

Pacific Islands

As we expand our programs in the Pacific Islands and re-establish our office in Suva, Fiji, The Asia Foundation is building on decades of on-the-ground experience in the region. Areas of focus include supporting Pacific solutions to Pacific challenges - working with respected leaders, local NGOs, and government agencies and officials to amplify voice and accountability in decision making; advancing women's leadership and agency on climate action and disaster management; enhancing digital economic opportunities and cybersecurity; and countering trafficking in persons.



TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS

In recent years, The Asia Foundation has undertaken a series of technology programs in Pacific Island Countries (PICs). The power of online platforms to expand markets for entrepreneurs, particularly women, drives our support for programs such as digitizing the ROC market in Fiji and new approaches to green business opportunities with women's networks. Our work builds on lessons learned from other regional activities, such as the Google-funded, multi-year partnership with APEC that supported dialogue and pilot projects focussed on digital prosperity in the APEC region, and the Google-funded Go Digital ASEAN program that provided online skills training to 200,000 disadvantaged small businesses across all 10 ASEAN countries. The Foundation also supports cyber resilience and knowledge sharing, convening regional meetings such as the Pacific Cyber Dialogue (with PNG's Department of ICT, the Asia-Pacific Network Information Centre, and the Australian and New Zealand Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade). Our Pacific Covid-19 Infodemic report (2021) analysed the state of online information ecosystems in three Melanesian countries, the risks of misinformation during the pandemic, and potential actions to respond to these challenges.

COUNTER-TRAFFICKING-IN-PERSONS

In partnership with USAID, the Foundation is leading a new program, Pacific RISE-CTIP, to address trafficking in persons through a multisectoral approach that engages stakeholders from government, civil society, and the private sector to strengthen prevention, protection, and prosecution. This 5-year program focuses on PNG, Fiji, RMI, and Tonga. The Foundation's approach prioritizes:

- Working within existing systems, structures and priorities
- Facilitating connected community interventions with regional and national systems
- Conducting evidence-based adaptive programming
- Promoting gender equality and social inclusion
- Harnessing digital innovations.

POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS

Through the DFAT-TAF Strategic Partnership, the Foundation has been commissioned to undertake a political economy analysis of three Large Ocean States (Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu), to better understand the values, needs, and interests of different groups in these countries (2021-22). The Foundation has also been commissioned to conduct a political economy analysis of

the water sector in 14 Pacific countries by Australian Water Partnership to inform its programming in the region (2021-22).

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND INCLUSIVE CLIMATE ACTION

Through the establishment of an internal PowerShift Fund in partnership with the Shifting the Power Coalition, the Foundation supports a localized approach led by 13 (mainly) women-led member organizations in the Pacific, to strengthen the capacity of beneficiary communities to respond to disasters and climate crises. In Fiji, we are working with young women scientists and their communities to monitor the environmental impacts of gravel extraction and industry compliance with government standards.

FUTURE OF WORK

Building on the findings of our 2020 analysis of the future of work for women in the Pacific, the Foundation will continue to pursue opportunities for policy measures and reforms to support women's equitable economic participation and women in STEM. We have commissioned further research on challenges and opportunities on the future of work for older women. The impacts of Covid-19 pandemic in the region have made it clear that healthy people are essential for healthy economies. The Foundation is working with the Pacific Island Food Revolution to incubate food system and behaviour change solutions to the ongoing health crises in the region.

LET'S READ

Through our Let's Read program, we are working with local authors, illustrators, editors, and translators to create digital and printed children's stories that reflect their own environment and encourage a love of learning. We have already co-produced 15 stories in English, Fijian, and Hindi on topics such as Oceans, Inclusive Climate Action, Human Rights, and People with Disabilities that are available on our free digital library. Print copies are being distributed to schools and libraries across Fiji. Teachers are already using them as classroom resources for primary school students. We partnered with Bilum Books to translate, digitize, and deliver books in three Papua New Guinean languages. The Foundation works with the U.S. Embassy in Fiji, which also serves Kiribati,

Nauru, Tonga, and Tuvalu, to support education, literacy, and skills building by distributing books to over 30 educational and government institutions. Recipients of Books for Asia shipments include libraries, schools, learning centres, and government offices.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Young Leaders from across the Pacific Islands experience transformative learning and exchange opportunities through our Leadership and Exchange programs, such as our new LeadNext program working with young leaders and our long-running Young Diplomats Program.

EXPERIENCE IN THE PACIFIC

The Asia Foundation has a long history of engagement in PICs. Following a decade of non-resident programming, the Foundation operated a Representative office in Suva, Fiji from 1990-95, from which it provided grants and technical assistance to Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and other Pacific Island countries aimed at strengthening parliaments, judiciaries, and other government institutions, supporting women's rights and empowerment, building the capacity of universities, providing educational materials through our Books for Asia program, and promoting regional cooperation and exchanges.

With support from USAID, the Foundation conducted a twenty-year flagship regional disaster risk management training program in the Pacific (1995-2014), that provided training to 7,000 regional, national, and subnational responders in 14 countries to manage weather and climate-related risks. The Foundation also supported nation-wide anti-violence campaigns in Fiji, PNG, and Solomon Islands, providing direct services to women survivors of violence through a partnership with USAID's East Asia Pacific Women's Initiative on Trafficking and Violence Against Women (2002-09).

Working with DFAT and AFP, the Foundation has conducted disaster management trainings in Samoa and Federated States of Micronesia (2010-12). In 2017, the Australian High Commission engaged the Foundation to conduct a scoping study on legitimacy and accountability in Solomon Islands. The Foundation took part in a similar study in PNG in 2020 for the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby.