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Meeting the COVID-19 and Cyclone Challenges

When I last wrote to you in our April newsletter, the team and I were developing new approaches to work effectively from home, while remaining engaged with the region. As this newsletter highlights, we have been able to continue to work with our Pacific partners to enhance national and regional security, and develop some valuable new joint initiatives.

Over the last few months, the Pacific region has been faced with an unprecedented health security challenge, as well as a [category five severe tropical cyclone](#). These events have had significant community and economic impacts that affect lives, livelihoods and national revenue from tourism, commodity exports, fisheries and agriculture/forestry.

Despite these development hurdles, Pacific governments have displayed their mettle. As our Advisory Board member Tuiloma Neroni Slade [observed](#) earlier this month, "disasters expose system weaknesses ... but also the strength of regional leadership and response." Pacific governments have taken swift and effective action to protect their communities and have leveraged regional and international partnerships to address new challenges. Even so, many economic and health challenges still loom large for the future.

Events this quarter have foregrounded the multiple and complex security issues facing the Pacific, as already highlighted by the PIF BoE Declaration's expanded security concept. PSC has enhanced our communication platforms and products to examine more closely pressing security issues and extend our reach to our Pacific partners.

Our regular blogs, the PSC weekly COVID-19 summary, and the interactive COVID-19 map, recently launched with ANU partners (see below), have made information about the unfolding health security situation easily accessible, and created a space where Pacific voices can express their interpretation of unfolding events. We invite you to visit our website, *Pacific in Focus*, <https://www.policyforum.net/pacific-in-focus/> and explore the new, interactive *COVID-19 Response map*. Also, stand by for the upcoming launch of our Pacific Podcast – *Pacific Wayfinder*.

This quarter, we were honoured to host a [conversation](#) on COVID-19 between the PSC Advisory Board of Pacific leaders and the Australian Minister for International Development and the Pacific, the Hon. Alex Hawke concerning the pathway to recovery, and the role of the College. As the Board acknowledged, COVID-19 won't be the last public emergency to face the Pacific islands region, so recovery needs to

encompass stronger governance, wiser investments and enduring partnerships to enable the Pacific to get on to a sustainable and resilient pathway for the future.

We are pleased with the partnerships we are forging to support a more resilient Pacific, develop and implement national and regional security strategies, improve health security responses, contribute to local disaster preparedness and responsiveness, and support education to improve gender/cyber safety. It is a pleasure to work alongside national governments, regional agencies, international NGOs and multilateral organisations.

We will continue to adapt to our changed circumstances and remain grateful for your ongoing support. We are always eager to hear from you and find new opportunities to work together. -Keep well, and keep in touch!



Professor Meg Keen, Director.

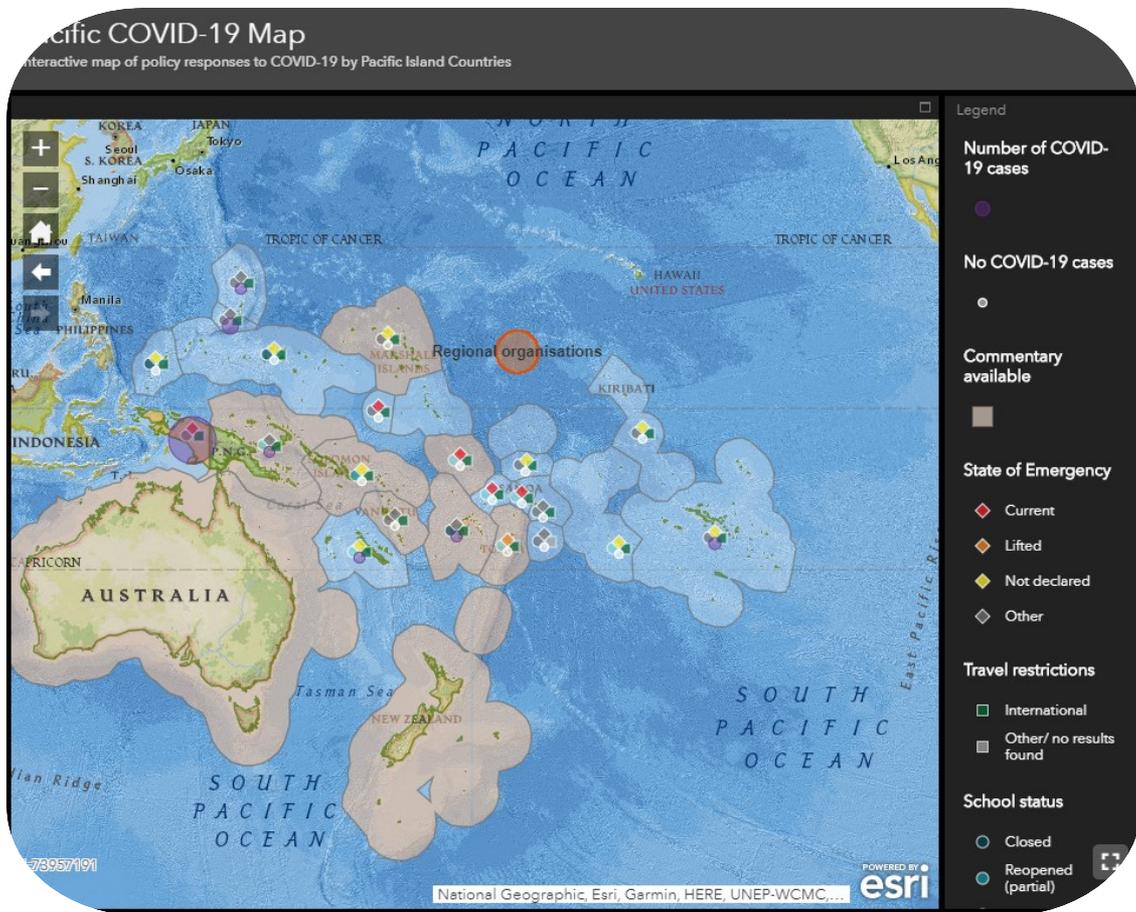
Mapping the Pacific Response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis presents one of the greatest human security challenges that our region has faced. In this period, it is more important than ever for policymakers to connect with one another, share expertise and communicate policy responses. It is in this spirit that PSC has created a weekly tracking matrix "COVID-19: The Pacific Response", which has been published each week since early April on the Asia Pacific Policy Forum website.

