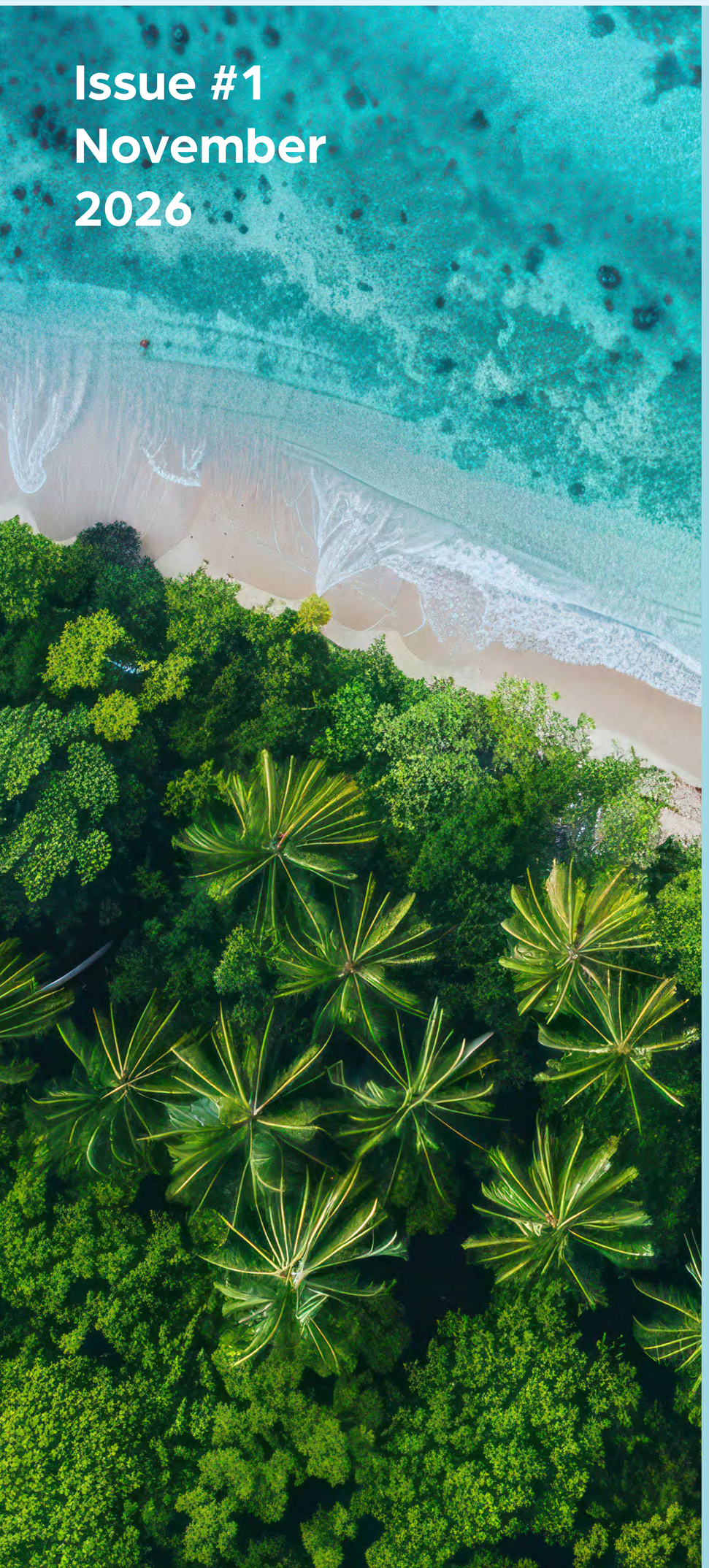
THE PACIFIC ASSOCIATION OF
WOMEN JUDICIAL OFFICERS

PAWJO

NEWSLETTER
ISSUE #1



IN THIS ISSUE

From vision to reality: The inaugural PAWJO AGM

Pacific voice take the stage: IAWJ Asia-Pacific Conference, Adelaide

Member spotlight: Judge Alalatoa Rosella Viane Papalii

Executive member spotlight: Principal Magistrate Tearo Ribua Beneteti

Building leadership that lasts: A Marshall Islands Judiciary Perspective

Access to justice spotlight: Bringing justice closer to the people in Kiribati

Research spotlight: Empowering Women in Pacific Justice Systems

Get involved: Help shape the work of PAWJO

Resources and opportunities

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Mauri and hello dear Members and Colleagues,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the inaugural edition of the PAWJO newsletter. This first issue provides an opportunity to reconnect with our valued members, share the progress we have made, and look ahead to the activities that will bring our association's goals to life.

Following the formation of PAWJO's first Executive Committee in February this year, much of our work has taken place behind the scenes. While you may have heard little from us during these early months, the Executive Committee has been meeting regularly online to develop our strategic goals, identify our priorities, and plan the activities through which we will put those goals into action.

I am pleased to share that we have now completed this initial planning phase. Thank you for your patience and continued support as we undertook this important groundwork. We wanted to ensure that our work would be guided by a clear purpose and a practical plan that reflects our shared aspirations.

This newsletter is our first initiative following that planning process. Through it, we will keep you informed of our progress, share our achievements and the activities undertaken so far, and highlight opportunities for members to become involved. Above all, we hope it will strengthen communication and connection across our association.

As President, my hope is that PAWJO will continue to grow as a supportive professional community—one grounded in integrity, collegiality, judicial independence, and a shared commitment to accessible and fair justice. Although we serve in different jurisdictions and circumstances, we have much to offer one another through the exchange of knowledge, practical experience, and encouragement.

On behalf of PAWJO, I extend our sincere gratitude to PJSP for its continuous support since PAWJO's establishment, including its assistance in bringing this first newsletter to publication. We deeply appreciate this ongoing partnership and the support it provides as we work towards our shared aspirations.

I also sincerely thank my fellow Executive Committee members for their commitment, thoughtful contributions, and time throughout these past months, and everyone who has helped bring this first edition together. I encourage all members to make this newsletter your own by sharing your news, reflections, experiences, and ideas. Whether it is a local initiative, a professional achievement, or a lesson from your work, your contribution can inform and encourage colleagues across our region.

Thank you for being part of PAWJO. I look forward to building on our progress together and translating our shared goals into meaningful activities for our members.

God Bless Us All.

With warm regards,

Hon. Tetiro Semilota Maate Moaniba
Chief Justice of Kiribati
President, PAWJO



FROM VISION TO REALITY

PAWJO holds its inaugural AGM

On 11 February 2026, Pacific women judicial officers came together in Fiji and online for a milestone several years in the making: the inaugural Annual General Meeting of the Pacific Association of Women Judicial Officers.



PAWJO Steering Komiti and Secretariat at the Inaugural AGM, Fiji, February 2026
Photo: PJSP

The AGM marked PAWJO's transition from an interim Steering Komiti to a fully constituted regional association, with members electing their first Executive Committee and making key decisions about the Association's governance and future direction.

The hybrid meeting brought together 58 PAWJO members, 11 in Fiji and 47 joining remotely, representing Kiribati, Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji. All three Pacific sub-regions were represented and the meeting comfortably achieved the quorum required under PAWJO's Bylaws.

For some members, joining remotely was itself a significant achievement. Lay Magistrates from Kiribati's outer islands joined in groups, some using a computer or Zoom for the first time, and participated in voting for the new Executive Committee. Their participation was strongly encouraged by Kiribati's Chief Justice and future PAWJO President, Chief Justice Tetiro Semilota, reflecting PAWJO's commitment to ensuring women serving in smaller and more remote courts have a voice in the Association.

Passing the baton

A significant moment came with the formal handover from the Steering Komiti, which had guided PAWJO through its establishment. Speaking on behalf of the outgoing Komiti, Associate Judge Claire T. Loeak reflected on lessons from the journey, particularly the importance of keeping members informed and connected across the distances of the Pacific and alongside the demands of judicial workloads.

The Steering Komiti then formally handed PAWJO's records to the new leadership, marking the end of its establishment role and the beginning of the Association's first operational year.

Setting the direction for PAWJO

The AGM was accompanied by planning discussions focused on what members wanted PAWJO to become. These discussions helped refine the Association's strategic direction, including its sustainability, and considered how available regional and partner support could be aligned with PAWJO's priorities.

Members also made several practical governance decisions for PAWJO's first year. PJSP was retained as the Association's Secretariat to provide continuity and support to the newly elected Secretary; the appointment of an auditor was deferred while a pro bono option was sought in the Marshall Islands; and members agreed that the Executive should meet at least quarterly. The next AGM was set for February 2027.

Members also raised an important issue for PAWJO's future governance: how to maintain equitable representation between Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. A proposal to explore a rotating presidency and cross-regional representation in the President and Vice-President roles was carried for further consideration, recognising the importance of ensuring all three sub-regions continue to have a strong voice as PAWJO grows.

ELECTED PAWJO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President: Hon. Chief Justice Tetiro Maate Moaniva Semilota, Kiribati
Vice–President: Judge Senileba Levaci, Fiji
Treasurer: Associate Judge Claire T. Loeak, Republic of the Marshall Islands
Secretary: Judge Talasa Saaga, Samoa

Six sub–regional representatives were also elected, ensuring representation across Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia:

Polynesia: Senior Justice of the Peace Tangi Taoro, Cook Islands, and Justice of the Peace Catherine Papani, Niue
Melanesia: Acting Principal Magistrate Tracy Ganaii, Papua New Guinea, and Principal Magistrate Tearo Beneteti, Solomon Islands
Micronesia: Acting Chief Justice Beauleen Carl–Worswick, Federated States of Micronesia, and Presiding Justice Kathleen Salii, Palau.



The newly elected PAWJO Executive Committee in Fiji, Feb 2026: (L–R): Judge Talasa Saaga, Samoa (Secretary); Principal Magistrate Tearo Beneteti, Solomon Islands (Melanesian Representative); Judge Senileba Levaci, Fiji (Vice–President); Chief Justice Tetiro Semilota Maate Moaniva, Kiribati (President); Associate Judge Claire T. Loeak, Marshall Islands (Treasurer); Principal Magistrate Tracy Ganaii, PNG (Melanesian Representative).

Absent: Senior Justice of Peace Tangi Taoro, Cook Islands (Polynesian Representative); Justice of the Peace Catherine Papani, Niue (Polynesian Representative); Presiding Justice Kathleen Salii, Palau (Micronesian Representative); Acting Chief Justice Beauleen Carl–Worswick, FSM (Micronesian Representative).

Photo credit: PJSP

A WORD FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Gude hi hai, mālō nī, fakaalofa lahi atu, ekamowir ormo, kaselehlie, alii, talofa, halo, malo e lelei, kia orana, bula vinaka, io̧kwe io̧kwe, mauri and welcome to the first edition of the PAWJO newsletter.

It has been a busy few months since PAWJO members came together for our inaugural Annual General Meeting in Fiji in February and elected the Association's first Executive Committee.
Since then, much of the work has been foundational. With a new Executive representing women judicial officers across Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, our focus as Secretariat has been on supporting the structures, systems and relationships that will allow PAWJO to grow into a sustainable, Pacific-led regional association.

The Executive has met regularly throughout the year, established five sub-committees aligned with PAWJO's five strategic goals, and begun translating those goals into a practical programme of work. Behind the scenes, we have also been putting in place the infrastructure a regional association needs, including collaboration systems, organisational templates, communications guidance and PAWJO's visual and digital identity.

At the heart of this work are the five strategic goals that will guide PAWJO through its foundational years:

- Promote culturally competent and gender-responsive judicial leadership and greater gender balance across Pacific judiciaries.
- Strengthen inclusive, supportive and empowering environments in which women judicial officers at all levels can thrive and advance.
- Support court leadership to improve access to justice for remote communities and vulnerable groups, in ways that recognise Pacific cultures, communities and local realities.
- Promote the diverse voices of Pacific women judicial officers, strengthening networks and two-way knowledge exchange between courts, jurisdictions and regional and international platforms.
- Build a sustainable and resilient PAWJO, with strong governance, active and representative membership, future leadership pathways and partnerships that can sustain the Association over the long term.

These goals reflect the breadth of PAWJO's purpose. The Association is concerned not only with women's representation on the bench, but with supporting women to thrive throughout their judicial careers, strengthening the courts and communities they serve, sharing Pacific judicial knowledge and experience, and making sure that women judicial officers from our smallest and most remote jurisdictions are part of the conversation.

PAWJO has also begun to make its presence felt beyond the Association. Members participated in the IAWJ Asia-Pacific Regional Conference in Adelaide, bringing Pacific perspectives to regional discussions on judicial leadership and other issues affecting our courts. The Association is now looking ahead to further opportunities for Pacific women judicial officers to contribute to regional and international judicial conversations.

This first newsletter is another small but important part of those foundations. It is a space to share experiences across our diverse courts, celebrate the achievements of our Pacific judicial sisters, learn from one another and keep members connected across the vast distances of our region.

There remains much to build, and much of that work will be shaped by you, our members. We hope this newsletter provides one more way for us to stay connected, share what is happening across our judiciaries and continue building PAWJO together.

Pacific Justice Sector Programme (PJSP) PAWJO Secretariat

PAWJO MEMBERSHIP

Country of jurisdiction	Members
Cook Islands	2
Fiji	14
Federated States of Micronesia	2
Kiribati	35
Marshall Islands	3
Niue	3
Palau	2
Papua New Guinea	10
Samoa	5
Solomon Islands	6
Tokelau	1
Tonga	4
Tuvalu	1
Vanuatu	40
Total	**128**

LINKS

PAWJO Visual Strategy

PAWJO Work Programme

PAWJO Bylaws

Contact us

Become a member

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PACIFIC VOICES TAKE THE STAGE IN ADELAIDE

International Association of Women Judges Asia-Pacific Conference



L–R: Judge Senileba Levaci (Fiji), Magistrate Pauline Taroimae (Solomon Islands), Senior Magistrate Ane Tavo–Mailangi (Tonga), Associate Judge Ingrid Kabua (RMI), JP Catherine Papani (Niue), Principal Magistrate Rosie Aize Johnson (PNG), Principal Magistrate Tracy Ganaii (PNG), Magistrate Joyceth Paile (Solomon Islands), Acting Justice Elisapeti Langi (Tonga), Hon. Chief Justice Tetiro Semilota Maate Moaniba (Kiribati), Judge Talasa Saaga (Samoa) Single Magistrate Atanikai Tanginako (Kiribati), Principal Magistrate Tearo Beneteti (Solomon Islands) Photo credit: PJSP

PAWJO members joined women judicial officers from across the Asia–Pacific in Adelaide in May for the 2026 International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) Asia Pacific Regional Conference, marking PAWJO's first appearance on the international stage since the Association was formally established earlier this year.

Held from 13 to 15 May under the theme *Championing Justice: Women Judges in the Asia Pacific,* the conference brought judicial officers and leaders together to exchange experiences, strengthen networks and explore some of the major issues facing courts across the region.

The Pacific had the strongest presence in the conference's history, with fifteen participants across all court levels in attendance. The New Zealand Pacific Justice Sector Programme (PJSP) supported nine women judicial officers from Kiribati, Fiji, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tonga and the Republic of the Marshall Islands to participate. Five were members of the PAWJO Executive Committee. They joined a further six Pacific women judicial officers from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga supported through other partners – the Australia Pacific Judicial Partnership Program (APJP), Papua New Guinea Center for Judicial Excellence (PNGCJE), Australia Solomon Islands Partnership in Justice (ASIPJ), together creating a significant Pacific contingent at the regional gathering.

Pacific voices featured prominently in the programme.

Senior Magistrate Tracy Ganaii of Papua New Guinea and Judge Senileba Levaci of Fiji joined judicial officers from New Zealand, the Philippines and Korea for a discussion on intimate partner violence, sharing perspectives and initiatives from their jurisdictions.

Later that day, PAWJO President Chief Justice Tetiro Semilota Maate Moaniba of Kiribati and Judge Talasa Saaga of Samoa joined the session Stepping Up: Women Advancing Judicial Leadership in the Asia Pacific.

The session explored how women are reshaping judicial leadership across the region and highlighted the formation of PAWJO as one of the emerging networks creating new opportunities for women judicial officers to connect and lead. Across the three days, delegates also explored climate justice, artificial intelligence in judicial practice, judicial wellbeing, child exploitation, modern slavery and developments relating to intimate partner violence.

For the PAWJO sisters, some of the greatest value came from simply having time together. Across countries separated by thousands of kilometres, women judicial officers often face similar professional pressures while having limited opportunities to meet. Adelaide provided space for talanoa, shared learning and informal conversations about the realities of judicial work in Pacific courts. Delegate feedback highlighted the value of feeling less isolated, learning from other jurisdictions and returning home with renewed motivation.

