



DIPLOMACY TRAINING PROGRAM

AFFILIATED WITH THE FACULTY OF LAW & JUSTICE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
A training program for peoples of the Asia-Pacific region

Human Rights, Climate Change and Business in the Pacific Suva, Fiji March 2026

in partnership with

Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO), Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS) and the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights Pacific Regional Office (UN HCHR RPO)

Program Report

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Executive Summary

The Diplomacy Training Program held this program in partnership with the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO), Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS) and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR – ROP) Regional Office for the Pacific in Suva.

Building upon DTP and PIANGO's *Human Rights, Climate Change and Business* (HRCCB) Program in Suva in 2025, as well as the most recent Australian Awards Fellowship program, *Pacific Voices on Climate Change* in November 2025, this program continued to strengthen DTP's engagement with civil society in the Pacific. Through 5 days of intensive learning and knowledge sharing among participants, trainers and local facilitators, this program successfully helped to build the confidence and networks of civil society members across the Pacific, including 23 participants from 10 different countries. The program included DTP's first participants from Niue, Palau and Samoa.

The diversity of the participants – in age and experience, and in their leadership roles at local, national and regional level was a strength of the program. Trainers and participants ensured that there was a focus on rights of persons with disability and the gendered impact of climate change on women and those with a disability.

The program included a special event to mark the 40th Anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development, a screening of the film "Pig Feast" at the National Museum of Fiji and an afternoon tea/reception at the Australian High Commission with speeches from DTP partners and participants.

The program took place as preparations are made for the Pacific PreCOP to be held in Fiji and Tuvalu in October 31 and following the ICJ's Advisory Opinion on state obligations on climate change. There is growing acknowledgement of the moral force of voices from the Pacific demanding more urgent action on climate change, and the need for these voices to be heard.

Participant evaluations of the program were very positive – with all participants saying the program met or exceeded their expectations.

The program was made possible with funding from DFAT's Australian NGO Cooperation Program, OHCHR, donations and the Global Green Grants Fund – and the generous pro bono contribution of Professor Surya Deva, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development.

Program Objectives



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This program continued the work of the partners, PIANGO, FCOSS and the UN HCHR PRO in developing the knowledge, skills and networks of civil society in the Pacific, to strengthen their voices as they engage with business, governments, international forums and negotiations. The program-built knowledge of human rights, the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and international agreements such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdictions Agreement (BBNJ -The High Seas Treaty), and proposed Fossil Fuel Treaty. Program participants also built skills and confidence in strategic advocacy and effective engagement with governments and business. The program set the following objectives:

1. Gaining knowledge of international human rights standards, principles, and mechanisms
2. Building knowledge and skills in engaging with UN human rights accountability mechanisms
3. Gaining practical skills in strategic advocacy, lobbying, and peoples' diplomacy
4. Strengthening networks across the region to enable information sharing and support

Expert resource persons, including human rights academics and practitioners lead sessions, shared knowledge and helped build networks. The program aimed to help strengthen existing networks and organisations, especially in support of PIANGO and their commitment to build the next generation of civil society leadership in the Pacific. It followed on from previous regional programs and the successful PIANGO/DTP Pacific Voices on Climate Change Program (Australian Awards Fellowship) in November 2025.

The timing was important considering the commitment for a Pacific Pre-COP31 and growing urgency of negotiations on climate change and its impacts, including climate mobility. The relevance of this proves there is a need and an opportunity to strengthen voices in and from the Pacific. Strengthening civil society strengthens democracy in the region at this time of growing authoritarianism and strategic rivalry. The program aimed to contribute to longer term strategies of capacity and network building by the partner organisations.

Program Partners

Pacific Island Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO)

PIANGO is the leading organisation of civil society in the Pacific and helps to guide DTP's programs in the region. We have partnered together in programs on Business and Human Rights and the SDGs, on the Climate Emergency and on Labour Migration. DTP has a long history of partnerships with PIANGO, confirms that PIANGO contributes strongly to participant and trainer selection. As a local partner, PIANGO also supports DTP's programs in venue and accommodation selection, local transport, and in-country logistics.



