

Information resilience: the new frontier for Pacific cooperation

Proposing a regional framework to protect trust and sovereignty in an era of digital disruption

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Blake Johnson is a security and development expert with more than a decade of experience in Australia and the Pacific. His research interests include understanding and building resilience against non-traditional and hybrid threats in the region, such as misinformation and disinformation, economic coercion and foreign influence.

Blake has designed a series of workshops on understanding and mitigating the threat of misinformation and disinformation in the Pacific. He has co-delivered these workshops with Pacific media councils and think tanks for governments, media, civil society and security forces across the region.

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About the Pacific Security College

The Pacific Security College serves members of the Pacific Islands Forum through learning and training, policy engagement and regional collaboration.

We have a holistic approach to Pacific security, encompassing traditional and non-traditional security issues, taking our lead from the Forum's *Boe Declaration on Regional Security*, the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* and the *Blue Pacific Ocean of Peace Declaration*.

We work in a spirit of service and collaboration with our Pacific stakeholders in national governments, universities, civil society organisations and regional institutions.

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- The Pacific has entered a new information era. False information, scams and AI-generated content are evolving and spreading rapidly online, eroding trust in democracies and institutions in the same way rising tides erode the shore.
- The Pacific needs greater investment in information resilience to withstand and mitigate the impact of harmful and false information. It is essential to stability, sovereignty and development.
- Nations need a unified statement to confront these growing information threats and to guide future policies, cooperation and foreign support on building information resilience.





Executive summary

Trust in the Pacific is under threat

The Pacific's information environment is evolving rapidly. Expanded connectivity, social media use, undersea cable investment and the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) tools are transforming how Pacific communities access, share and shape information.

This transformation brings major opportunities for economic participation, access to services, education and regional connection. But it also creates new vulnerabilities.

Across the region, Pacific governments and communities are confronting a wide range of information harms, including:

- misinformation regarding elections, health, disasters and overseas job opportunities
- cyber-enabled fraud and scams
- AI-powered impersonation of leaders, public figures and citizens
- coordinated disinformation campaigns shaping narratives and political divides.

These incidents often have immediate real-world consequences, but their deeper long-term effect is the erosion of trust between governments, media and communities.

At its core, this proposal is about protecting trust.

Trust underpins deep Pacific traditions of knowledge sharing and cooperation within and between countries across the region.

When trust weakens, governments struggle to communicate during crises, misinformation spreads more rapidly, and public confidence in institutions declines.

In a region facing increasing geopolitical competition and digital disruption, protecting trust has become a strategic priority.



Information resilience is the solution

Regional cooperation on shared issues is one of the Pacific's greatest strengths. In recent years, that cooperation has led to greater investment and support for climate resilience and digital resilience. Building information resilience should be the new frontier for regional cooperation.

Information resilience is the ability of societies, institutions and individuals to anticipate, withstand, adapt to and recover from harmful or misleading information.

Where cybersecurity and digital resilience protect systems and infrastructure, information resilience protects people, trust and decision-making. It strengthens the ability of governments, media and communities to communicate clearly, identify false information, and maintain confidence during periods of disruption.

This paper argues that information resilience should be treated in the same way as climate and digital resilience across the Pacific: as a cross-cutting regional priority linked to development, security and sovereignty.

A Pacific Information Resilience Statement is the first step

Information resilience is a new framing of an old idea of maintaining trust and ensuring space for the truth. But in order for it to be prioritised through regional institutions and coordinated action, the region needs a Pacific Information Resilience Statement.

The statement should demonstrate a commitment to protecting communities from false information, reinforce democratic integrity, and signal collective expectations of responsible behaviour online and in media and government communications.

It should aim to provide a practical framework for cooperation, guide future regional initiatives and help align external support with Pacific priorities.

There are three key objectives for regional cooperation that should be addressed by the statement, based around media, communities and government. These objectives are to:

1. Strengthen media and communication pathways
2. Protect communities and maintain public trust
3. Safeguard sovereignty and self-determination in the information space.

Media, education institutions and community leaders need to be empowered now to strengthen communication channels, support digital literacy, and build region-wide information resilience.

Pacific leaders must address the information challenge if they want to take the lead in shaping the region's information future.





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Director's introduction

I am pleased to launch the latest publication in the Pacific Security College policy paper series. Through these papers, we seek to support regional conversations on how we can collectively realise the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* and build a safe, secure and resilient Pacific.

This paper tackles a key challenge: how do we promote trust in a rapidly changing information environment? Advances in technology, expanding connectivity, and the rise of new tools such as artificial intelligence are transforming the way information is created, shared and consumed across the region.

The effects are already evident in our communities. People are falling victim to online scams. False or misleading information can undermine confidence in legitimate sources of advice and expertise.

The Pacific Peace and Security Dialogue this year highlighted how important trust is to promoting security. But how do we do that?

As this paper argues, one way to meet that challenge is by building information resilience: equipping individuals and communities with the knowledge, skills and tools to recognise and respond to online threats.

Given the borderless nature of digital technologies and information flows, no country can address these challenges alone. Regional cooperation will be essential if the Pacific is to strengthen its collective capacity to navigate an increasingly complex information environment.

In this paper, Blake Johnson proposes a starting point: a regional statement on information resilience that would signal a shared commitment to protecting Pacific communities from the harms of false and misleading information, while providing a framework for practical cooperation and action.

Our policy papers are intended to encourage thoughtful discussion, and I thank Associate Professor Shailendra Singh, Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, Fane Fakafanua and Ofani Eremae for their reflections on the proposal and their insights into the opportunities and challenges presented by the region's evolving technological and information environment.

The Pacific Security College policy paper series aims to support informed debate, dialogue and policy development. The views expressed are those of the author and respondents, and do not represent the official positions of the College, our university, or our funder.

Our policy papers *do* reflect our strong belief that effective policy emerges from engaging with a diversity of perspectives, and from exploring how we can work together to realise the shared vision set out by Forum Leaders in the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*.



Professor Dave Peebles
Director
Pacific Security College
October 2026



Recognising information resilience as a priority

Pacific leaders have increasingly recognised digital resilience and cyber resilience as development and security priorities. Over the past decade, significant investment has been made in telecommunications, undersea cables, cybersecurity and digital service delivery.

But resilience is not only about infrastructure and systems: it is also about the information flowing through them.

Information resilience protects trust as a strategic asset, focusing on the messages and data that pass through that digital infrastructure.

Governments rely on trust to communicate during disasters and emergencies. Communities rely on trust to identify credible information. Democracies rely on trust to maintain confidence in institutions and electoral systems.

Where cybersecurity and digital resilience protect systems and infrastructure, information resilience protects people, trust and decision-making. It provides a buffer against the growing pressures of misinformation, scams and manipulation online that can create societal shocks.

Information resilience should therefore be treated as a cross-cutting regional priority linked to sovereignty, stability and development.



What is information resilience?

Information resilience is the ability of societies, institutions and individuals to anticipate, withstand and recover from harmful or misleading information.

It strengthens the capacity of governments, media and communities to communicate clearly, identify false information and maintain trust during periods of disruption. It also strengthens the capacity of societies to detect and avoid harmful and misleading information online.

Where cybersecurity protects systems, information resilience protects people, trust and decision-making.

Information resilience incorporates all aspects of society because everyone contributes to, and engages in, the information space.

Information harms erode trust

The Pacific region has already felt the consequences of an array of information threats, from fake audio of parliamentarians inciting public outcry, to fake websites and recruitment schemes.

Some consequences are immediate, such as money taken from hopeful citizens (Johnson et al. 2024).

Others are slower and harder to measure but can have equal, if not greater, impact over time, including:

- breakdown of trust within and between populations, local media and governments
- reduced resilience in a crisis due to poor communication
- exacerbated ethnic and societal tensions
- diminished participation in democratic processes.

Pacific governments and media increasingly recognise these issues, but they are often under-resourced when it comes to understanding and addressing them (ABC 2025).

The long-term challenge is countering the gradual erosion of trust that occurs when communities can no longer easily distinguish between credible information and manipulative and harmful content online.



When online falsehoods cause harm

Pacific countries have experienced fake recruitment schemes, impersonation scams and manipulated content targeting public figures and communities.

These incidents can result in financial loss, public confusion and declining trust in official information sources. During crises or elections, news of even relatively small incidents can spread rapidly through close-knit communities and undermine confidence in institutions.

In one such case in 2022, Papua New Guinea's Defence Force was imitated in fake online recruitment scams targeting individuals across the country. The resulting financial loss led to a lingering lack of trust in government and security forces, exacerbating tensions and frustrations online with the recruitment investigations in 2026.

The region is also vulnerable to global information threats. Solomon Islands' politicians have been falsely quoted in foreign propaganda, causing public confusion and anger (Johnson 2025).

AI-generated revolutionary content has reached the region from as far as Burkina Faso (Williams et al. 2025), sparking anger and dissatisfaction online in Vanuatu.

Why a regional statement is needed

The region needs a way to articulate shared principles for strengthening the Pacific information environment while recognising differing national priorities, capabilities and policy settings.

A Pacific Information Resilience Statement would serve as both a political signal and a practical coordination framework.

It should be focused on providing a targeted call for cooperation across core areas that would strengthen trust across the region, including:

- stronger communication pathways between governments and media
- improved coordination during crises and elections
- shared training initiatives
- stronger public awareness campaigns
- more coordinated external support aligned with Pacific priorities.



Cooperation in media, communities and government

A practical regional approach could be organised through three objectives designed to support the three key groups in society essential for maintaining trust: media, communities and government.

Objective 1: Strengthen media and communication pathways

A strong and trusted media sector is central to information resilience in the Pacific.

Journalists and media organisations are often the first line of defence against misinformation by verifying information, providing context and supporting public understanding. However, many Pacific media organisations operate with limited resources and under the increasing pressure of the fast-paced digital information environment (Pacific Freedom Forum 2024).

Strengthening trusted communication pathways should be a regional priority and could include:

- supporting journalism and media training at a tertiary and professional level
- building fact-checking and verification skills
- strengthening communication channels between governments and media
- promoting the availability of trusted information in local languages.

Strong communication pathways become particularly important during disasters, health emergencies and political events when delays or inconsistencies in official communication can quickly open channels of misinformation.

Regional cooperation can help scale practical support, strengthen professional networks and encourage peer learning across Pacific media organisations, training institutions and governments.



When things go right – trusted communications

Strong communication pathways between governments, media and communities can significantly reduce the impact of misinformation during disasters, emergencies and online scam incidents.

When trusted information is delivered quickly, consistently and through respected local voices, communities are better able to respond calmly and make informed decisions.

Regional cooperation can help strengthen these trusted communication systems across the Pacific.

Some, but not all, Pacific Island Countries have regular press club addresses and conferences between government and media. Those that do, such as Tonga, provide an avenue for media to engage regularly with government on a range of topics, and provide the population with opportunities to see these exchanges.

Then, when a disaster occurs, governments and media know how to disseminate information quickly and effectively, and citizens know where to look. This reduces the risk of miscommunication or the spread of false information during a critical window for action.

Strengthening media and communication pathways across the region could include a call for greater financial support and training for press club addresses, or a commitment by governments to establish one as a regular practice.

Recent announcements for new regional institutions, including the Pacific Centre for Communications and Journalism in Fiji and checkpacific.com in Cook Islands, are encouraging steps forward in regional collaboration but will also need ongoing support and engagement. As Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka said at the launch of the new centre: “No Government, media organisation or institution can do this alone.”



Objective 2:

Protect communities and maintain public trust

Pacific communities are increasingly exposed to scams, online fraud and harmful misinformation. New internet users and vulnerable communities are often disproportionately affected. This can be felt particularly acutely during election periods when public trust may be especially low.

Strengthening community protection requires more than short-term awareness campaigns. It requires sustained investment in practical digital literacy that helps people identify suspicious content, question false information and respond safely online.

Governments, media organisations, telecommunications providers and community leaders can all contribute to strengthening public awareness and establishing trusted reporting pathways.

A regional statement could help encourage:

- clearer public communication during incidents
- stronger cooperation on scam awareness
- improved public education initiatives
- practical information-sharing between Pacific countries facing similar challenges.

Distrust online regularly peaks during election periods or times of political crisis.

From conflict at the neighbourhood level, to legitimate candidates being undermined by misinformation campaigns, false information can have real impacts on community relations and democratic outcomes.

Maintaining democratic integrity requires public trust, and citizens must have access to accurate, timely and trusted information.

Governments and electoral bodies have a key role to play, but media organisations are increasingly required to serve as a frontline defence against misinformation and manipulation.

Regional cooperation can support democratic resilience through:

- sharing lessons learned and practical experiences
- improving coordination during elections
- strengthening communication responses
- developing regional awareness of emerging information threats.

Education and transparency are key to building and maintaining public trust in the new information era.



Objective 3:

Safeguard sovereignty and self-determination

As connectivity expands, sovereignty increasingly extends beyond physical borders into the information space.

Foreign actors can shape narratives, influence debate and erode trust in institutions in ways that are often subtle and difficult to detect. This creates new challenges for Pacific countries seeking to maintain independent and trusted information environments.

Information resilience is therefore closely linked to self-determination. Governments and communities must be able to make decisions based on accurate, locally grounded information, free from manipulation or coercion. When information environments are distorted, from deliberate manipulation or even the unintended bias of social media feeds and algorithms, public understanding and policy choices can be skewed away from national interests.

A regional approach can help reinforce sovereignty by capitalising on some of the Pacific's greatest strengths: deep traditions of knowledge sharing, collective understanding and regional solidarity.

By pooling lessons learned and sharing experiences, Pacific governments and institutions can identify emerging risks earlier, adapt successful approaches and avoid duplicating effort.

Importantly, regional cooperation can also help avoid rushed or overly heavy-handed responses to information harms. Efforts to strengthen resilience must remain balanced and proportionate, and should not unintentionally undermine democratic freedoms, media independence or public trust.



What a regional statement delivers

A statement is the first step to building regional information resilience

The Pacific requires a clear and coordinated approach to information resilience as the region enters a period of intensified geopolitical attention and digital disruption.

The challenge is not to control content, but to ensure that trusted and credible information can cut through the noise.

Information resilience should therefore be viewed in the same way as climate and digital resilience: as a strategic priority linked to sovereignty, development and stability.

A Pacific Information Resilience Statement provides a practical first step towards achieving this goal.

A statement will guide development towards sustained action

A regional statement would provide a foundation for coordinated and sustained action.

Existing regional institutions and architecture provide a foundation for Pacific governments, media organisations, civil society and technical partners to strengthen practical cooperation and better align external support with Pacific priorities.

The process could follow a similar model to the development of the Teieniwa Vision, which evolved from a principles-based regional commitment into broader cooperation and implementation around anti-corruption efforts.

This approach would allow information resilience to develop gradually through practical cooperation, rather than imposing immediate or unrealistic policy obligations.



Many steps to come

Acknowledging the need for greater information resilience and regional cooperation in the information space is the first step in tackling a complex and evolving strategic issue. But many challenges lie ahead. An in-depth examination of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper, but they warrant ongoing consideration.

In the long term, the region must also seek to strengthen legal frameworks and law enforcement responses to online harms without infringing upon individual freedom.

This includes improving digital forensics, enhancing cooperation between police, telecommunications providers and financial institutions, and establishing clear pathways for reporting and acting on harmful content.

At the same time, regulatory approaches must be carefully designed to avoid overreach, ensuring that efforts to address harm do not undermine freedom of expression or public trust.

A stronger collective understanding of misinformation and disinformation stemming from increased information resilience and capability should lead to better policies and laws around information use.

A statement provides clear signals to partners

A regional statement would send a clear signal to partners that supporting or building upon existing coordinated and scalable information resilience initiatives is a more constructive approach than fragmented short-term interventions.

Pacific countries require more sustained investment in areas such as journalism, digital literacy, government communication and countering misinformation. Existing initiatives, including regional media support programs such as the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme, are valuable but more is needed to address the scale of the current challenge.

A shared regional framework would help Pacific countries articulate common priorities, align support — both external to and within the region — with Pacific-defined outcomes, and encourage more practical cooperation between governments, media organisations and regional institutions.

By grounding the issue in building regional resilience, it aligns progress in digital and media literacy alongside other priority development areas.



A statement emphasises the importance of maintaining trust

At its core, this proposal is about protecting trust.

Trust allows governments to communicate effectively during crises. It enables communities to identify credible information and respond calmly during periods of disruption. It strengthens democratic confidence and social cohesion.

When governments communicate clearly, media operates more effectively and communities are better equipped to navigate online information. Societies become more resilient to coercion, confusion and harmful misinformation.

As always, collective action remains one of the Pacific's greatest strengths. Information threats are increasingly shared across borders, but so too are the region's relationships, values and traditions of cooperation.

A shared approach to information resilience allows Pacific countries to learn from each other, coordinate responses more effectively, and engage external partners from a position of greater clarity and confidence.

By taking practical steps now, the region can strengthen trusted communication, protect its sovereignty and shape its own information future.





In conversation with...



Associate Professor Shailendra Singh **Head of Journalism,** **University of the South Pacific**

We often hear that information is power. Because this assertion appears so clichéd and obvious, are we overlooking its significance in real-world terms? Especially today, in the midst of the digital era, with all its threats and opportunities.

This is just one of many questions emanating from this paper.

The core issue is whether the Pacific fully appreciates and is sufficiently prepared for the information revolution unfolding since the computer age, gathering momentum with the rise of the internet and social media, and now accelerating even more rapidly with the advent of artificial intelligence (AI).

This is an issue that is not only pertinent, but also urgent, with the paper outlining the clear, present and escalating danger to regional countries from the proliferation of false information, scams and AI-generated content.

The paper suggests that as a region, we are largely defenceless against these threats to information integrity; threats that are “eroding trust in democracies and institutions in the same way that rising tides erode the shore”.

Using the climate change analogy to emphasise the seriousness of the situation and its urgency is appropriate in more ways than one. With inaction or insufficient action, not only is climate change gaining momentum, but its impacts are also worsening, with some scientists concerned about reaching a tipping point.

This situation is applicable to the information space as well in that the risks of false information, scams and AI-generated content are not only widespread, but more difficult to address and eradicate if they take hold.

The difference with climate change is that Pacific Island leaders, through the Forum Secretariat, issued a regional statement to deal with the phenomenon. This represented a powerful collective stance that added weight to a declaration recognising climate change as an “existential threat” and calling on industrialised countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

A collective statement is a commitment that is usually a precursor to collective actions. It denotes strength in numbers, especially for small island countries that lack individual clout and resources. By adopting a focused and unified approach, the Pacific has achieved more in addressing climate change and in being heard in the international arena than it ever would have through fragmented, individual efforts.

This is the inspiration behind the call for a regional statement on information integrity, denoting Pacific cooperation to not just deal with the threats of the new information era, but to capitalise on its potential benefits, which are quite immense and hold a lot of promise for a developing region like ours.

It is in this same spirit that the paper is calling for a regional statement as the first step towards building regional information resilience.

Given the enormity of the information integrity challenge, the Pacific needs to be proactive rather than reactive, and while individual countries' efforts are commendable, they are insufficient, due to, among other things, a lack of expertise and resources.

The Pacific needs greater investment in information resilience and a regional statement is a clear signal to partners about what the priorities are and where the resources should be directed.

Time is of the essence because, as the paper points out, it's a question of our stability, sovereignty and development, which are all at stake.



Ofani Eremae Co-founder and Editor, In-depth Solomons

As a journalist working on the ground in Solomon Islands, I welcome this timely and critical academic paper. Conversations surrounding regional security and resilience have long been focused on physical infrastructure and climate adaptation. While those threats exist, the invisible erosion of our information ecosystem poses an equally severe risk to our democratic institutions, social cohesion and regional stability.