For Acting Justice Elisapeti Langi of Tonga, the judicial wellbeing session was particularly powerful: *"It opened critical dialogues on handling vicarious trauma, addressing burnout, and establishing mental health support systems… I left the conference vowing to take better care of my physical and mental health to be able to carry out my work efficiently."*

Adelaide was an important early milestone for PAWJO. It gave the Association an opportunity to introduce itself internationally, demonstrate the contribution Pacific women judicial officers can make to regional discussions, and strengthen relationships with the wider IAWJ community.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Celebrating Judge Alalatoa Rosella Viane Papalii

From a young student who left her village in Samoa in pursuit of education, to a respected judicial leader, 2026 has brought new milestones in the remarkable journey of Judge Alalatoa Rosella Viane Papalii.

In October 2026, Judge Papalii was recognised by the University of Waikato with a Distinguished Alumni Award, celebrating her outstanding contribution to law, the judiciary and the people of Samoa.

Judge Papalii's journey has been shaped by perseverance, service and a deep belief in the transformative power of education.

Her Honour hails from Leulumoega–tuai, a village of deep cultural significance in Samoa. Recognising her academic promise from an early age, her father made the difficult decision to send her to live with his sister and her family in Apia, where she could access greater educational opportunities.

His faith in his daughter was richly rewarded. Judge Papalii became one of the top students of her year and secured a scholarship to the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand, initially studying social sciences and secondary teaching.

Just months before she graduated, however, her beloved father, who had inspired and encouraged her education, passed away. Amid that profound loss, the birth of her first son, Romero, brought renewed strength and purpose.

Judge Papalii later returned to Waikato to study law, completing her Bachelor of Laws and Master of Laws while raising a growing family. She has spoken of the challenges of balancing full–time study, motherhood and financial pressures during this period, and of the faith and perseverance that carried her through. She was admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand in 2004.

Judge Papalii returned home to Samoa to serve her people, building a successful career across civil and criminal law before establishing RV Papalii Law and Notary Public in 2009. For more than a decade, she also served the Samoa Law Society in leadership roles including Acting President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

In 2017, the late Chief Justice Sapolu invited her to join the judiciary. She went on to become Principal Judge of Samoa's pioneering Alcohol and Drugs Court and later served as Coroner, where she cleared a backlog of more than 400 cases.

In June 2026, Her Honour reached another significant milestone when she was sworn in as an Acting Judge of the Supreme Court of Samoa, with authority to sit in the Lands and Titles Appellate Court.

Receiving the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2026 brought Judge Papalii's journey full circle. She returned to the university where her studies had begun decades earlier to receive the honour surrounded by her mother, husband, children, siblings and extended family.

The year has also been one of remarkable achievement for her family. Three of Judge Papalii's sons graduated from the University of Waikato in 2026, with qualifications spanning architecture, health science, law and commerce. Her eldest son, Romero, has followed his mother into law, completing a Master of Laws at Waikato and now serving as a climate change legal analyst to the Government of Tokelau.

PAWJO warmly congratulates Judge Papalii and celebrates the contribution she continues to make to Samoa, to the judiciary, and to women's judicial leadership across the Pacific.



Judge Alalatoa Rosella Viane Papalii (middle row, centre–right) with family at the University of Waikato Distinguished Alumni Awards, New Zealand, October 2026.
Photo supplied

EXECUTIVE MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Principal Magistrate Tearo Ribua Beneteti

Melanesian Representative, PAWJO

For Principal Magistrate Tearo Ribua Beneteti, judicial service is ultimately about people.

> *"I still find myself passionate and desiring to see justice in the lives of our people that appear before me. This service we render is one I hold dear."*

A Principal Magistrate in Solomon Islands with 19 years of legal and judicial experience, Tearo Ribua Beneteti has worked on both sides of the Bar table and across almost all areas of criminal and civil law, appearing at every level of the courts in her country. She holds an LLB from the University of the South Pacific and an LLM from Monash University.

Today, Principal Magistrate Beneteti also serves as one of Melanesia's two representatives on the PAWJO Executive Committee, helping shape the new Association she had a hand in establishing. From September 2024 to February 2026, she was a member of PAWJO's Steering Committee, contributing to the Constitution, foundational documents and administrative arrangements that paved the way for PAWJO's establishment.

Faith, purpose and resilience

Faith is central to how Principal Magistrate Beneteti understands her judicial role. She describes respect, professionalism, humility, honour and being willing to learn as principles that have grounded her throughout her career, alongside her Christian faith.

One experience remains particularly significant. Assigned to a court circuit, she faced approximately 1,000 files, some dating back to the 1980s, which had to be dealt with within three weeks. The newly constructed circuit building did not yet have electricity. Court continued into the evenings using Police torches, mobile phone lights and whatever other lighting could be found.

She organised the cases by year and priority, coordinated prosecutors and established a system to ensure each file was addressed. By the end of the three-week circuit, the cases had been disposed of with no matters left pending or adjourned. She later applied similar discipline to a backlog of more than 1,000 outstanding warrant-of-arrest files stretching back to the 1990s, completing that assignment within a year.

For Principal Magistrate Beneteti, experiences such as these reinforced the importance of faith, preparation, organisation and remaining focused on the task immediately before you.

Lessons from the bench

After nearly two decades in law, Principal Magistrate Beneteti is clear that judicial resilience is not simply about enduring a demanding workload. Judicial officers need to actively sustain themselves.

Her advice is practical: prepare thoroughly and read every file before court; prioritise work rather than becoming overwhelmed by everything at once; maintain physical and mental wellbeing; nurture family relationships and help loved ones understand the demands of judicial office; and build trusted professional relationships.

