

# State of the Media: Pacific Region



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*This study was led and designed by ABC International Development (ABCID), informed by our Pacific partners. The University of Adelaide's (UoA) Stretton Institute were implementation partners across the 12 countries studied. Fieldwork and data analysis was conducted by Pacific researchers. We would like to thank all the expert advisers and study participants for their time and generous contributions.*

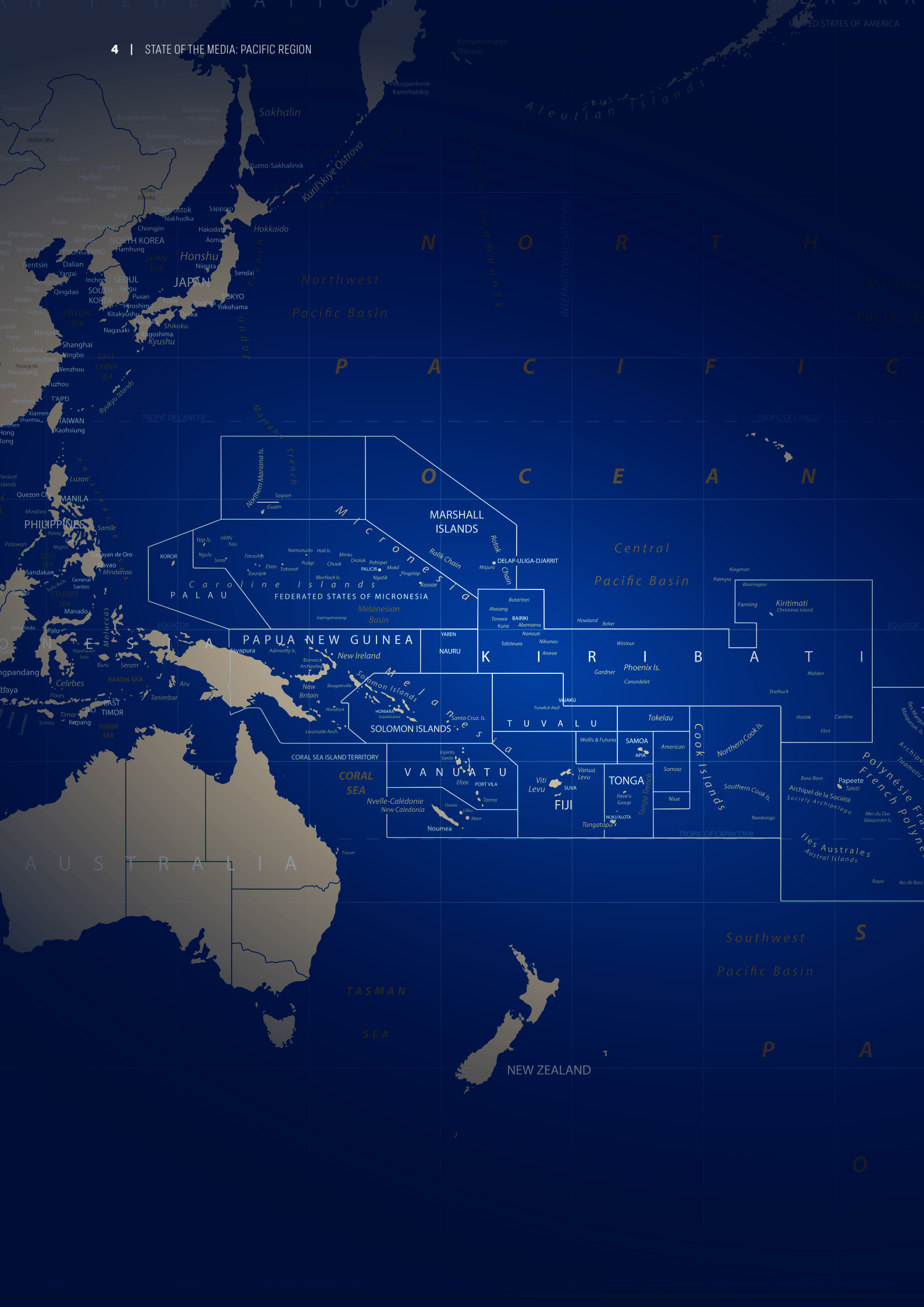
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*Any opinions represented in this report are those of the authors and research participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation or the University of Adelaide.*

*Photos in this report are from ABCID programs, ABC staff, and ABC archives, unless otherwise specified.*

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# ACRONYMS

<b>ABC</b>	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
<b>ABCID</b>	Australian Broadcasting Corporation International Development
<b>AI</b>	artificial intelligence
<b>BBC</b>	British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>CEO</b>	chief executive officer
<b>CGTN</b>	China Global Television Network
<b>FBC</b>	Fiji Broadcasting Corporation
<b>FSM</b>	Federated States of Micronesia
<b>FTA</b>	free to air
<b>FSII</b>	Forum Solomon Islands International
<b>GEDSI</b>	gender equality, disability and social inclusion
<b>ICCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>IPTV</b>	Internet Protocol Television
<b>JICA</b>	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
<b>LGBTIQ+</b>	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other sexually and gender diverse people
<b>MIDA</b>	Media Industry Development Act
<b>MoJo</b>	mobile journalism
<b>NUS</b>	National University of Samoa
<b>NGO</b>	non-government organisation
<b>OCCRP</b>	Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project
<b>OTT</b>	over-the-top
<b>PACMAS</b>	Pacific Media Assistance Scheme
<b>PINA</b>	Pacific Islands News Association
<b>PR</b>	public relations
<b>RMI</b>	Republic of the Marshall Islands
<b>RNZ</b>	Radio New Zealand
<b>SMS</b>	short message service
<b>SIBC</b>	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation
<b>TBC</b>	Tonga Broadcasting Commission
<b>TVBC</b>	Tuvalu Broadcasting Corporation
<b>TTV</b>	Telekom Television
<b>TTC</b>	Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation
<b>USP</b>	University of the South Pacific
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UN-PRAC</b>	United Nations Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption
<b>UoF</b>	University of Fiji
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of the Media research project provides an up-to-date snapshot of the media environment across the Pacific Islands region. It was conducted in partnership with the Stretton Institute at the University of Adelaide, with oversight from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's International Development unit (ABCID). The research was funded under the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), an Australian Aid initiative implemented by ABCID on behalf of the Australian Government. This regional report, along with the accompanying 12 country reports, will serve as an accessible resource for media, civil society, and governments. The 12 Pacific Island countries studied are: the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

The study builds on findings published in the 2013 State of the Media and Communication Report, capturing shifts in the media landscape (including changes to media access and coverage across print, broadcast, and digital), current media policy and legislation, media infrastructure, the footprint of media organisations, and top-level audience consumption patterns.

There was an overarching consensus among respondents that, despite positive advancements in the Pacific media sector, it remains fragile in the face of digital disruption and additional loss of advertising revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic, creating an existential crisis. The following themes were identified in the research.

## Internet access dramatically increased

Relative to the findings of the 2013 State of the Media and Communication Report, internet access has significantly increased in most Pacific countries. Fiji and Samoa, for example, now have internet access rates of 85 per cent and 75 per cent respectively, a sharp increase from 2013 figures of 28 per cent and 7 per cent. Increasing internet access is attributed by respondents to the rising number of internet service providers across the region and improved connection to submarine cables. Access to low Earth orbit satellite technology has also contributed to rising rates of internet connectivity, particularly in smaller Pacific nations such as Nauru and FSM.

## Misinformation and disinformation amplified in larger Pacific countries

While misinformation and disinformation impact all focus countries to varying extents, these challenges are amplified in larger countries such as Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Samoa, which have active diasporas and higher penetration of foreign media sources, particularly on social media platforms owned by big tech companies. Mis/disinformation narratives were particularly rife during the COVID-19 pandemic and key political events. There have been moves in several countries to establish stronger government regulation of media to counter growing misinformation online. However, according to media practitioner respondents, these efforts risk curtailing the mainstream media's ability to cover public interest news stories and may weaken media's ability to hold government to account.



*Reading the news in Lekutulevu, Vaturova, Cakaudrove Province, Vanua Levu, Fiji. (Tom Perry)*



*FBC's Sainiani Boila reporting from the village of Naloto, Fiji.*



## Cautious engagement with artificial intelligence in newsrooms

All media practitioner respondents across the 12 countries have experimented with artificial intelligence (AI) to varying degrees, specifically in aggregating, producing, and presenting news content. However, many are doubtful of AI's capacity to accurately represent Pacific names and other cultural intricacies. Additionally, there remains a gap in the industry around broader AI-related infrastructure, education, and digital initiatives essential for the efficient integration of AI into newsrooms.

## Pacific print media sets benchmark for quality journalism

Despite viability concerns, exacerbated by decreasing revenue and rising printing costs, print media (particularly those that are independent of government funding) remain the credible 'voice of truth' amid the proliferation of online mis/disinformation. Sampled audiences recognise print media as the most consistent providers of quality journalism, balance and evidence-based reporting.

## Government funding sustains and stifles Pacific media

Media practitioners acknowledged the critical role that government funding plays in the viability of the media industry, particularly in countries with smaller markets where media struggles to operate on a commercial basis. However, widespread concerns were raised about the relationship between government funding and the ability of media to report freely without pressure. There were concerted calls for regional and national media associations to work with governments in establishing themselves as central bodies responsible for disbursing government grants and funding for media, a move which respondents believe would ensure greater editorial independence, but also necessitate a strengthening of media associations to manage this responsibility.

## Media freedom a key concern for Pacific media

Respondents working in media acknowledged that, while they are generally free to report on issues of public interest, media freedom is not expressly enshrined in the constitution of most Pacific countries. This exposes journalists to legal implications should their coverage be deemed to infringe laws on defamation, confidentiality, or national security. At the time of writing, Fiji, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Palau, and Tonga are the only countries where freedom of the media is explicit in the constitution. Concerns about media freedom have also impacted audience trust in mainstream media, particularly government-owned media organisations.

## Media self-censorship more likely in smaller Pacific nations

Interviews with media practitioners revealed that journalists in Pacific nations with smaller populations are more likely to shape their reporting, or avoid covering specific topics altogether, so that stories do not inadvertently cause offence to community or family members or generate societal tension. Many saw this as a non-negotiable part of the profession, given their prominence in a closely knit community.

# 1. METHODOLOGY

*The study scope was determined by ABC International Development (ABCID), informed by our Pacific partners. The University of Adelaide's (UoA) Stretton Institute implemented the study across the 12 countries.<sup>1</sup> Fieldwork and data analysis approaches were designed and conducted by Pacific researchers, acknowledging the research expertise in the Pacific region and the importance of platforming Pacific voices in Australian conversations about Pacific development.*

The study methodology comprised a desk-based review of relevant literature to contextualise primary data collection, 103 semi-structured interviews with media practitioners and audience members, and an audience survey, completed by 119 respondents, conducted through Qualtrics. Respondents spanned the 12 focus countries: the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. However, some countries received low response rates for the audience survey. This means that not every country features a dedicated analysis of audience media consumption patterns.

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<sup>1</sup> Papua New Guinea was not included as part of the sample countries as this falls under ABCID's PNG-focused program, the Media Development Initiative.



*Covering a Minister's presentation to the media during a budget reporting workshop in Fiji.*

A central challenge discovered during fieldwork was that access to certain groups was hard to establish, particularly in nations where the media operates under stringent government regulation. As such, the views represented in this study cannot be regarded as exhaustive. Both the interview and the survey questions are included as appendices 3 and 4 to this report. Fieldwork was conducted between January and July 2024.

The desk-based review surveyed previous reports on the Pacific media landscape (notably the 2013 State of the Media and Communication Report), databases of national legislation and policies, country reports relating to media freedom in the Pacific (particularly Freedom House research), United Nations statistics databases, government websites for the 12 countries being studied, and reports by relevant regional organisations. Media reports and national media associations' policies and codes of conduct were also consulted. Relevant academic literature was referred to where appropriate.

Each country report was co-authored by a local expert adviser, conversant with the media and information landscape of the country. The advisers also provided locally relevant insights on the structure and emphasis of interview and survey questions, where required. The biographies of the expert advisers are given in appendix 1.

The primary outputs of the study are this regional overview report and 12 country reports. More detail about the project methodology is provided in appendix 2.

# 02

## 2. INTRODUCTION

*The State of the Media project provides an up-to-date snapshot of the state of the media in the Pacific Islands region. This regional report, along with the accompanying 12 country reports, will serve as an accessible resource for media, civil society, and government organisations in support of development goals in the region. The 12 Pacific Island countries studied are: the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.*



*Temese Teloko presents in the Tuvalu Broadcasting Corporation studio.*

*The report's findings build on the previous State of the Media Pacific study (2013),<sup>2</sup> acknowledging new challenges that have since arisen to media freedom, accessibility, and the shifting development goals of the region, including the changing geopolitical landscape and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

The areas covered by this report include media policy and legislation, media infrastructure, and the regional media footprint, supplemented (where appropriate) with primary data on audience media consumption patterns in the Pacific.

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<sup>2</sup> [PACMAS Regional State of the Media Report 2013.](#)



### **3. MEDIA LANDSCAPE**

*The most significant development in the Pacific Islands media landscape over the past decade is the explosion of social media as a platform for media broadcasting. Almost all media outlets in the region now have a presence on social media, particularly Facebook. This has also enabled an increase in the availability of international and regional news and other broadcast content through livestream platforms, facilitating greater reach to diaspora populations. In parallel, there has been a sharp decline in the availability of print media, along with a less steep decline in radio and television audiences. However, radio remains important in most countries, especially for emergency broadcasts that are vital in times of natural disaster.*

Since the 2013 State of the Media and Communication Report, there have been some changes in the media landscape of the Pacific. For example, in Samoa, Talamua Radio closed down permanently during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a few radio stations have been launched in recent years, for instance Barava FM in Solomon Islands; Siufofoga Gagaemauga No.1. 88.0 FM in Samoa; and Vox Populi, University of Fiji's campus radio.

Several newspapers and magazines have ceased publication since 2013. These include the newspapers The Vanuatu Times and The Vanuatu Independent; Kiribati Independent and Te Mauri (Kiribati); Taimi o' Tonga, Ofa ki Tonga, and Talaki (Tonga); as well as the Tuvalu Media online weekly newspaper Fenui. In Fiji, magazines like Republika, Fiji Magic, and Mai Life have also ceased publication, while the last news update from the Fiji online community newspaper The Jet was in 2023.

There is also a rise in online news sites led by senior journalists, for instance The Kiribati Newsroom, Talanoa O Tonga, Solomon Business Online, and In-depth Solomons. Journalists employed in the mainstream media also host other multi-media programs online. For instance, The Lens @177 TV-style interview online series is hosted by Anish Chand, West Bureau chief at The Fiji Times. Senior editor of Palau-based newspaper Tia Belau, Kambes Kesolei, runs a popular YouTube channel and hosts the Kausisechakl Weekly Talk Show.

## Print

As noted, print media distribution is declining in most of the 12 Pacific Island countries studied. For example, Tonga currently has a single active newspaper, Koe Kele'a, which is complemented with monthly newsletters produced by the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (Tohi Fanongonongo) and the Roman Catholic Church (Taumu'a Lelei), both of which are published in Tongan. Some countries have newspapers that only publish a couple of times a week (like the Island Times and Tia Belau in Palau), while other countries (such as Vanuatu and Samoa) have a daily newspaper.

Despite viability concerns, findings show that print media, particularly non-government funded outlets, in countries such as Fiji, Solomon Islands and Samoa, have managed to preserve their credibility as the 'voice of truth' amid a proliferation of online mis/disinformation. For example, according to Samoan media practitioner and audience respondents, the Samoa Observer, remains critical in setting the benchmark for quality investigative journalism in the country, using a variety of credible experts and sources.

Ownership of newspapers varies across the region. For example, in Solomon Islands there are two privately owned newspapers, Solomon Star and Island Sun, both publishing seven days a week. Fiji also has two privately owned newspapers: The Fiji Times (founded in 1869) and Fiji Sun (1974-1987 and reestablished in 1999). In Samoa, the Samoa Observer is privately owned and published daily. There are also two government-owned newspapers in Samoa, one publishing weekly and one monthly. The major newspapers in FSM, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, and Vanuatu are privately owned.

Printed newsletters are also an important source of information in most of the countries studied. In many countries, newsletters are published by government agencies to report on legislative and other initiatives. In the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the United States Army garrison on Kwajalein publishes the weekly newsletter The Kwajalein Hourglass.<sup>3</sup> In Vanuatu, each government ministry produces newsletters and news updates on the government portal.

<sup>3</sup> [The Kwajalein Hourglass weekly newsletter](#), accessed September 4, 2024.

## Radio

Radio is a staple part of the Pacific media landscape, serving as a primary source of information for the region, particularly in remote areas where digital connectivity is inconsistent and during times of natural disaster. Most of the 12 Pacific Island countries studied have at least one government-run radio station. Almost all countries have commercial radio stations, although smaller countries, such as Tuvalu, have no radio station (or other media outlet) that is independent of government.

Churches are also important broadcasters and provide a mix of spiritual, educational, health-based and cultural programming as part of a broader faith-based media sector. In most countries at least one denomination or church has its own radio station.

In several countries, university media and journalism programs have been granted licences to broadcast radio stations. For example, since 2012 the media and journalism program at the National University of Samoa (NUS) has run a campus radio station with funding from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The University of the South Pacific (USP), in Fiji, and the University of Fiji (UoF) also have their own radio stations.

Notably, several of the countries covered by this study have radio and television programs made by diaspora content creators living overseas and broadcast locally.

ABC radio and Australian television content is also broadcast in almost all the countries studied. RNZ Pacific broadcasts in digital and analogue shortwave to the Pacific. Chinese content is also frequently broadcast on both radio and television. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service is broadcast through national radio in Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, RMI, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

## Television

The availability of television broadcast varies significantly among the countries studied. The introduction of digital broadcasting, including online broadcasting, has increased the availability of television in many countries. For example, in Vanuatu, there are 144 foreign television channels available via subscription digital services offered by Canal Plus, Telsat, and Digicel.<sup>4</sup> Samoa has 10 digital television channels, one of which is government run. Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, and Tuvalu each have just one government-run television station, although they also host foreign-produced cable channels. Fiji has two private television stations and one government-owned television service.

Churches also maintain television stations in several of the countries studied. For example, in Samoa, the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa runs the TV2 channel, the Catholic Church of Samoa runs the Upu Mana channel, Graceland Broadcasting Network runs the Good News Trust TV channel, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints oversees the BYUtv channel.

Paid subscription Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) channels have also increased television access in several countries. For example, in Fiji, pay TV service is provided by Sky Pacific (owned by Digicel Fiji), making over 20 channels featuring entirely foreign content available on subscription. In most of the countries studied, television providers have expanded their content offerings online, on social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube.

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<sup>4</sup> Hilaire Bule, [Vanuatu Daily Post - 144 TV Channels in Vanuatu](#), September 14, 2023.



## Online

As noted, social media has become a popular platform for accessing media content across the region. Most newspapers, radio, and television stations maintain an online presence, uploading news content to their social media platforms and websites. Facebook is the most popular social media platform across the countries studied and carries news content as well as livestream news and events. Certain media organisations also use social media to cross-promote content on their other platforms, such as print, to increase readership. For instance, all media in RMI have a social media presence, primarily on Facebook. As a key media practitioner interviewee observed: “We have a Facebook page where we post some material, mostly is like teaser stuff to get people to read the paper. We also have a website, and the website is largely used to encourage people to subscribe to the newspaper. And then we have a digital edition of the newspaper identical to the print edition, which is sent via email to subscribers” (Marshall Islands 01).

The online profiles of media organisations and their digital content offerings are indications of increased and improved internet connectivity in the Pacific. Pacific media organisations also utilise a variety of social media platforms – such as YouTube, TikTok, X, LinkedIn, and Instagram – to engage with audiences and disseminate news content.

A significant change, compared with the 2013 State of the Media and Communication Report findings, is not only the entry of online media players but also the more widespread establishment and nascent commercialisation of online news platforms. For instance, the Samoa Observer has a functioning digital subscription model to primarily serve diaspora Samoans.

Table 1 provides a snapshot of mainstream media by type across the Pacific. Data was consolidated with the support of local expert advisors and should not be regarded as exhaustive due to the evolving nature of the media landscape with media outlets ceasing and sometimes resuming operation after a hiatus. Nonetheless, the data shows that radio is strongly represented across the region and all countries studied had at least one online news service regardless of domestic market size.

*left: Lourdes Malau working on highlights at the 2019 Pacific Games in Samoa. right: Shooting on mobile phones in Nuku'alofa, Tonga.*



Table 1. Mainstream media landscape

Country	Population <sup>5</sup>	Free-to-air television	Radio	Print	Online
Federated States of Micronesia	106,194	0 TV broadcasters	10 radio stations (5 state-owned radio stations, 2 church-owned, 1 community-run, 2 commercial)	1 commercial newspaper	1 online news service <sup>6</sup>
Fiji	904,590	3 commercial TV broadcasters, 1 church broadcasting network	20 radio stations (13 commercial radio stations, 3 community-run, 4 church-owned)	2 commercial newspapers (1 daily, 1 monthly) 1 community newspaper	3 online news services
Kiribati	124,742	1 commercial TV broadcaster	3 radio stations (1 state-owned, 1 privately owned, 1 church-owned)	2 newspapers (1 state-owned, 1 privately owned) 1 state-owned newsletter	1 online news service
Republic of the Marshall Islands	54,366	0 TV broadcasters	5 radio stations (1 state-owned, 1 privately owned, 2 church-owned, 1 community-run)	1 privately-owned newspaper	1 online news service
Nauru	12,017	1 state-owned TV broadcaster	2 state-owned radio stations	2 state-owned newsletters	1 online news service
Niue	1,510	1 state-owned broadcaster	2 radio stations (1 state-owned, 1 commercial)	1 privately-owned newspaper, 1 state-owned newsletter	1 online news service
Palau	17,989	0 TV broadcasters	4 radio stations (1 state-owned, 3 commercial)	2 commercial newspapers	2 online news services
Samoa	202,100	12 TV (4 commercial, 6 church-owned, 1 community-run, 1 state-owned)	17 radio stations (10 commercial, 4 church-owned, 1 state-owned, 2 community-run)	2 newspapers (1 commercial, 1 state-owned) 7 state-owned newsletters	6 online news services
Solomon Islands	761,215	3 TV broadcasters (2 commercial, 1 state-owned)	6 radio stations (3 commercial, 1 state-owned, 2 church-owned)	2 commercial newspapers, 2 church-owned newsletters	11 online news services

<sup>5</sup> [Pacific Community - Statistics for Development Division](#), accessed September 4, 2024.

<sup>6</sup> *The only newspaper, The Kaselehlie Press, is the prominent online news source.*

Table 1. Mainstream media landscape continued

Country	Population	Free-to-air television	Radio	Print	Online
Tonga	99,026	2 state-owned TV stations	9 radio stations (6 commercial, 1 state-owned, 1 church-owned, 1 community-run)	2 church-owned newsletters, 1 commercial newspaper	4 online news services
Tuvalu	10,876	1 state-owned TV broadcaster	1 state-owned radio station	No newspapers	1 online news service
Vanuatu	314,653	3 TV stations (1 state owned, 1 church-owned, 1 commercial)	8 radio stations (2 commercial, 2 church-owned, 4 state-owned)	1 commercial newspaper	1 online news service

## Government support and involvement

Governments typically play a central role in media broadcasting across the Pacific, given the relatively small scale of most national media sectors. As such, media are often reliant on government support to remain viable. For example, there are no locally-owned private media outlets in Nauru or Tuvalu, where all local radio and television stations are government run. In these countries, respondents expressed concern about the effect of government media ownership, particularly the perception that this encourages media reports to advance government agendas rather than provide independent reporting and analysis.

In Nauru the media is under direct government control and journalists are required to take the same oath of allegiance to the government as other civil servants. In Tuvalu, the broadcaster is state owned, and respondents expressed concern about its ability to effectively operate as the fourth estate in a democratic system. Across the region, surveys of audience members (see Media Consumption section) revealed that their level of trust in media is impacted by how independent they perceive media to be as an objective source of information and public interest news.

In some countries, such as Samoa and Vanuatu, government ministries have well developed media units, which produce widely circulated newsletters, as well as government-run newspapers and radio channels. Respondents in media stated that a key function of the government newsletters is to update the public on government initiatives and services and their impact for the community, to build advocacy within communities for government projects.

## Local content

In all countries studied, locally produced content focuses on stories affecting local communities, covering topics such as climate change, lifestyle diseases, land rights, politics and sport, as well as crime and court reporting. It is also common for media to report on specific government infrastructure and externally funded development projects. As one respondent from Samoa commented, for example: “everyone wants to see what has been going on, what has been implemented, some success stories... failure and challenges of projects” (Samoa 03).

Media coverage in larger media markets such as Fiji and Solomon Islands features more stories on the region. In these markets, there is greater emphasis in news content on the collaborative efforts of Pacific Island countries to address common challenges, leverage shared strengths and promote sustainable development across the region.

In all countries studied, respondents recognise the importance of gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) to media production and content. However, cultural and social conventions in many countries impact how effectively this is achieved and the ways inclusion is promoted more generally. For example, in Vanuatu, one media practitioner respondent characterised GEDSI as an ideology coming from outside Vanuatu, through foreign influence, and thus a threat to Vanuatu *kastom*.<sup>7</sup> In the case of Kiribati, the government is working with media to raise awareness on gender equality and women’s rights, as part of a locally-led initiative.