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Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS)

FCOSS is one of DTP's foremost local partners. They provide a number of key benefits and important local insights for DTP's program facilitation, including staff members, transport support, in-country administration, participant and trainer selection, and valuable connections with Fijian local NGOs and government. DTP maintains strong relationships with a number of FCOSS staff, including its executive director, Vani Catanasiga.

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR – ROP)

OHCHR-ROP has been a historical partner of DTP, formalised in an MoU in 2021. OHCHR-ROP has consistently collaborated with DTP on capacity building initiatives, including the Global Compact on Migration, Business and Human Rights and the Climate Emergency's Impact on the Pacific initiative. This partnership is uniquely beneficial for this program – OHCHR-ROP provides a range of government and international/UN connections and plays a role in selecting and suggesting local participants, expert trainers, and developing the program's schedule and training sessions.

Program Participants

This program included 23 participants from across the Pacific, from 10 different countries:

- Australia
- Fiji
- Kiribati
- Niue
- Palau
- Papua New Guinea
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Tuvalu
- Indonesia/West Papua

Age

Participants' ages ranged from 21 to 61 years.

Gender balance

There were 8 Male participants and 15 Female participants.

Disability inclusion

This program included 2 participants from disability advocate organisations, Fusi Alofa Association in Tuvalu and Fiji Mobility Alliance



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Professional backgrounds

Participants represented Pacific organisations across civil society, churches, disability advocacy, human rights, climate funds, climate justice, environmental conservation, legal services and ethnographic roles.

Participant presentations

Participants, throughout the program, had the opportunity to present to the group on the background of their home organisations, the work they are involved in and the key messages they wish to share as well as points of collaboration and partnership.



HRCCB Program visit to the Australian High Commission, Suva

Program Description: Program Schedule and Highlights

Day One

The program was launched by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, Professor Surya Deva, Regional Representative of the OHCHR for the Pacific, Heike Alefsen, Executive Director from FCOSS, Vani Catanasiga, and The Honourable Filimoni Vosarogo, Fiji Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources. The opening discussions emphasised climate change in the Pacific as the most significant threat to human rights. The opening also highlighted that effective responses depend on collaboration across governments, civil society, international organisations, and the private sector. While robust domestic legal systems and



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climate-ready legislation are essential, civil society plays a critical role in accountability and implementation. The Pacific's leadership in framing climate change as a human rights issue reflects lived experience and reinforces the need to centre affected communities in decision-making and regional cooperation.



Emeline Siale Ilolahia (PIANGO), The Hon. Filimoni Vosarogo, Fijian Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources, Heike Alefsen (UN HCHR RPO) and Surya Deva (Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development) at the Opening Ceremony

Participants were later able to attend the UNDP's celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the UN General Assembly Declaration on the Right to Development. The Right to Development was presented by UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, Professor Surya Deva, as a holistic framework integrating economic, social, political, and environmental dimensions. It emphasises equitable participation but is undermined by rising inequality, conflicts, a shrinking civil society, and inadequate climate finance. Effective implementation requires locally led, inclusive development that strengthens democratic participation and aligns with community needs.

Participants Julie Talagi-Funaki from Niue, and Puanita Ewekia from Tuvalu joined PIANGO's Executive Director, Emeline Siale Ilolahia, and Professor Deva, for a panel discussion on the application of the right to development in the Pacific. The panel highlighted climate finance as a key challenge, often characterised by inaccessibility, bureaucracy, and misalignment with grassroots priorities. Julie and Puanita both argued that successful models are people-led and trust-based, ensuring resources reach those most affected. Tensions between economic development and environmental protection, particularly in the context of deep-sea mining in the Pacific, highlight the need for models that internalise social and environmental costs. Finally, the panel reflected the need to address how profits are generated and distributed. A human rights-based approach requires integrating environmental and human rights considerations into core business operations to prevent harm and promote sustainable development.