Mentoring is particularly important. Principal Magistrate Beneteti encourages judicial officers to develop relationships with senior mentors they can approach in confidence, while also building networks with judicial colleagues elsewhere in the Pacific.

> *"Have strong professional networks with overseas counterparts so you can build networks and have resource colleagues at any time."*

It is an approach she puts into practice herself, volunteering for opportunities to learn and contribute. Her regional engagements have included speaking on the role of faith-based organisations in court decision-making and presenting on environmental corruption in the Pacific. In December 2026, she is also due to speak at the International Anti-Corruption Conference in Punta Cana on integrity solutions for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in climate and disaster operations.

> *"I enjoy exploring and testing different approaches to find solutions to the emerging needs we face as Pacific women judicial officers. Central to this is building trust and confidence among our members, and strong relationships with our regional and international partners."*



Principal Magistrate Tearo Ribua Beneteti
Photo supplied

BUILDING LEADERSHIP THAT LASTS

A Marshall Islands Judiciary Perspective

The Marshall Islands Judiciary is one of several small judiciaries in the central North Pacific. As in most institutions in a small jurisdiction, there is no deep pool of judicial officers to draw from and few resources to spare, so leadership has to be grown and mentored from within.

Associate Judge Ingrid K. Kabua's career illustrates what this can look like. She began as an Assistant Clerk and advanced through the Judiciary's ranks, serving more than two decades as a clerk of the courts, first as Deputy Chief Clerk and then, for 16 years, as Chief Clerk. As Chief Clerk, she led a support team whose reports earned unqualified, or clean, audit opinions for ten consecutive years.[1]

Sound financial stewardship is leadership too. That record provided a credible basis for the Judiciary's requests for resources, which were granted on the strength of years of clean audit reports.

On 1 October 2025, Associate Judge Ingrid K. Kabua was appointed as the first woman to serve as a District Court Associate Judge. The District Court adjudicates civil cases involving claims not exceeding US$10,000 and criminal cases where the maximum penalty is a fine not exceeding US$5,000, imprisonment for less than three years, or both.[2]

Her appointment follows a longstanding pattern of clerks progressing to judicial office in the District Court and Traditional Rights Court. District Court judges are appointed by the Judicial Service Commission for a ten-year term, or until age 72.[3] Appointments to the Traditional Rights Court are confirmed by the Nitijela, signified by a resolution submitted by the Minister of Justice, on behalf of the Cabinet which approved the appointment on the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission.[4]

Among the clerks who were appointed to a judicial post is the Hon. Milton Zackios, who also served as Chief Clerk for many years before becoming a District Court Associate Judge and who continues to sit as a pro tem judge of the Traditional Rights Court, Hon. Bokarok Hilai, and Billy Samson. The Traditional Rights Court's former Chief Judge, the Hon. Walter K. Elbon, and its current Chief Judge, the Hon. Grace L. Leban, served as clerks of the courts before their judicial appointments.[5]

This growth is strategic. Under the leadership of Chief Justice Carl B. Ingram, clerks and judges of the District Court, Traditional Rights Court, High Court and Supreme Court have attended judicial training courses delivered by, among others, the National Judicial College in Reno, the Pacific Justice Sector Programme (PJSP)and the Australia Pacific Judicial Partnership (APJP). They have also taken part in capacity-building workshops and a tailor-made judiciary certificate and diploma program at the University of the South Pacific, and they receive in-house mentoring from the Chief Justice. In addition to various judicial seminars, webinars and workshops, Associate Judge Kabua completed the certificate and diploma program and is currently enrolled in the LL.B. program at the University of the South Pacific.

For a jurisdiction with limited resources and a limited pool of judicial officers, diligence and accountability are essential virtues. They are how leadership is grown, mentored and sustained from within.

As a member of the Pacific Association of Women Judicial Officers (PAWJO), Associate Judge Kabua participated in the Australia Pacific Judicial Partnership (APJP) mentorship initiative in 2025 at the Federal Court of Australia and contributes to the Pacific Islands Judicial Officers Association (PIJOA) as an active member.



District Court Judge Ingrid K. Kabua and Traditional Rights Court Judge Claire T. Loeak at the 2024 Women in Justice Workshop in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
Photo credit: PJSP

[1] Marshall Islands Office of the Auditor General, Audit Reports: Archives–Marshall Islands Judiciary Fund, Financial Statements, FY2014–FY2024
[2] The Marshall Islands Judiciary, The Judiciary's Courts and Personnel: District Court
[3] 27 MIRC Ch. 2, Judiciary Act (1983)
[4] 27 MIRC Ch. 3, Traditional Rights Court (Composition and Appointments) Act, §303
[5] Traditional Rights Court Chief Judge Grace Leban (2026); Nitijela Resolution 27, Appointment of Hon. Grace Leban

ACCESS TO JUSTICE SPOTLIGHT

Bringing justice closer to the people in Kiribati

For PAWJO members across the Pacific, Kiribati's experience offers a useful example of access to justice being approached not as a single service or project, but as a relationship between courts and the communities they serve.

Across Kiribati's widely dispersed islands, access to justice is shaped by distance, transport, communications and whether people understand the protections and court services available to them. In 2026, the Kiribati Judiciary continued to look for practical and locally relevant ways to bridge those gaps, taking information about the courts directly into schools and communities, travelling to outer islands, and establishing the Judiciary's first toll-free hotline.

The year also saw a distinctly different approach to community engagement: the Judiciary's inaugural Miss Judiciary initiative, championed by Chief Justice Tetiro Semilota Maate Moaniba as a platform for promoting access to justice through public engagement. The initiative created a visible ambassador through whom the Judiciary could engage young people and communities on justice, protection and pathways to assistance.



