

Pacific Courts Administer Better Justice



CJs from around the region meeting in Apia

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A key outcome of the Pacific Islands Chief Justices forum held last week in Apia is that the courts in the Pacific Islands are administering justice better.

This success is partly due to assistance from the Pacific Judicial Development Programme PJDP whose work was under review during the meeting in Apia.

The Programme is funded by the New Zealand government and has sponsored training and other projects for the judiciary in Samoa and other Pacific Islands.

PJDP, Dr Livingston Armytage told Newsline through an email that the meeting was a success.

He added that Pacific Judicial Development Programme has made “measurable difference to improving society and human wellbeing across the Pacific.”

The following are the key results of the meeting.

It is noted that the citizens live in fairer societies with better access to justice. This is because citizens in the Pacific Island countries are more empowered to access and use the courts to redress injustice, and the courts are more responsive to the needs of the public seeking justice.

“ Two thirds (67%) of court users experience improvements in performance; 85% of court actors indicate PJDP has helped courts to be more responsive to community needs.”

Also noted is that the Judicial Leadership is stronger.

“ Courts are directing and managing progress more proactively. Judicial leaders are regionally networked and supported with strategic and technical capacity to drive, plan and implement local improvements, enabling justice to be better administered across the region. 94% of court actors agree their peers are more competent in their roles; 87% agree PJDP has helped courts to improve the quality of justice service delivery.”

Other key results are the public is enabled to demand judicial integrity, transparency and accountability; more efficient court administration and deliverance of justice; and that continuing court improvement is more locally sustainable.

It is found that ‘improvements in professionalism, integrity and conduct have built public trust in the courts and that the 15 “ Cook Islands Performance Indicators” and regular annual reporting equip both courts and the public with knowledge and capacity to drive continuing improvements in judicial quality.’

Also courts are ‘ increasingly disposing of cases and reducing backlogs according to established time standards and that improved efficiency and public awareness of this, is strengthening public trust and consolidating confidence in courts.’

Moreover, courts in the Pacific are taking more ownership and responsibility for continual improvement , with experienced local trainers building competence by addressing training needs in a skilled, cost effective, contextually appropriate way.

Chief Justices attended the meeting from Vanuatu, Palau, Kiribati, Cook Islands, Tonga, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomons and Niue. Samoa’s Chief Justice Patu Falefatu Sapolu chaired the forum.

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