In Solomon Islands and across the wider Pacific, the transition into the digital age has been rapid. Thousands of our people have skipped the desktop computer era entirely, moving straight from traditional oral storytelling to smartphones and social media. While this has democratised communication, it has also left our information ecosystem highly vulnerable. For instance, when a cyclone hits, physical infrastructure damages are visible immediately. But when a coordinated disinformation campaign or a viral, unsubstantiated rumour is spread, the damage is invisible until it manifests as civil unrest, political instability or the erosion of public trust in vital institutions.

Comparing information resilience to climate resilience, in my view, is a powerful and necessary paradigm shift for our region. Just as Pacific Islanders build seawalls to protect their homes from rising tides, we must build societal defences to protect our people from the waves of mis/disinformation. There is no use building state-of-the-art, climate-resilient undersea cables if the content running through them is contaminated.

To drive forward meaningful cooperation, I believe we must operationalise support across the three pillars identified in this paper. However, this must be tailored specifically to the Pacific reality.



1. Media

Local newsrooms across the Pacific — and particularly in Solomon Islands — are severely understaffed, underfunded and facing immense pressure from political actors and geopolitical interests. We need more than short-term training workshops; we need institutional sustainability. This means funding independent, public-interest journalism, establishing regional fact-checking networks that operate in local languages (such as Solomon Islands Pijin), and providing robust digital security tools for investigative reporters.

2. Communities

In Solomon Islands (and I believe in most Pacific Island Countries), digital literacy has not kept pace with digital access. Rumours on platforms such as Facebook are often taken at face value because the traditional cultural structures of trust do not translate cleanly online. Information resilience must be grounded in the community. We must integrate media literacy into school curriculums and actively partner with trusted traditional structures — church groups, community leaders and women's councils — to build grassroots immunity against manipulation.

3. Government

There is a fine line between combating disinformation and state-sponsored censorship. Heavy-handed approaches, such as threatening social media bans (as was a previous instance in Solomon Islands) or enacting restrictive media laws, ultimately weaken a society's resilience. I would like to see Pacific governments move towards proactive transparency. Resilience is achieved when governments trust the public with the truth, communicate transparently and protect freedom of information, rather than resorting to draconian control measures.

Pacific Island Countries cannot fight a borderless, digital threat with isolated, national responses. A concerted effort is needed. Regional bodies, academic institutions and international partners must move from analysis to action. We need to establish a coordinated Pacific Information Resilience Statement that brings together journalists, civil society leaders and policymakers to co-design a strategy that is uniquely ours — rooted in Pacific values of community and truth, but fully equipped for the digital age.



Fane Fakafanua
Chief Operating Officer,
Royal Oceania Institute

This paper speaks to the Pacific's information environment changing rapidly, and this is very true throughout all the islands. Even though some islands may have more limited access, it hasn't hindered the progression of the dangers of misinformation and disinformation, as well as the growing presence of AI.

One of the prominent examples of this happened in 2021, after the riots in Solomon Islands, where there was a huge surge in disinformation and misinformation spreading online relating to the riots and how they had started. Additionally, in 2024 in Tonga, fake audio of a Tongan parliamentarian cursing at another member during parliament went viral online. The hoax led to public outcry and unfair calls for the parliamentarian's resignation. While the matter was resolved, partly by members who had been present to verify the true audio, there is still ongoing damage to the reputations of those involved. It is likely these attempts at falsifying content from leaders will become more frequent and sophisticated as more people can access the technology. In this case, the media played an important role in ensuring the true information was shared with the public, working closely with the government to publicise the conversation records and reassuring people that the viral audio was false.

False information regarding foreign partnerships and geopolitics is seen everywhere in the Pacific region but it's often not the largest threat to Pacific people. Financial scams are a significant factor and prey upon people from all walks of life whose livelihoods can be really hurt by loss of money online. The schemes are getting so advanced that even very educated people who are well versed in technology and finance have been successfully targeted. Some of these scams exploit visa schemes and labour mobility opportunities, which also damages the reputation of partners in the country. False information, spread both deliberately and accidentally, about politicians and electoral processes during campaigns also undermines trust in government, leadership and institutions. Sometimes, Pacific governments are at a loss on how to address these issues in society.

It is for this reason that I agree with the paper's stance that information resilience should be treated the same way climate change is—with increased attention and urgency. As one Tongan journalist has stated: "Climate resilience helps us deal with natural disasters. Information resilience helps us deal with mis/disinformation. One protects our environment, the other protects our decisions. In today's world, we need both." The information environment is changing so rapidly that without more coordinated focus on it, there is a real risk of increased and more serious disruption to governments and communities through the spread of false information.

Whilst each country and government is working to combat this issue according to their individual budget, access and priorities, I believe a regional effort through a regional statement will greatly assist in guiding a mutual goal for the islands — one that will help governments work together to find a solution, provide training and support the exchange of ideas. Media professionals and government communications officials from across the region would benefit from sharing experiences and processes with each other.

Whilst media associations across the region often feel that they are not empowered to ask for and receive the right information from the government — often receiving invitations to sporadic press conferences at short notice with no prior information or context — Tonga government has regular press conferences with the media and various levels of engagement from Ministers to CEOs, which helps build rapport and trust.



Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls
Network Coordinator,
Pacific Women Mediators Network

Digital resilience at the intersection of gender, peacebuilding and ICTs in the Pacific

The paper clearly states that Pacific leaders increasingly recognised digital resilience and cyber resilience as development and security priorities, leading to significant investments in telecommunications, undersea cables, cybersecurity and digital service delivery. And I agree; resilience is not only about profit-oriented or private sector-led infrastructure and systems. It is also about communities and their communication rights including information and communication technologies (ICT) literacy, and accessible and appropriate platforms.

Advances in ICTs present both an extraordinary opportunity and an extraordinary threat for fulfilling women's rights and gender equality. On the one hand, new technologies can bring education and life-saving information to wide audiences. They can elevate women's voices and raise awareness about their priority issues. They can create more diverse spaces for civil society strategising, activism and participation in political processes and peace negotiations. On the other hand, ICTs can perpetuate exclusion, misogyny, sexist violence and harmful gender norms. In the context of armed conflict and peacemaking, ICTs are still primarily perceived as a threat to international peace and security.

However, while ICT democratisation can empower women, the persistent gender digital divide often excludes marginalised voices from decision-making and civic engagement. At the same time, while social media and digital platforms enable grassroots peace activism and early-warning networks, they also expose women to technology-facilitated gender-based violence, online harassment and silencing. Digital resilience will require a clear strategy for governments and civil society to ensure communication rights give women the agency to advocate for their needs and shape national and regional peacebuilding strategies.

Transformative action for digital inclusion

To prevent the institutionalised marginalisation of diverse voices, regional frameworks such as the Lagatoi Declaration must evolve through a redesigned stakeholder process that moves beyond exclusive regionalism towards inclusive local action and embeds linkages across the pillars of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Regional Peace and Security Action Plan.

This includes grounding digital governance with human rights standards, including gender equality and communication rights, to ensure the prevention of online violence, and the protection and the safeguarding of Indigenous knowledge.



Ensuring women and gender-diverse people are central to tech development and infrastructure decisions is crucial because ICT for gender equality and feminist tech needs transformative action. Member states can collectively lobby the International Telecommunication Union to ensure support for developing relevant and inclusive national and regional ICT policies and national plans. Collaboration with feminist movements and networks is needed to ensure a dedicated focus on feminist funding approaches.

Gender equality, peacebuilding and security

For more than two decades, Pacific women have championed the Beijing Platform for Action and used the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council to link gender equality and peacebuilding to how appropriate and accessible technology can progress the pillars of the WPS agenda—Participation, Protection, Prevention, Relief and Recovery—enabling leadership from local mats to regional policy tables.

With the adoption of the Ocean of Peace Declaration and the PIF Regional Peace and Security Action Plan, there is an opportunity to support the development of accessible and appropriate platforms linked to Pacific Island interpersonal peacebuilding, dialogue and mediation, extending beyond high-level *talanoas* to where information flows, within and with communities.

