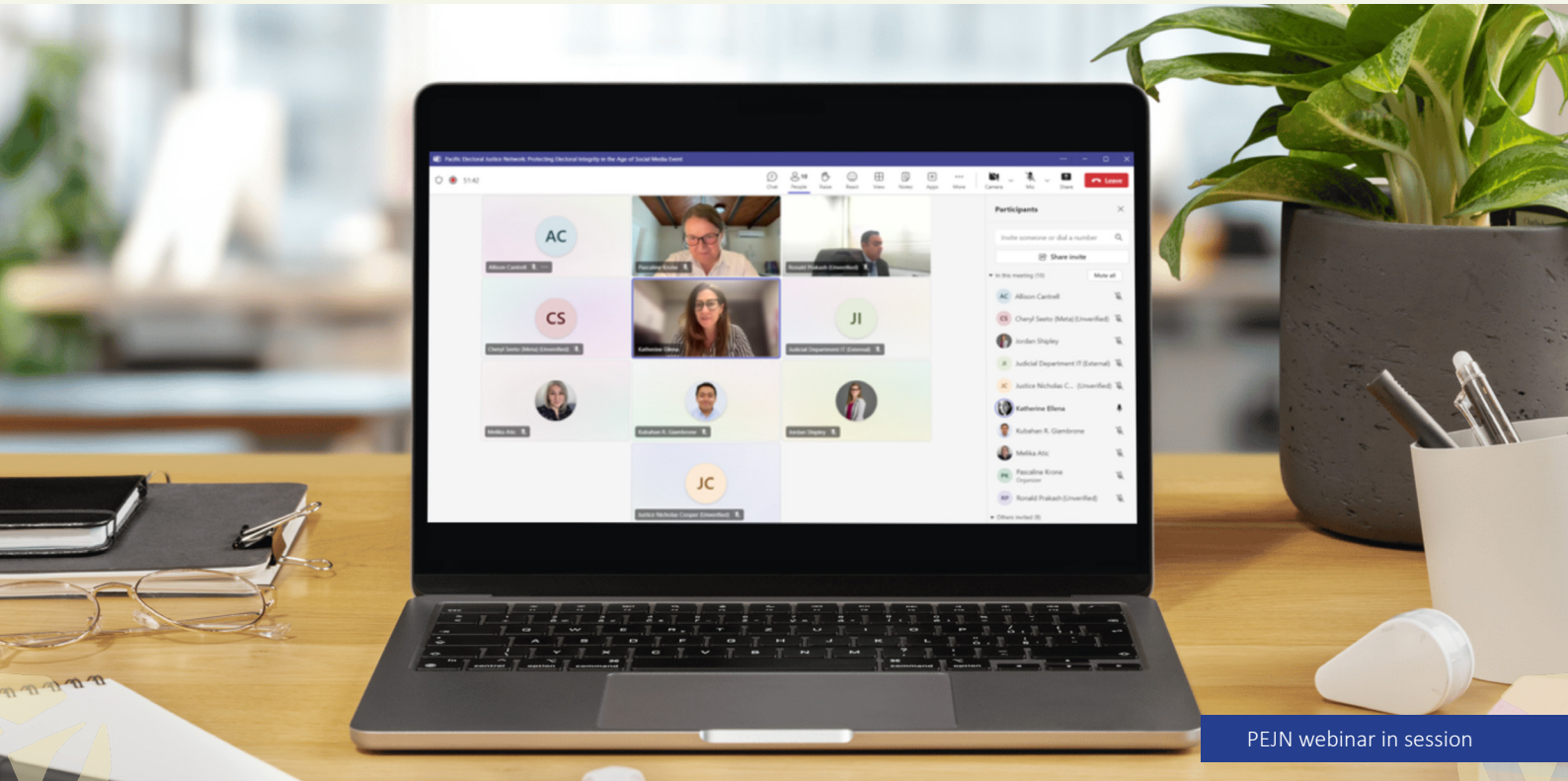


**PROJECT Governance**

THE FORTNIGHTLY  
**INSIGHT**

26 November, 2024



**Pacific Electoral Justice Network on Electoral Integrity in the Age of Social Media**



21 November 2024

On 21 November, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) held a webinar with members of the Pacific Electoral Justice Network (PEJN) on the topic of **“Protecting Electoral Integrity in the Age of Social Media”**. In attendance were PEJN representatives from Fiji, Tonga, and Nauru. A video recording of this webinar will be shared with the broader PEJN by IFES in order to expand the reach of this activity.

*(Continued on page 2)*

IFES Pacific Islands Country Director and IFES Vice President of Programs welcomed PEJN participants to the webinar and emphasised the growing impact of the online information environment on electoral outcomes and perceptions of independence of election management bodies (EMB) and the judiciary. IFES then invited a representative from Meta (formerly known as Facebook) to present during the webinar on organisational policies to counter false information generally, and cross-sectoral work to promote electoral integrity. Cheryl Seeto, Meta's Head of Policy Programs for Australia and the Pacific Islands led a presentation on:

- **Meta's content policies for violence and criminal behaviour, online safety, objectionable content, integrity and authenticity, and intellectual property;**
- **Meta's increasing reliance on artificial intelligence (AI) to monitor and proactively address content in violation of Meta policies;**
- **Formation of cross-functional teams prior to elections in the Pacific, including the Meta public policy team, electoral integrity experts, government and civil society partners managers, operational teams, and thematic policy area teams;**
- **Transparency of advertisements on political and electoral issues, and record-keeping of such ads for seven years; and**
- **Partnerships formed with electoral stakeholders, including election management bodies (EMB), national law enforcement agencies, IFES, independent third-party fact-checkers, and online safety and media literacy implementing organisations.**

After the Meta presentation, the IFES Vice President of Programs presented a case study of a decision by the Indonesian Criminal Court to annul articles addressing fake news and defamation. The case study illustrated the profound role of the digital landscape in elections, with high internet usage and widespread political activity online. The 2024 elections saw extensive use of disinformation tactics, including deepfakes, to influence voters. Legal challenges by human rights defenders resulted in rulings that sought to balance the fight against disinformation with protecting free speech.