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Day Two

In Professor Deva's morning session, he distinguished the Right to Development from conventional development by emphasising the importance of process as well as outcomes, and the inclusion of social and political participation. Key challenges identified across Pacific contexts include land ownership complexities, social conflict, discrimination, weak education systems, and manipulation by both governments and corporations. Competing models of development were contrasted: a growth-driven approach that sidelines human rights, and a human rights-based "planet-centred participatory development" approach that embeds rights in all decisions. While the former may yield faster economic gains, the latter is more sustainable and equitable. Practically, Professor Deva encouraged advocates to challenge tokenistic consultation, propose alternative development models, and use community experience-sharing to expose harms of projects such as mining or logging.

Professor Deva also outlined the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), structured around three pillars: state duty to protect, corporate responsibility to respect, and access to remedy. Although not legally binding, the UNGPs are highly influential. States must regulate corporate activity, ensure policy coherence, and prevent human rights abuses, including through oversight of state-owned enterprises and private contractors. Businesses are also expected to respect human rights by avoiding harm and addressing impacts across their operations and supply chains. Professor Deva stressed that climate change is implicitly captured within the UNGP framework, as environmental harm directly affects human rights, making corporate accountability central to climate governance.

The afternoon session was led by Project Lead for the Australian Climate Accountability Project at UNSW's Australian Human Rights Institute, Maria Nawaz. Maria highlighted the Pacific's leadership in global climate advocacy, driven by the region's disproportionate vulnerability despite minimal contributions to the emissions that cause this vulnerability. Through collective action, Pacific countries have pushed for stronger emissions reductions, a nuclear non-proliferation treaty, climate finance, and the "polluter pays" principle.

Maria highlighted the ICJ's Advisory Opinion (ICJ AO) on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change as a significant development. The ICJ AO affirmed that states have legal obligations to prevent climate harm, regulate emissions, and protect human rights. While non-binding, the opinion strengthens advocacy efforts, supports accountability, and reinforces the need for climate policies aligned with the 1.5°C target.

After the conclusion of formal sessions, the group went to the Fiji Museum to attend a screening of 'Pig Feast'. This documentary investigates the massive deforestation, agribusiness expansion, and human rights impacts on Indigenous Papuan communities in West Papua. Participant Samuel Womsiwor from West Papua was also able to share some of his reflections on the documentary and outline some of his experiences of the environmental destruction in his



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homeland from the Indonesian developments. Samuel noted the lack of grassroots consultation with the Indigenous communities in West Papua, and the threats the developments pose to traditional lands, culture, and food security.

Day Three

Director of the Hawaii Institute for Human Rights, Joshua Cooper, and the OHCHR Pacific Regional Office's Chiaki Ota, mapped the UN human rights system and how to understand UN standards and mechanism as a set of complementary tools to be used in advocacy strategies. The session distinguished treaty-based mechanisms that apply primarily to ratifying states from charter-based mechanisms that apply to all states. The UN Human Rights Council, a 47-member intergovernmental body, serves as the central forum for addressing violations, reviewing states, and mandating independent experts. The UPR reviews all states every 4–5 years with key advocacy entry points including stakeholder submissions and oral statements.

Treaty bodies monitor compliance and issue authoritative “soft-law” guidance. However, these the monitoring function depends on treaty ratification by states. Special Procedures, such as Special Rapporteurs, draw their mandate from the UN Charter and provide more flexible tools through country visits, communications, and reporting, enabling civil society to apply pressure alongside international mechanisms, effectively “squeezing” states between domestic and global accountability.

Recent advisory opinions (ITLOS, IACtHR, ICJ) further strengthen the legal nexus between climate change and human rights, affirming duties to prevent environmental harm and recognising intergenerational rights. Practical exercises run by Joshua and Chiaki highlighted how mechanisms like UPR, treaty bodies, and SDG-linked Voluntary National Reviews can be used to address issues such as gender inequality, environmental harm, and climate displacement, with an emphasis on coalition-building, strategic submissions, and using accessible databases.

