

Chief Justices connect at Leadership Forum Samoa 2024

14 Chief Justices from across the Pacific, including New Zealand and Australia, attended the Chief Justices' Leadership Forum in Apia, Samoa across three days in February. This annual forum is an opportunity to share insights, identify opportunities for collaboration, and discuss the challenges that jointly face the Pacific judiciaries and justice sectors.

Topics discussed at this year's Forum included judicial wellbeing, regional cooperation in improving justice sector outcomes, and managing the responsible use of artificial intelligence within the courts.

Chief Justice Satiu Simativa Perese, from the host country Samoa, pictured middle top right, said the annual Forum fostered the sharing of knowledge, wisdom, and experience, and went towards advancing justice and equity in the Pacific region.

PJSP delegates in Samoa attending the Forum said one of the highlights of the event was a visit to Amaile village where they were able to observe an "ifoga", a traditional restorative justice ceremony which can be a mitigating factor in an offender's sentencing in the formal justice system. While in Samoa PJSP kaimahi also held a regional Pacific Women Judges hui and supported a regional Pacific Electoral Justice Network Workshop being run by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

At right, traditional Ava ceremony for the Chief Justices.



Pacific Women Judges hui Samoa

With so many women attending the Chief Justices' Leadership Forum and the Pacific Electoral Justice Network Workshop in Samoa in February, it was a timely opportunity for women judicial officers to get together to discuss matters specifically relating to women and justice.

This group included two women Acting Chief Justices (for Kiribati and Tonga) and eight women judges and magistrates from Nauru, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Vanuatu.

As well as a formal meeting to reflect on recent research on women in judiciaries across the Pacific and to consider the establishment of a Pacific chapter of the International Association of Women Judges, the group was hosted for dinner by the Minister of Justice Afioga Matamua Seumanu Vasati Sili Pulufana.

The group also met with the Australia's Ambassador for Gender Equality, Stephanie Campbell AM, over lunch.

PJSP is planning to hold a two-day conference in September 2024 to progress matters relating to women and justice in the Pacific. Further details will be posted at the [PJSP website](#) in due course.



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Ina'ilau: improving access to justice for women

The US Department of State has provided financial support for Ina'ilau, a programme designed to improve access to justice for Pacific women and children, and to better support women who are in justice roles across the Pacific. This work has already started in Tonga, with key initiatives targeted at expanding access to legal aid for vulnerable women and children and working to find ways for women to access justice more easily in Vanuatu. Ina'ilau's aims are to:

- expand the reach of courts to provide access to justice for more women
- improve court services in family violence and family-related cases;
- support quality decision making to protect women and children's human rights;
- support women in the justice sector access professional development; and
- support women leaders in the justice sector and women into leadership roles.



Fiji's justice sector sets priorities with PJSP

During a series of in-country engagement meetings attended by PJSP's Deputy Director Priscilla Agius and our Senior Advisor Education and Development Vaimoana Fakaosi in March, improved court and case file management processes, opportunities for judicial training and improved litigation skills for practitioners were identified as key priorities for the Fiji justice sector.

The PJSP team will now work with the Fiji judiciary to schedule a comprehensive in-country needs assessment, supported by PJSP's court management and administration specialist and ICT advisor. The assessment will focus on identifying Fiji's knowledge management needs, case file management needs, information security needs and other institutional/administrative support needs.

The PJSP team will work on developing a Fiji-specific action plan to support Fiji to focus on other priorities identified, including further opportunities for judicial training for members of the Fiji judiciary.

PJSP will also continue engaging with the Fiji Law Society around litigation skills opportunities offered through PJSP for legal practitioners in Fiji.



Pictured from left Raven Kumud, Deputy Registrar Legal, Court of Appeal Justice Chandana Prematikala, Acting Chief Justice Salesi Temo, PJSP Deputy Director Priscilla Agius, Court of Appeal Justice Isikeli Maitoga, and PJSP Senior Advisor Vaimoana Fakaosi.

Spotlight on the Cook Islands

Kia orana and welcome to the **Spotlight** segment of the newsletter where we let people know more about PJSP-related activities specific to one of our 15 partner countries. For this edition, we are starting with the Cook Islands.

Te Kura PJSP Principal Advisor Tina Pope and Advisor Education and Development Delwyn Te Moni have just returned from Rarotonga where they supported retired Family Court judge John Adams and local Justice of the Peace Tangi Taoro deliver two workshops for Cook Islands Justices of the Peace (Justices) – the first was an *Orientation programme* for new Justices, and the second was a *Decision making and judgment writing programme* for both new and experienced Justices.

In the Cook Islands, the Justices deliver justice daily. Justices are not necessarily legally trained but instead are appointed based on their good standing in the community, fluency in Cook Islands Māori and English, knowledge of Cook Islands culture, and their ability to make judicial decisions.



The new, revised [Cook Islands High Court Bench Book](#) was used in the training. The workshops covered principles governing the judiciary, managing court proceedings and court craft, evidence-based judging, bail, sentencing, issues-driven decisions, and practical judgment writing skills. Family violence and other family cases were also covered. The training was practical in approach, with a lot of time provided for participants to practice writing and deliver various decisions.



Front: Tina Pope (PJSP Principal Advisor), Hon. Vaine [Mac] Mokoroa (Minister of Justice), HE Tui Dews, John Adams (Programme Facilitator), John Andrew (Arorangi CICC Assistant Minister), Tangi Taoro (Senior JP). **Middle:** JPs Angeline Tuara, Mii Makimare, Simiona Teiotu, Nga Mataio, Georgina Keenan-Williams, Vania Kenning. **Rear:** Paul Turepu, Mata Nooroa, Delwyn Te Moni (PJP Advisor), Kopu Matua-Atuatika (Registrar, Ministry of Justice)