The [matrix](#) collates open-source reporting of COVID-19 related issues, including: the status of states of emergency, lockdowns and curfews in the region; travel restrictions and border closures; political economy; school and university closures; health and social affairs; and overseas development assistance flows. To accompany the matrix, the College's Research Officer, Hugh McClure writes a weekly '[Trendlines](#)' blog, which summarises the headline developments in the policy response to COVID-19 in our region.

Most recently, PSC has joined with ANU's Department of Pacific Affairs (DPA) to present an interactive tool 'Mapping the Pacific Response to COVID-19'. The [map](#) is designed for Pacific policymakers and researchers to be able to apply filters and view selected content from the matrix and blogs. By embedding long-form DPA articles onto the map description boxes, the tool not only reports headline news and policy development, but also captures a snapshot of analysis. View the video which explains the map by following this YouTube link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vEn1UJwGmM>

If you would like to contribute to our blogs, or know of any policy updates, please get in touch! This is not an academic blog, we welcome all contributions between 700-1000 words.



Partnerships for Human Security

Guided by the Boe Declaration and together with partners from academia, health and security sectors in the Pacific region, we are working on the development of a collaborative project to support security agencies to enhance their partnership potential with the many agencies responding to the current COVID-19. This work explores how diverse agencies can support the health and well-being of the population as a key pillar of national security strategies. We are currently scoping the project with partners in Fiji, and then will seek to expand our work to other interested Pacific countries. To support the framing of health security issues, we are collaborating with Fiji National University (FNU) to design an interactive graduate health and security course intended for Fiji government officials and FNU students, which will explore multi-agency approaches to health and human security. This could become a regional offering.

In partnership with UN Women, and in consultation with SPC, we are developing Cyber Safety Materials for Women to be delivered by locally-based trainers in Suva.

Pacific Islands are experiencing a digital transformation that could have major implications for democratic governance and the region's development. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/digital-islands-how-pacific-ict-revolution-transforming-region>

However, many women are not yet experiencing the full benefits of this revolution—and indeed, are vulnerable to increased risks of online violence.

By increasing their understanding of cyber safety and opportunities, the pilot program aims to reduce Pacific women's vulnerability to harm, and to improve their productive use of digital technologies.



ANU and CSIRO have partnered to co-design and undertake an integrated assessment in close collaboration with ACIAR that provides a systematic analysis of emerging food systems vulnerabilities at regional and country scales and canvases options to mitigate those risks and vulnerabilities.

The assessment will inform possible actions that could be taken by governments and other food systems stakeholders to increase food systems resilience in the face of future shocks. The assessment will focus on the Pacific Islands Countries (PICs), PNG, Indonesia, Timor-Leste and the Philippines, recognising that each has very different agri-food systems.

The project aims to address two key questions:

1. What existing food system vulnerabilities are being exposed and amplified by the COVID-19 shocks
2. How can this illustrative shock be used to inform future 'research for development' (R4D) interventions to support food systems resilience in the Indo-Pacific?