The participants also had a short presentation from Joe Crawford from the International Women's Development Agency, which emphasised that inclusive, individual-level data is central





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to advancing human rights and accountability. In the Pacific, reliance on household-level data obscures inequalities within households, particularly gendered impacts. Data from Equality Insights shows how factors such as gender, disability, and age intersect to shape poverty, health outcomes, and food insecurity across the life course. Without this data, policy responses risk being ineffective or misdirected. The presentation highlighted that poor or inaccurate data can erode trust in institutions, while robust data strengthens advocacy by making inequalities visible to policymakers. Advocates are encouraged to push governments to invest in individual-level data collection, particularly in Small Island Developing States where capacity constraints exist.



Sutharee Wannasiri from the Accountability Counsel ran sessions focused on accountability mechanisms in project finance, particularly leveraging investors such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. Advocacy strategies include using OECD National Contact Points, bank grievance mechanisms, and Independent Accountability Mechanisms (IAMs), which allow affected communities to file complaints regarding harmful projects. While these processes can lead to remedies, project suspension, or policy change, they are often slow, limited in enforcement power, and require strategic use.

A key insight was to “follow the money,” as financial actors hold leverage and set project standards. Effective complaints require clear evidence of harm, prior engagement with institutions, and well-defined goals. The sessions also emphasised building community power through relationships, knowledge, legitimacy, and narrative, alongside practical strategies such as simplifying communication, using local languages, and engaging trusted community structures. Ultimately, combining legal mechanisms with grassroots mobilisation offers the strongest pathway to accountability and change.

Day Four

Sutharee’s day four session focused on negotiation and mediation within project finance accountability mechanisms, emphasising dialogue as a preferable alternative to formal investigation or review. The value of mediation was emphasised as being more transparent and consultative, less costly, more flexible, and effective, with a high rate of agreement. Sutharee also stressed that mediation can provide greater community outcomes including labour protections, and environmental safeguards, as well as potentially providing social support, like translation and education, enabling greater participation. However, power imbalances between



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communities, governments, and corporations can undermine fairness, particularly where corruption or pre-determined government decisions exist. Communities often face resource constraints, language barriers, intimidation, lack of trust, internal divisions, and difficulties selecting legitimate representatives. Effective negotiation therefore requires careful planning regarding representation, procedures, timelines, language, and location, with an emphasis on accessibility and trust. There was a sharing of negotiation strategies, tips and experiences.

Professor Surya Deva, then led a role play session where participants were able to gain experience advocating for the causes their organisations to the UN, with Professor Deva role playing in his position as UN Special Rapporteur. Submissions on climate change, gender, and extractive industries illustrated intersecting human rights impacts, including economic vulnerability, exclusion from decision-making, environmental harm, and cultural loss. A recurring issue raised was the inadequate or tokenistic consultation by decision makers, often limited to select groups and lacking inclusivity, particularly for women, youth, and marginalised communities.

The participants were then given the opportunity to visit the Australian High Commission in Suva for afternoon tea, where they were able to meet and build connections with the staff of the Australian High Commission, including Deputy High Commissioner, Clair McNamara. This was a unique experience for the participants, giving them exposure and allowing them to network and build confidence in diplomatic and rights-based advocacy.



Returning to the classroom for the afternoon session, Professor Deva, and PIANGO's Emeline Siale Ilolahia had an open dialogue with participants, to hear the main obstacles to effective participation in governance and decision-making. Key barriers raised to meaningful participation included the lack of accessible information, technical complexity, insufficient notice, logistical constraints, and public distrust in government processes. Participation is a focus of one of his next thematic reports and the experience and voices of the participants from the Pacific will feed directly into that report. Professor Deva stressed the necessity of early engagement, clear communication, use of accessible formats, and genuine responsiveness to community input. Structural reforms such as progressive taxation, transparent public finance, and inclusive policy design were identified as vital to align development with human rights. Professor Deva also emphasised the importance of evidence-based advocacy, use of case studies, and continued engagement with UN mechanisms to influence accountability and reform.



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Day Five

Joshua Cooper returned for his session on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Joshua emphasised UNDRIP's unique origin as a document drafted by Indigenous peoples and its grounding in the right to self-determination. Key provisions highlighted included protections against forced removal (art 10), rights to maintain political, economic and social systems (art 20), and the right to determine development priorities (art 23). The recognition of collective rights was defended as essential to Indigenous identity and survival.