## Foreign content and news

Foreign media content is available in all 12 countries studied. Most commonly this comes from Australia or New Zealand, primarily via Radio New Zealand (RNZ), although in the northern Pacific, content from the United States is also common, and Vanuatu has broadcasts from Radio France International. Media practitioner and audience respondents across the Pacific region also noted that pay TV content is available from Germany and South Korea, mostly featuring news and entertainment programs. Content from China is also increasingly available across the region, with China Global Television Network (CGTN) and Chinese International Radio broadcast across countries such as Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Samoa. Content from the United Kingdom via the BBC is available free to air in Fiji and Solomon Islands, through the Fijian Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) and Telekom Television (TTV) respectively. BBC programs are also available to audiences in Palau and RMI as paid subscription services. Kiribati has access to BBC TV 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It should be noted that audiences in the Pacific may also be able to access BBC content through digital terrestrial platforms (such as Tuvalu TV).

## Artificial intelligence

Respondents from all 12 countries reported experimenting with the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in media production. In some countries, such as Samoa, media respondents indicated that they see AI as a useful tool for aggregating, producing, and presenting news content, although they are cautious about its accuracy, particularly in a Pacific context given that many AI tools do not work well with Pacific languages.

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<sup>7</sup> *Kastom in Vanuatu refers to the traditional culture customs and practices of the Ni-Vanuatu people. The term is used in Bislama the local pidgin language.*

Beyond considerations around adopting AI operationally, media practitioners across the region highlighted that more knowledge is required in the sector about AI's technical requirements (e.g. availability of Pacific-relevant datasets for machine learning) to strengthen its application in newsrooms. It was suggested by media that methods of AI application across government and private sector services are not yet defined, and greater technical education on approaches to using AI will empower media to explore how AI can support their work.

## Business resilience

The small population size of most of the Pacific Island countries studied challenges the business resilience of their media. As noted, in some countries, such as Tuvalu, the media sector is entirely state owned. The primary sources of revenue for the Tuvalu Broadcasting Corporation (TVBC) are government grants, advertising charges, birthday request charges, and monthly subscription fees. There is a prevailing fear among Tuvalu's media practitioners, as raised in interviews, that the government might de-corporatise TVBC due to its heavy dependence on government funding. Other countries, such as Fiji and Samoa, can support larger and more diverse media sectors, reflecting the larger size of their economies and, in the case of Samoa, high levels of media engagement from the Samoan diaspora.

Privately owned media businesses rely primarily on commercial advertising for their revenue. In Fiji, for example, the Fiji Times and Fiji Sun are privately owned and depend largely on advertising and printing revenue to remain viable. In addition to commercial broadcasting of free-to-air services, Fiji TV (owned by Fijian Holdings Limited) also provides radio, television, and communication products.<sup>8</sup>

Some national broadcasters also run commercial TV channels and radio stations such as the FBC, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) and Tonga Broadcasting Commission (TBC), as part of a hybrid model encompassing government funding and commercially generated revenue. These hybrid funding arrangements are often not sufficient to maintain basic broadcasting infrastructure.

Many media operators also rely on donor assistance to move businesses towards digital models that will be critical for business viability in the future. Media organisations noted in interviews that donor assistance from international organisations (in contrast to direct government funding) distances government agendas from the editorial process and allows media to promote the values of media independence and media's watchdog role in society.

Most media practitioner respondents acknowledged a lack of staff resourcing and remuneration across the industry, with those from community and church-based media organisations highlighting that their organisations were sustained by the dedication of just a few idealistically motivated journalists committed to delivering news to audiences. Staff are sometimes unskilled in the fundamentals of journalism necessary to complete the roles. Interview findings show that in some instances, support staff without journalism training, such as drivers, were requested to cover breaking stories due to a lack of available journalists.

Mentoring and financial support for Pacific media and individual journalists are provided by ABC International Development (ABCID), BBC Media Action, the East-West Center, Internews, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) among others.

<sup>8</sup> [Fiji Television Limited - About Us](#), accessed September 4, 2024.

## Internet infrastructure

In most of the countries studied, analogue television transmission has been turned off and there has been a full transition to digital broadcasting.

