

Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative Newsletter

Issue 6 | March 2020



Welcome to 2020!

The Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative (PJSI) is looking forward to continuing collaborations with our 15 Partner Courts across the Pacific to promote accessible, just, efficient and responsive justice services. Among our many follow-up activities, this year PJSI will pilot three new activities related to the need for improvements in legal aid, bar associations, and progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We look forward to continuing to work with our Partner Courts throughout 2020!

Dr Livingston Armytage AM
Technical Director

Novel Coronavirus Outbreak

On January 30 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global public health emergency. The PJSI team are closely monitoring developments and all travel will be subject to our internal risk assessments, as well as official health/travel advisories in relevant Pacific Island Countries, New Zealand, and Australia to ensure the safety of all travellers on PJSI activities. If you have any concerns, please contact the [PJSI Team](#).

Certificate and Diploma of Justice Update

Thank you to all those who have submitted their applications to study the Certificate or Diploma of Justice at the University of South Pacific in 2020. PJSI are excited to be able to support almost 70 students to participate in the Certificate and Diploma of Justice. We wish you all the best for your studies and look forward to hearing about your progress!

Court Data Workshop in Vanuatu & Follow-up Webinar

In October, PJSI delivered a regional Court Data Management Workshop in Vanuatu attended by 42 representatives from 13 Pacific Island Countries. The aim of the workshop was to build

the capacity of Pacific Island courts to better plan, manage and analyse cases and court data; and to develop strategies to better report on courts' activities and performance. Participants were provided with the skills and support to develop a Court Data Management and Reporting Plan to guide activities following their return to their local judiciary.

Following the Vanuatu workshop, a remote Webinar was held in November to embed key concepts from Vanuatu and to support partner courts in addressing challenges with initial implementation of their *Court Data Management Plans*. The Webinar format allowed countries to hear the differing approaches taken by Partner Courts, and share their knowledge and experience.

The workshop was fruitful, relevant and attentive to all the judiciaries in the Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative.

Mrs Kupu Matusa-Atuatika, Cook Islands

Based on feedback from the Webinar, several Partner Courts are pursuing initiatives in regard to disability disaggregated data and court user surveys, whilst others have already begun using data and court performance indicators to monitor judicial activity and case management.



Human Rights in Solomon Islands!

This visit was a follow-up activity to the human rights pilot conducted in the Solomon Islands in May 2017. The aim of the visit was to increase the capacity of Magistrates and High Court judges to apply international, constitutional and other national human rights standards in their daily work in the courts.



The visit provided participants with an interactive opportunity to discuss key human rights law, learn methodologies for applying human rights standards in cases and resolving clashes between constitutionally protected human rights and custom. This visit equipped Solomon Islands Magistrates and High Court judges with the knowledge, methods and motivation to implement human rights standards now and into the future.

Gender and Family Violence Visit to Vanuatu

In November 2019, a workshop was held to provide technical support to the Magistrates Court in Vanuatu in implementing their *Domestic Violence Action Plan 2019*, developed in August 2018 during a previous visit. Nine Magistrates were trained in key areas of implementation such as awareness and prevention, collaboration, victim-focus and victim-centred approaches and perpetrator accountability. Upon completion of the workshop, the Magistrates Court had increased their capacity, skills and knowledge to implement the Vanuatu Magistrates Court *Domestic Violence Action Plan 2019*.



Kiribati Access to Justice Visit

Between 2-12 December 2019, a two-week visit was held in Kiribati, comprised of community consultations and a follow-up workshop with court personnel to review Kiribati's *Access to Justice Plan*. The purpose of this visit was to consolidate and extend PJSI's earlier support in regard to enabling rights and access to justice with the courts of Kiribati.

Consultations were held across North and South Tarawa, and the remote island of Maiana. These consultations provided insight into the perceptions of court-users, and non-users, on the performance of the courts. In addition, workshop training re-familiarized court staff with the

Enabling Rights & Unrepresented Litigants Toolkit, highlighted challenges with the accessibility of court remedies to vulnerable and marginalised groups as well as strategies for community engagement and awareness raising.

In the 2020 pipeline

A number of activities are scheduled this year, including:

5th Chief Justices' Leadership Forum & 8th Initiative Executive Committee Meeting - Solomon Islands - Dates to be re-confirmed

The Chief Justices' Leadership Forum and Initiative Executive Committee Meeting has been postponed due to the Coronavirus situation, and will be re-scheduled as soon as possible. This Forum provides an opportunity for Chief Justices from across the region to discuss a range of topics to promote improvements in justice and leadership, and to continue dialogue on judicial development across the Pacific.

Human Rights Visit - Tonga: 20-30 April

The visit will provide participants with follow-up support on their courts *Human Rights Action Plan* and progress the application of human rights in the courts.

Regional Substantive Capacity Building Workshop - Samoa: 20-24 July

Participants will discuss the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how these goals can be harmonised and integrated into their courts.

Regional Legal Aid and Bar Associations Workshop - Palau: October

The workshop will offer participants capacity building and link together the courts, legal aid and bar associations as they work to overcome common issues throughout the Pacific.

For a complete list of our upcoming activities and locations, please see the [Activity Schedule](#).

Leadership Incentive Fund Closed

Due to the overwhelming level of interest in the Leadership Incentive Fund, all available funding has now been committed. Subject to available funding, PJSI will advise if the Leadership Incentive Fund is re-opened.

Comments and Feedback

We welcome and appreciate comments or contributions from everyone involved in a PJSI activity. If you have any feedback or require further information, please contact our PJSI team on: pjsi@fedcourt.gov.au.