The Pacific Pre-COP discussion conducted by Ujjwal Krishna from ACFID, and Emeline Siale Ilohahia concluded the formal sessions. The session focused on positioning Pacific civil society within international climate negotiations. Mechanisms such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and COP processes were raised as key accountability tools, though implementation gaps persist. Pre-COP was identified as a strategic opportunity to elevate Pacific priorities, particularly given Australia's leadership role in upcoming negotiations. The Bonn Conference was also noted as a preparatory forum shaping technical and financial agendas ahead of COP.

Priority issues identified by participants included climate finance, displacement and climate mobility, sea-level rise, deforestation, renewable energy, and labour mobility. Participants also raised persistent challenges including unclear mechanisms for calculating non-economic loss, limited accessibility of funding, and dependence on state-controlled distribution channels.

Pre-COP processes offer leverage, but meaningful participation requires technical knowledge, coordination, and sustained advocacy. Issues such as the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme highlight the intersection of climate, development, and labour rights, including concerns about dignity, consent, and structural inequality.





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Participant Evaluations and Recommendations

In order to better meet the expectations and needs of program participants, DTP provided a post-program opportunity for participants to provide feedback on their experiences, reflections, and potential areas for improvement. These anonymous and extensive evaluation questionnaires provide coordinators and trainers to adjust future programs and maximise impact, satisfaction, and engagement. It also allows participants to reflect on the benefits and insight they have gained from the program and encourages them to consider how they can best implement their new knowledge and skills into their work.

Overall, feedback demonstrates that the program was overwhelmingly successful and had a significantly positive impact on participants.

Most Useful Sessions/Content:

Part A of the program evaluation focused on the outcomes for participants in developing their practical advocacy skills, knowledge, and networks across a number of substantive areas. This training program was designed to provide participants with experience and information across four main areas:

5. Gaining knowledge of international human rights standards, principles, and mechanisms
6. Building knowledge and skills in engaging with UN human rights accountability mechanisms
7. Gaining practical skills in strategic advocacy, lobbying, and peoples' diplomacy
8. Strengthening networks across the region to enable information sharing and support

61–83% of participants *strongly agreed* that their knowledge and skills across all of these areas were improved as a result of the program. In addition, 100% of participants reported that their skills and knowledge had improved in some way over the course of the training.



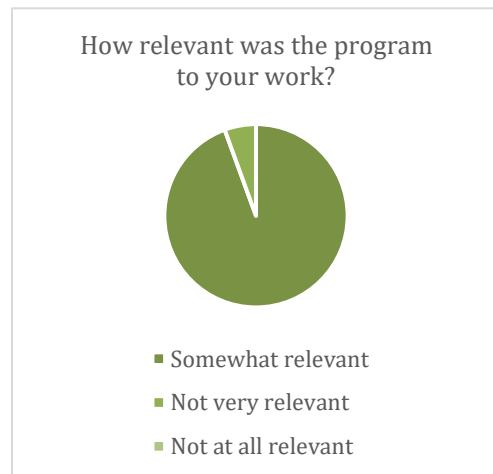


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Written participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with one participant specifically identifying how powerful UN mechanisms can be in supporting advocacy:

“Before this training, I did not fully understand how these mechanisms work, but now I see that they are powerful tools for advocacy. They give a voice to communities, especially vulnerable groups like persons with disabilities, to demand fairness and inclusion. This session was important to me because it is practical—I can take this knowledge back and use it to support my community in addressing real issues.”



All participants reported that the program at least met their expectations, with 83% of the respondents reporting that the program exceeded their expectations.

Respondents found that the program and its content was overwhelmingly relevant to their current advocacy work, with 94% of participants agreeing that it was very relevant. Specifically identified areas of short- and long-term applicability and usefulness included:

- UN and OECD complaints mechanisms and processes
- Advocacy financing
- Negotiation and mediation role playing
- The role of the UN special rapporteur and UPR, especially led by Professor Surya Deva

Highlights of the Program:

Group work and networking opportunities were a distinct highlight, and allowed participants to form stronger regional and domestic relationships with other participants and similar advocacy organisations. Not only does this benefit individual participants, but also strengthens advocacy capacity for other organisations and civil society organisations.