### So what?

The event highlighted the importance of collaboration among governments, NGOs, and tech platforms to protect democratic processes in the digital age. PEJN participants and IFES additionally discussed the role of the judiciary in interpreting electoral laws in light of advanced technology and emerging threats to the electoral information environment. Additionally, the judiciary itself is a potential target for disinformation, which may threaten perceptions of independence of the judiciary in ruling on election cases. It is therefore critically important that PEJN members and judicial professionals understand Meta and other social media platforms' approach to information integrity and election information sharing.





Focus group participants reflecting on their learnings

## PROJECT Governance Hosts Focus Groups with “Telling Your Pacific Story” Workshop Participants

November 2024



In November, following the successful “Telling Your Pacific Story” public information officer and community journalism workshop in Palau, the East-West Center hosted focus groups with workshop participants to gather feedback on their experiences and inform the design of future workshops.

During the focus groups, participants reconnected and reflected on the positive impacts of the workshop on their work, additional skills they would like to develop, and other individuals in their networks who could benefit from similar training.

Participants highlighted the value of reconnecting with colleagues through the workshop, as well as the high-quality foundational training and personalized feedback that helped them enhance and structure their work more effectively. They also recommended incorporating more specialized training and group activities tailored to the roles of public information officers. Additionally, they suggested a stronger emphasis on engaging with youth, promoting ethical journalism on social media, and supporting young aspiring journalists in entering the field.

### So what?

Smaller Pacific Island countries face challenges in sustaining local news media and staffing government public information officers. In the absence of traditional sources, people rely on online social networks and word of mouth to share local news and government information, but these networks are very vulnerable to misinformation.

Building on the success of previous media workshops in Palau and the Marshall Islands, the East-West Center and the Pacific Media Institute are continuing to grow and strengthen community media networks across the Pacific. By actively seeking out and incorporating feedback from workshop participants, this ensures that the content covered in future workshops will be even more targeted to the practical needs of public information officers and underserved independent and community-driven public interest media across the North Pacific, while also ensuring a line of communication for ongoing support to participants between workshops.



## PPAC Planning and Reflections



14-15 November 2024

From the 14 to 15 November, the Pacific Peoples Advancing Change (PPAC) team convened from across the region for a two-day workshop. This provided an opportunity to review achievements and lessons from the completion of Phase Six and to prepare for Phase Seven. Discussions focused on planning for 2025, improving MEL systems, and refining training tools. As a programme with staff across four Pacific countries, this was a valuable opportunity to collaborate and plan for the next group of grantees.

PPAC is a civil society capacity strengthening project supported by PROJECT Governance. The team has recently been preparing for the inception of Phase Seven, which runs from late 2024 to November 2025. Funding has been awarded to sixty grantees across five countries - Tuvalu, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, and the Federated States of Micronesia - to address key issues such as environmental protection, gender-based violence, disability inclusion, and good governance.

Grantees will receive mentoring, training, and capacity building to ensure campaign success. PPAC has successfully implemented over 300 campaigns over the last six phases and influenced over 20 legislative and policy changes to date. PPAC seeks to support new and emerging civil society organisations who are often taking grant funding for the first time.

### So what?

PROJECT Governance’s support for the PPAC programme amplifies its commitment to fostering inclusive, effective governance across the region. By funding 15 grantees in Phase Seven as well as staff time, PROJECT Governance directly invests in initiatives that address critical issues like gender-based violence, environmental protection, and disability inclusion. PROJECT Governance has supported two previous phases of the programme, demonstrating its commitment to grassroots advocacy and support for Pacific people pushing for human rights advocacy in their own communities. This partnership strengthens civil society organisations’ capacity to advocate for any human rights-related issue, ensuring sustainable community-led change. With PPAC’s proven success – 100% of campaigns achieving or partially achieving their objectives in Phase Six - PROJECT Governance reinforces its role as a catalyst for stronger, more equitable governance in the Pacific.





**MARK THE DATE**



**27-29 November:**

Strengthening Inclusion in Tonga's 2025 General Election: EDAWG Formation and Strategic Planning Workshop - Nuku'alofa, Tonga

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**9-11 December:**

Workshop on Advancing the Right to Information (RTI) in the Pacific organized by UNESCO in cooperation with Government of Fiji, Attorney-General's Chambers and the Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS) with the support of IFES and SPC- Fiji

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**10 December:**

Solomon Islands Electoral Commission Strategic Planning Committee Workshop - Solomon Islands

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**12-13 December:**

Solomon Islands Electoral Commission Strategic Planning Workshop (internal SIEC participation only) - Solomon Islands



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