This would include providing education and the tools necessary to become involved in peacebuilding, particularly when ICTs, in their current form, are not well-suited to achieving peacebuilding goals due to several key factors:

- Lack of ‘human connection’: Establishing trust and fostering peacebuilding dialogue is more challenging in digital environments.
- Limited engagement: Shorter meeting durations intended to prevent ‘Zoom fatigue’ result in less direct contact between participants.
- Radicalisation of discourse: The nature of online platforms often makes constructive discussion of sensitive issues more difficult.
- Diminished influence: The absence of personal connection can lead to women feeling their contributions are not taken seriously by decision-makers.

Innovation for community peacebuilding and human security

Digital resilience provides the opportunity to consider support for developing a Pacific Island civil society-managed peacebuilding and human security platform that supports inclusive early warning and early response.

By co-creating platforms that meet specific prevention, participation and protection needs, women are aligning technological innovation with the gender, peacebuilding and human security agenda, and ensuring that financing supports community-led systems rather than top-down, techno-centric approaches.





Contributor profiles



Associate Professor Shailendra Singh
Head of Journalism,
University of the South Pacific

Associate Professor Singh is Head of Journalism at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji.

In 2026, he was awarded a Fulbright Visiting Scholar Fellowship and is currently based at the Tully Center for Free Speech at Syracuse University, where he is researching media, human rights and social cohesion in Fiji, with a focus on national security challenges in a transitional democracy. He was previously the 2022 Pacific Research Fellow at the Australian National University's Department of Pacific Affairs.

Associate Professor Singh served on the Editorial Board of Fiji's independent National Security and Defence Review, which undertook a comprehensive review of the country's national security, defence and intelligence environment.

His publications include an analysis of national media coverage of Fiji's 2018 general election (2021) and a study of sexual harassment among female journalists in Fiji (2021). His broader research examines media performance in divided societies, media regulation, digital disruption and the sustainability of Pacific media.

Associate Professor Singh serves on the editorial boards of three scholarly journals: *Pacific Media*, *Current Issues of Mass Communication*, and the *Journal of Diaspora Research*.



Ofani Eremae
Co-founder and Editor, *In-depth Solomons*

Mr Eremae is a leading Solomon Islands journalist with almost 30 years of experience in print and digital journalism. He has served as editor of both the *Solomon Star* and *Island Sun*, the country's two major English-language daily newspapers.

In 2022, Mr Eremae co-founded *In-depth Solomons*, the country's first and only news outlet dedicated to investigative journalism. Under his leadership, *In-depth Solomons* has gained recognition for its fearless reporting, professionalism and commitment to public-interest journalism. It has established itself as a vital voice for transparency and accountability in Solomon Islands and the wider Pacific.



Fane Fakafanua
Chief Operations Officer,
Royal Oceania Institute

Lady Fakafanua is the Chief Operations Officer at the Royal Oceania Institute, an independent think tank that supports and pursues Pacific-centred, ethical, fact-based research and analysis, based in the Kingdom of Tonga.

Her work covers various areas relating to security, such as mis/disinformation and geopolitical tensions in the region. She has collaborated closely with other think tanks such as the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) and the Observer Research Foundation in India.



Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls
Network Coordinator,
Pacific Women Mediators Network

Ms Bhagwan-Rolls is a second-generation Fiji Island feminist working on the intersection of gender, media, communications and peace by supporting the development and production of appropriate and accessible media.

She is the Chairperson and Gender Liaison of the Board of Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, Co-Chair of the Global Fund for Women Board of Directors, and a member of the Feminist Alliance on Rights, coordinated by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership. Ms Bhagwan-Rolls was a member of the Civil Society Advisory Group on UNSCR1325+10 (2009-2010), convened by UN Women; the first UN Women Global Civil Society Advisory Group (2012-2014); and the High-Level Advisory Group for the Global Study on UNSCR1325+15 (2014-2015). Between 2010 and 2012, she coordinated civil society input into the development of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012-2015) as well as the GEAR campaign.

Ms Bhagwan-Rolls is a co-founder of femLINKpacific, which emerged from the women-led Blue Ribbon Peace Vigil initiative in Fiji in 2000. Through her leadership, femLINK has developed a program infrastructure applying peacebuilding practice and a communications for development approach to a regional women's community media network.





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