Anchoring Strategic Analysis



Our second 'Anchoring Strategic Analysis' course was successfully delivered for the Pacific Fusion Centre (PFC) before the COVID-19 lock-down-. The course covered skills and approaches to better conduct strategic analyses. It is targeted to government and non-government participants from across the region. Key issues examined include regional, national, and international issues related to climate security, health security, transnational crime, border security and cyber-security. Given the existing environment, the course is being re-designed for remote delivery as an online training resource. The participants from the course are contributing to the development of the online materials through a case study filmed to demonstrate the application of the techniques in real life scenarios. This post course collaboration with the Pacific Fusion Centre has been valuable from an evaluation perspective as well as embedding relationships.

In addition, PSC will deliver a joint leadership session with the ANU's College of Business and Economics for the PFC participants in late July. To wrap up the participants' learning experience with PSC, the College will host a small function to farewell the participants at the completion of the leadership session.

Responding to Security Challenges and Boosting Resilience

Reflecting the heightened human security concerns in the region, this quarter we have written extensively on the policy responses and challenges to the COVID-19 pandemic in the region.

Our work on area-based responses to disaster management is advancing. In collaboration with Australia and Pacific Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity International and the University of New South Wales we have begun investigating how local government



and non-government institutions are building resilience through stronger networks and collaborations on the ground. We now have locally-engaged team members in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu helping us scope the project and discuss priorities with practitioners.

You may be interested to read the following articles:

- From the College's Director, Professor Meg Keen: ['The Future of Pacific Security'](#); ['Two Few Boots on the Ground? Women and Security in the Pacific'](#); ['Voices of Pacific Leaders: COVID-19 and the Path to Recovery'](#); ['Fishing for a Future: Transparency Challenges in Pacific Island Tuna Fisheries'](#)
- From the College's Pacific Lecturer, Dr Henry Ivarature, based in Port Moresby: ['The Securitisation of Public Health Emergencies'](#); ['Building Pacific Solidarity: The Pacific Island Forum's Response to COVID-19'](#) ; ['Papua New Guinea Must Control its Borders'](#)
- From the College's Communications Director, Ben Bohane, based in Port Vila: ['The Perfect Storm: The Challenges of Dealing with a Cyclone During a Global Health Crisis'](#)
- From the College's Gender Advisor, Ali Gillies: ['Is the Boe Declaration Silent on Gender?'](#)
- From the College's Research Officer, Hugh McClure ['COVID-19: The Pacific Response'](#) (published each Wednesday)
- And, from our valued contributors some rich offerings, including: Elizabeth Kopel ['The Impact of COVID-19 on Livelihoods in Papua New Guinea'](#); Laura Bruce ['Pacific Informal Settlements: Not Immune from COVID-19'](#); Tim George ['The Pacific Region and COVID-19: Preparing for the Future'](#)

Communications Update

The Communications Team has begun production on its documentary 'Pacific Lockdown: COVID-19 Challenges and Lessons'. We have commissioned four video diarists across our region to document their personal experiences and those of their communities over the coming months. This material will go into the documentary along with news footage and expert commentary. We hope to launch the documentary in December, which will likely make it the only Pacific-wide documentary to chart the COVID-19 crisis and how Pacific island countries have responded as seen through Pacific eyes. It is our hope that it will have lasting educational and historical value.

Production of the PSC podcast series, *Pacific Wayfinder*, has also begun. Through this series we will

present a number of podcasts which discuss a broad range of security issues with those who have a deep understanding and experience of the region. Early issues being covered include: human security, women in national security, and the security challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Briefings and Dialogues

The College, like the rest of the community, has faced many challenges that COVID-19 has placed on all of us. The impacts of COVID-19 have had significant impact on our work plan, and we expect the impacts on the region will continue for some time. Despite these setbacks, and thanks to digital technologies, we have continued to leverage strong partnerships in Australia and the region to advance our mission. This quarter, we have consulted, virtually, with the PNG Department of Prime Minister and National Executive Council on PNG security priorities; the PNG based Pacific Island Leadership and Governance (PILAG) group on possible collaborations, and the National Research Institute (NRI) on College work and exploring the possibility of future cooperation.

We have been in regular communication with the Fiji Department of Defence and National Security on our partnership to advance national and health security. We have also been in consultation with other countries on security issues, including Tonga and the Cook Islands, and with regional agencies.

Director Professor Meg Keen provided an overview of the challenges of COVID-19 and the ongoing

climate change security challenges in the Pacific to members of the Australian federal parliament in late June, as part of an initiative organised by Save the Children.

Extraordinary Advisory Board Meeting

This quarter, the PSC Advisory Board held a virtual, and extraordinary meeting which included an overview of PSC's reorientation in the face of COVID-19, and review our initiatives in the rapidly changing climate. We have met a third time this year with our Board to facilitate dialogue between our diverse board membership and the Minister for International Development and the Pacific. Information on our Board members can be found [here](#).

Master's By Coursework

The team have been busy designing an elective course within the Master of Public Administration at ANU. To be led by A/Prof Robert Styles, the course will take a Pacific focus and will include topics of national security, people and performance in public organisations, and cross-sectoral healthcare governance. We are also working with ANU colleagues on micro-credential offerings for professionals.



Telling the Region's Stories Through Photos

Our Vanuatu-based Communications Director, Ben Bohane, is, in his own time, leading a course through the VII Academy 'Photojournalism and Documentary Photography' for Pacific-region participants. As you can see from the above image, Ben understands how useful photos can be to communicate the broad-range of security challenges facing our region, and this course seeks to provide opportunities for Pacific island storytellers to hone their craft and depict their own stories.

For more information follow:



PhD Scholarships

We are excited to announce the release of four PhD scholarships for students from the Pacific Island Forum countries (excluding Australia and New Zealand). The objective of this Award is to provide funding for high achieving international students from Pacific countries to enable them to pursue a 3-year PhD program relevant to the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security and one or more of the expanded security issues (climate, resource, environment, human or traditional security) at the Australian National University. Further details can be found at <https://www.anu.edu.au/study/scholarships/find-a-scholarship/australia-pacific-security-college->

<https://vii.academy/events/photojournalism-and-documentary-photography-a-vii-academy-12-week-seminar-with-ben-bohane-for-the-pacific-region-participants/>)

[phd-scholarship](#) or by contacting A/Prof Robert Styles, Robert.styles@anu.edu.au.

PSC Welcomes New Staff



Program Coordinator: Maima Koro

We are pleased to welcome Maima to PSC this quarter as the College's Program Coordinator.

Malo ni Maima Koro is from Tokelau and Samoa. She has over 20 years' development experience in the Pacific at national and regional levels and has worked in the security, education, health, and governance sectors. Maima has a wealth of knowledge of the Pacific landscape and specialises on the contextualisation of donor-funded initiatives to suit Pacific countries.



Gender Advisor: Ali Gillies

We are also pleased to welcome Ali to the PSC team as our gender advisor.

During her distinguished career in international development, Ali has held significant roles at Australia's Agency for International Development (AusAID) as well as guiding governance and capacity building policies, NGO programs/humanitarian responses and partnerships between Australia's World Bank, Asian Development Bank and UN peace strategies. As Assistant Director General for AusAID, she led the organisation's fragility and conflict team (a key specialisation), and as Gender Coordinator, steered gender policy for the organisation.

Next newsletter we'll introduce two additional staff members who have recently joined us: Ms Elijah Malifa (Marketing and Communications Officer), and Dr Nick Thompson (Senior Health Advisor).

Generous and Grateful

We are thrilled to share with you a very generous gift the College accepted from the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) earlier this month. This beautiful Tivaevae applique by Mama Oki Vainerere Moetaua (2018) was originally gifted to the NGA by Cook Islands PM, Sir Henry Puna, and we are grateful to

showcase this artwork in our primary teaching space.



Podcasts - What's out and What's to Come!

Reflecting our shift to online engagement, Director Professor Meg Keen will be participating in four upcoming Podcasts/Webinars. The webinars will discuss the Pacific response to COVID-19, Climate change and COVID-19, and Resilience at Risk.

- Meg joined A/Prof Nicole Haley (Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU) and Dr Henry Ivarature (PSC) on the Crawford Policy Forum Podcast to discuss our COVID-19 Matrix, how this virus is affecting the region and policy responses. Now Out: <https://www.policyforum.net/resource/podcast-pacific-policy-responses-to-covid-19/>
- Meg will joint Professor Howard Bamsey (ANU School of Regulation and Global Governance, and Chair of the Global Water Partnership, former Executive Director of the Green Climate Fund) with Professor Mark Howden (ANU Institute for Climate Change, ICC) to participate in the ICC podcast series on COVID-19 and Climate Change – International Relations. https://anu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_icUAK1mmSz-dXkFncOjUUw
- Meg will join Professor David Sanderson (inaugural Judith Neilson Chair in Architecture at UNSW) as part of the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative podcast series on Resilience at Risk. They will be discussing Corruption and Crises: What is Fuelling Disaster Impacts? August 7, 9:00am AEST. https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10158463721068293&id=69201508292
- Meg will join Dr Ronak Patel, Director of the Urbanisation and Resilience Program at the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative to discuss Pacific disaster interventions and opportunities for responses that support sustainable development. September 4 2020, 7:00am AEST https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10158463721068293&id=69201508292

Keep in touch!

We recognise the importance of regional connectivity and the need for dialogue, knowledge sharing and collaboration in an increasingly crowded Pacific. Through bespoke courses and technical assistance, we will create opportunities for further learning and the exchange and development of ideas to advance the

security agenda of the Pacific islands.

If you have suggestions for workshops, training, or future collaborations, please get in contact.

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