Tabokori Kiaieta was appointed the first Miss Judiciary in May and went on to represent the Judiciary in the national pageant, where she was crowned Miss Kiribati 2026 on 12 July. It was a significant achievement in itself, but the initiative had a wider purpose. Through school and community visits, Miss Judiciary joined the Judiciary team in raising awareness of court services, family protection and where people can go for help.

Through school visits, public events and pageant activities, Miss Judiciary directly engaged an estimated audience of over 15,000 people. Her campaign content also reached more than 10,000 social media followers and generated over 22,000 YouTube views, significantly expanding the visibility of the Judiciary and its access to justice messaging.

The approach demonstrates that improving access to justice can also mean thinking differently about who delivers justice messages, where those conversations take place and how courts connect with people who may rarely enter a courthouse.

That same principle underpinned a programme of outer-island outreach during August and early September.

Judiciary teams travelled to Butaritari from 6–9 August, Abaiang from 17–20 August, North Tabiteuea from 24–27 August and Abemama from 6–13 September. The visits focused on family violence protections, Protection Orders and the new Toll-Free Hotline 152, while strengthening links between island communities and court services.

Engagement extended beyond general community awareness. The Judiciary met with Island Councils, community leaders, women, men and young people, including people living on more remote islets. Police officers and Lay Magistrates also participated in practical training and discussions about their respective roles in receiving, issuing and serving Protection Orders. Demonstrations and smaller group sessions created opportunities for community members to ask practical questions about accessing help safely.

The visits also highlighted the realities of delivering justice services across an island nation. Reliable telephone and network coverage, suitable equipment, transport and early logistical planning all affect whether services can reach communities consistently. The Judiciary also identified a continuing need for refresher training among those involved in Protection Order processes.



Miss Judiciary, school awareness and community engagement activities



The Judiciary directly engaged with remote communities

ACCESS TO JUSTICE SPOTLIGHT

Bringing justice closer to the people in Kiribati

Hotline 152: another pathway to the court

On 2 October, the Judiciary formally launched Toll-Free Hotline 152, the first hotline established by the Kiribati Judiciary. The service provides people with information and assistance relating to family violence and Protection Orders, particularly where distance, travel costs or other barriers make travelling to a court difficult.

The launch itself brought the access-to-justice message back into the community. Students from Sacred Heart College performed a drama about Hotline 152 as part of the Ministry of Justice's 10th anniversary celebrations, helping communicate the service and its purpose in an accessible way.

The Kiribati Judiciary acknowledges the communities, schools and justice-sector partners that contributed to this work, including the Pacific Justice Sector Programme and UN Women, for their invaluable support



To raise awareness, Sacred Heart College students performed a drama about Hotline 152 during the Ministry of Justice's 10th anniversary celebrations (above), while the judiciary wore specially printed T-shirts for the occasion (below)

Photo credits: Kiribati Judiciary





RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Empowering women in Pacific justice systems

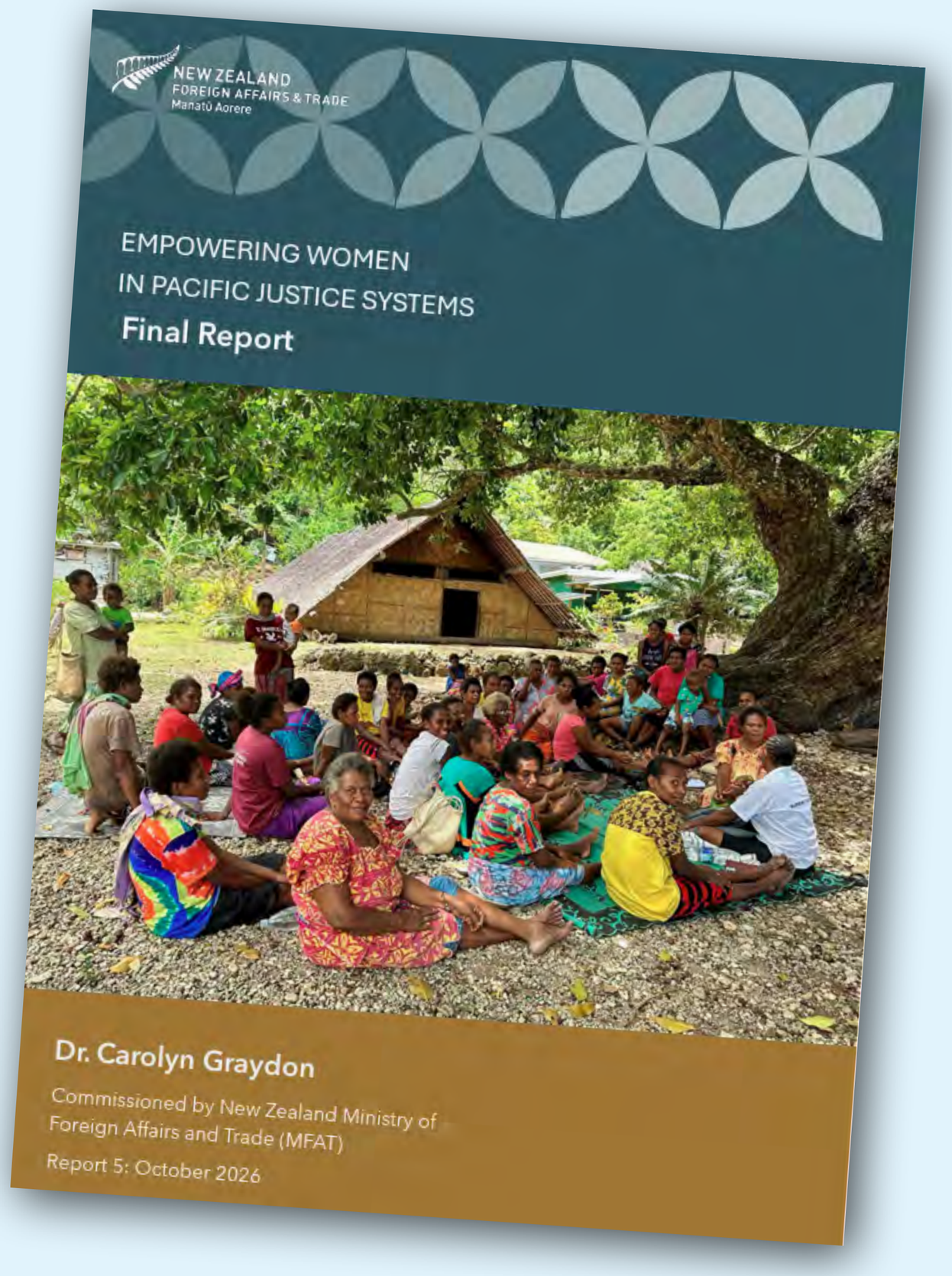
A major body of research by Dr Carolyn Graydon, commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) has recently been published. The work explores women's experiences, leadership and participation across Pacific justice systems. The research provides an important evidence base for understanding the barriers facing women seeking justice and women working within justice systems, and helped inform the establishment and direction of PAWJO.

Towards Gender Balance and Equality in Pacific Judiciaries | Dr Carolyn Graydon
Drawing on the experiences of more than 100 Pacific women judicial officers, the report maps women's representation across Pacific courts (updated October 2026)and examines appointments, promotion, professional development, workload, workplace safety and conditions. It also documented strong support among women judicial officers for a Pacific regional network, which has since become PAWJO. **Read the full report.**

Towards Women–Centred Justice in the Pacific | Dr Carolyn Graydon
Drawing particularly on research in Kiribati and Vanuatu, this report asks what women in rural and remote communities actually want and need from justice. It examines state, customary and religious justice processes and highlights the need to design justice responses around women's safety, priorities and desired outcomes. **Read the full report.**

Towards Women's Leadership in Local Justice Processes | Dr Carolyn Graydon
This report examines women's participation and leadership within local justice systems and identifies practical pathways for strengthening their roles as decision–makers. It considers customary and church leadership, local courts, policing and community organisations, with particular attention to the experiences of Kiribati and Vanuatu. **Read the full report.**

Empowering Women in Pacific Justice Systems: Final Report | Dr Carolyn Graydon
Published in October 2026, the final report brings the research together, connecting women–centred justice, gender balance within Pacific courts, women's leadership in local justice processes, and the findings from Kiribati and Vanuatu. It sets out recommendations for more inclusive, culturally responsive and accessible Pacific justice systems. **Read the full report.**



Together, Dr Carolyn Graydon's research provides a valuable resource for PAWJO members, placing the experiences and perspectives of Pacific women at the centre of conversations about judicial leadership, gender competence and access to justice.



GET INVOLVED:

HELP SHAPE THE WORK OF PAWJO

PAWJO's work programme has been shaped by the priorities identified by members. Now we need your knowledge, experience and practical support to help turn those priorities into action.

There are many ways to contribute, whether by joining a sub–committee, acting as a focal point for your jurisdiction, sharing expertise or providing practical support to a particular activity

We are particularly looking for members interested in:

Gender–responsive judicial leadership: Contribute to PAWJO's regional scoping work by sharing how gender competence and culturally responsive judicial practice are understood and applied in your court or jurisdiction.

Mentoring, judicial education and professional development: Help identify priority learning needs, develop mentoring approaches and create opportunities for Pacific judicial officers to learn from and support one another.

Judicial wellbeing: Contribute experience and ideas on judicial wellbeing, resilience, workload, safe workplaces and the family, cultural and community responsibilities carried by Pacific judicial officers.

Access to justice and community–level courts: Share approaches that are working in your jurisdiction, particularly court outreach, community–based initiatives and support for judicial officers serving remote communities and local–level courts.

Research and knowledge–sharing: Help identify and share useful judgments, research, tools, induction materials and Pacific examples of good judicial practice.

Communications and newsletters: Join a PAWJO Communications Sub–Committee to help produce future editions of this newsletter. Members could help identify and commission stories, liaise with contributors across the region, compile submissions, edit and prepare articles, and ensure each edition reflects the voices and work of PAWJO members across Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia. PAWJO's work programme provides for quarterly newsletters covering progress, member achievements, opportunities and regional activities.

Project management and administration: PAWJO also needs practical hands–on support to turn ideas into activities. Members with experience or an interest in project planning, coordination, administration, organising events, monitoring activities or supporting sub–committees can contribute to individual initiatives or help keep particular workstreams moving.

Pro bono and specialist support: As a new association, PAWJO will not always have all the expertise or resources it needs in–house. Members can help identify individuals, organisations and professional networks willing to contribute specialist expertise or pro bono support, including technical, legal, research, communications, governance, administrative and project–management assistance.

You do not need to take on a major role to make a valuable contribution. You might join a sub–committee, mentor a colleague, review a resource, help edit the next newsletter, coordinate an activity, contribute your professional expertise, or connect PAWJO with someone who can help.

PAWJO belongs to its members. The more experience, ideas and skills we bring from our sisters across our region, the stronger our Association will become. If there is a workstream you would like to contribute to, please contact the PAWJO Secretariat: pawjo@justice.govt.nz

OPPORTUNITIES
AND CONNECTIONS

The Canadian Chapter of
International Association of Women Judges
Advancing Human Rights and Equal Justice for All

IAWJ Biennial Conference 2027 | Québec City

The 18th IAWJ Biennial Conference will bring women judges and justice leaders from around the world to Québec City, Canada, 18–21 May 2027. Under the theme Women's Justice: Strong and Free, the conference will provide opportunities to connect, exchange experiences and explore issues including judicial leadership, access to justice, human rights and judicial innovation. Registration is now open.
Find out more:
https://iawjcc.com/events/2027-iawj-biennial-conference/

pjsp PACIFIC JUSTICE SECTOR PROGRAMME

Pacific Justice Sector Programme

PJSP offers a range of funding and professional development opportunities for Pacific justice sector professionals, including the Vaka Fund for regional training and conferences, LIFT funding and support for locally led justice initiatives, the regional Judicial Mentoring Programme, and scholarships for justice-focused study through the University of the South Pacific.
Find out more:
https://pjsp.govt.nz/funding-and-support

APWJN

The Asia and Pacific Women Judges Network (APWJN) connects women judges across Asia and the Pacific to share experience, build trusted professional relationships and strengthen women's judicial leadership. The judge-led network provides a regional platform for peer learning, collaboration and collective action on the opportunities and challenges facing women in the judiciary.
Find out more:
https://apwjn2026.org

PIJOA

The Pacific Islands Judicial Officers' Association provides a collection of practical resources for judicial officers.
Find out more:
https://pijoa.org/resources

Supporting judicial well-being across the Pacific – add your voice!

Judicial officers across Pacific Island jurisdictions are invited to contribute to the first-ever regional study on judicial well-being. Led by the Australian Catholic University in partnership with the Pacific Justice Sector Programme, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the United Nations Development Programme, the study is expected to build a stronger evidence base on judicial well-being across the Pacific.

The findings should provide valuable regional insights and inform practical, evidence-based approaches to supporting judicial well-being and delivering quality justice. The online questionnaire takes approximately 30 minutes to complete, and participation is anonymous, with measures in place to protect respondents' identities. The questionnaire is distributed through judiciaries and other avenues accessible only to Pacific judicial officers.
We encourage judicial officers across the Pacific to add their voices to this important regional study.

If you are a judicial officer in the Pacific and would like to take part in the survey, please reach out to PJSP: contact@pjsp.govt.nz.

Australia Pacific Judicial Partnership

Australia Pacific Judicial Partnership

APJP brings together the Federal Court of Australia and courts from 15 Pacific Island countries to support stronger, more accessible and effective judicial and court services. Opportunities include Mana Grants, a small grants facility available to eligible partner countries to support locally appropriate solutions.
Find out more: https://www.fedcourt.gov.au/apjp

Papua New Guinea
Centre for Judicial Excellence

The PNG Judiciary, through PNGCJE, is a contributor to judicial capacity building in the Pacific region. The Centre works with courts, training institutions and partner judiciaries to strengthen judicial education across neighbouring Pacific jurisdictions.
Find out more:
https://pngcje.gov.pg/pacific-cje/

PACIFIC JUDICIAL COUNCIL

The PJC brings together judicial officers from American Samoa, Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau and the Marshall Islands. It supports regional collaboration, judicial education and professional development, with a focus on strengthening court leadership and the administration of justice across its member jurisdictions.
Find out more:
https://pacificjudicialcouncil.org

RELEVANT ARTICLES
FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Safer court spaces expand across Tonga

Ha'apai Magistrates' Court has opened Tonga's fourth private waiting room for vulnerable court users, providing a safer, more private and child-friendly space, particularly for women, children and survivors of family violence. The facility is part of wider family protection initiatives improving access to protection orders and survivor-centred court services across Tonga, including its outer islands.
Read

PNG takes community-led approach to strengthening Village Courts

Village Courts and community leaders are joining forces to improve local responses to family and gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea.
Read

Pacific framework strengthens support for survivors

A new Pacific-led counselling framework establishes minimum standards for safe, ethical and survivor-centred support for people affected by gender-based violence. Developed through consultations in Kiribati, Samoa and Papua New Guinea, it will help 13 Pacific governments strengthen national counselling standards and the implementation of family protection laws.
Read

Cook Islands brings women's rights and small island realities to CEDAW country exchange

The Cook Islands has presented its progress on women's rights to the UN CEDAW Committee, highlighting advances in women's leadership, safety and access to justice, alongside the particular challenges facing women and girls in the Pa Enua.
Read

Pacific women call for greater voice in climate and water decisions

Pacific women leaders are calling for women, young people and people with disabilities to have a stronger role in decisions about climate resilience and water security as El Niño places increasing pressure on water supplies across the region. A new WaterAid Australia report, Rising Tides, Rising Voices, drawing on surveys and interviews across 24 Pacific countries and territories, highlights the disproportionate impact of water insecurity on women and girls and the value of women's traditional knowledge in responding to climate change.

The report found that 79% of respondents identified women's exclusion from water management and climate decision-making as the most urgent gap requiring attention. Pacific advocates are calling for climate financing to reach grassroots organisations, for women and people with disabilities to be meaningfully represented in climate governance, and for the Pacific narrative to shift from vulnerability towards the region's resilience, knowledge and leadership.
Read

Women's judicial leadership key to public trust

A May 2026 UNDP Asia-Pacific analysis highlights a persistent regional "justice paradox": while more women are entering the judiciary, they remain significantly underrepresented in senior courts. UNDP argues that strengthening women's judicial leadership is not only about gender equality, but about building more representative, credible and trusted justice institutions.
Read