“One of the highlights of the program is the group session with the UN Special Rapporteur. This session was really helpful because we had the opportunity to speak with a UN special Rapporteur. We were also given feedback on our exercise which was really helpful.”



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“My highlight of the program is doing the practical sessions with the whole group. It is indeed very helpful because I now understand how the UN System works when it comes to meeting a special rapporteur or involving a consultant with him. I was not part of any consultation when it comes to reporting so this is a highlight for me as we prepare for COP 31.”

On Day 2 of the program, DTP along with the Fiji Museum were proud to host a screening of the film ‘Pig Feast’ for both participants and members of the general public. There was a great turnout, including a Q and A session with participant of the program and West Papuan activist Samuel Womsiwor. The film highlights the devastating current human rights and environmental issues associated with Indonesia’s Food Estate in Merauke, West Papua.

“The highlight of the program would be the screening of the West Papua movie. Each of our countries have our issues of climate change and its effects on land and sea and how it affects our people's lives. But watching the movie and seeing the magnitude of destruction, clear felling forests, and uprooting the people's lives with no thought whatsoever of the people's rights to homes, food and water security, children and women's wellbeing, and rights to basic government services of health and education.”

Program Delivery/Duration Comments:

Overall, participants were satisfied with the length of the course, however some mentioned the need for more time in sessions to cover topics in depth, for example: “Topics such as the United Nations are important, big topics and need a lot of time in simplifying, in explaining and showing examples with group discussions.”

Other comments, including areas for improvement:

One participant did provide feedback on a potential area for improvement, specifically in regard to the development of stronger regional networks. They identified the importance of discussing the role of firm guidelines for regional cooperation, which would allow similar civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to initiate collaboration and networking more effectively.



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“This was one of the best training courses that I have attended so far. The speakers are experts in their field of work, so it was very useful listening to them sharing their experiences. I would recommend that DTP continue to engage the experts to do the training because it is very important for the participants' learning and development. With that, I wish to thank DTP for this wonderful opportunity of training and to build my network with my pacific family as we continue to fight towards one common goal.”

Program Outcomes

This program invited participants from a wide range of backgrounds, including lawyers, government, NGOs, Indigenous advocacy groups, and NHRIs. The inclusion of many group activities, individual advocacy presentations, and overall proximity of participants across the training program further contributes to the building of networks between participants and their organisations.

The program was successful in going beyond meeting participant's expectations and strengthening networks within Pacific civil society. Participants were actively involved in sessions ranging from engaging the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, Pacific leadership on global climate advocacy through to accountability mechanisms for project financing related to human rights, climate change and business.

The amazing help of local partners, PIANGO and FCOSS, including participants from these organisations made the program both valuable and possible. DTP looks forward to continuing to strengthen these relationships and build on the common goals shared with PIANGO and FCOSS.

The way forward: DTP's next steps

This program built upon DTP and PIANGO's *Human Rights, Climate Change and Business* (HRCCB) Program in Suva in 2025, as well as the most recent Australian Awards Fellowship program, *Pacific Voices on Climate Change* in November 2025.

This program is part of a wider strategy of PIANGO / DTP capacity building for civil society in the Pacific. Supporting Pacific civil society to engage their governments and the governments of Australia and other developed countries is critical to driving ambitious action on the climate emergency.

DTP will focus on post-program catch-ups, the maintenance of DTP WhatsApp groups and alumni events, and the sharing of individual advocacy work will aid in the maintenance of networks between participants long after the program has ended.



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Acknowledgements

DTP would like to acknowledge the support of local partners PIANGO, FCOSS and the UN HCHR ROP. DTP would also like to acknowledge with thanks and appreciation the support and engagement of the trainers, facilitators, NGO colleagues and DTP alumni and volunteers who all helped so much with the program.