There are varying numbers of internet service providers in different countries across the region. Improved connection to submarine cables has been a major development in many of the countries studied. For example, the launch of the Tui-Samoa cable in February 2018 and the Manatua cable in November 2019 has resulted in Samoa having one of the highest rates of mobile phone coverage in the Pacific region.<sup>9</sup> However, other countries, such as Nauru and Tuvalu, are not connected to a submarine cable and rely on satellites for their internet connectivity – although the Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation (TTC) has received a grant to examine the feasibility of connecting to the planned Central Pacific cable.

Access to low earth orbit satellite (via Starlink) has also had an impact on improving internet access in several countries. Regulators in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Nauru,<sup>10</sup> Samoa, RMI, and FSM have issued licences for Starlink to operate, while Tuvalu is in the process of granting licences. The Tongan government has issued a provisional temporary permit for Starlink to operate in Tonga for six months as of July 2024.<sup>11</sup> The Niue government has restricted the use of Starlink units on the island.

Better internet connectivity has led to higher rates of internet access in most countries studied, in comparison with the 2013 State of the Media and Communication Report. In most countries, as depicted in Table 2, internet access has increased dramatically. As of 2024, Fiji, Nauru, and Tuvalu have all reached 80 per cent, and have the highest proportion of their population accessing the internet among the countries studied.

Table 2. Internet penetration rates<sup>12</sup>

Country	% of population accessing internet in 2013	% of population accessing internet in 2024
FSM	20	41
Fiji	28	85
Kiribati	10	54
Marshall Islands	3.5	73
Nauru	6	83
Niue	83	80
Palau	6	68
Samoa	7	75
Solomon Islands	6	45
Tonga	12	58
Tuvalu	40	81
Vanuatu	8	70

9 Adel Fruean, *Samoa Observer - Mobile coverage reaches 97 per cent*, March 27, 2021.

10 Nauru has formalised the operation of Starlink as of August 19, 2024.

11 Sariah Magaoo, *Pacific Media Network - Niue Starlink internet users could face strict penalties*, August 16, 2024.

12 Figures are from PACMAS: *Data Reportal - 2024 Digital Country Reports*.

## Broadcast transmission range

In all countries studied, radio has the widest transmission coverage and provides a vital source of information in times of natural disaster and in provision of cyclone warnings.

The scope of television coverage and availability of verified data differ among the countries studied. For example, in Niue, media practitioner respondents noted that, while broadcast transmission covers most of Niue, there remains a blind spot over a small area on the northwest of the island. In Nauru, TV coverage is island wide, but respondents in media noted that not all households have an antenna to watch TV programs. For Tuvalu, TV broadcast is only available in Funafuti, with the rest of the population accessing news and other programming through the streaming service offered on Tuvalu TV's Facebook page.

The transition to digital allows for better picture and sound quality, more efficient use of the broadcast spectrum, and the ability to offer more channels and interactive services. Media practitioner respondents affirmed that most governments and media organisations in the region are keen to achieve a full transition to digital, as it promises broader coverage and higher content quality. However, this shift is contingent on funding, technical expertise, and infrastructure solutions that account for the geographic dispersion of islands in each nation.

In the Pacific, the transition to digital has been gradual and varies by country. In Fiji, latest available data shows that more than 80 per cent of the population is within coverage for TV since the switch from analogue to digital in 2019.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Samoa's transition from analogue to digital means that most of the population can access digital TV, provided they have a new digital set-top box, antennas, and cables to access the platform.

In Solomon Islands, transmission coverage is facilitated through TTV, with broadcast accessible in Honiara and four other provincial towns. Since it switched from analogue to digital, TTV is also providing its television service online or "over the top" (OTT) via its TTV PLUS app. In Vanuatu, TV coverage is accessible only in the main urban centres such as Port Vila and Santo; however, ni-Vanuatu can access TV via digital apps. Transmission coverage in Palau is facilitated by a state-owned telecommunications company that provides a digital TV service via cable lines, reaching every home across the islands. However, due to their remote locations, two islands in the Palau island chain, with a combined population of less than 1 per cent of the total population, currently lack television access. In the case of Tonga, transmission coverage is concentrated in Tongatapu, where the capital, Nuku'alofa, is located. There is currently a lack of verified data on transmission coverage in Kiribati, RMI, and FSM – providing an opportunity for further research.

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<sup>13</sup> This figure was obtained through media practitioner interviews but also confirmed through external secondary sources, such as [CIA World Factbook 2021-Fiji](#), last updated December 14, 2021.

# 04

## 4. LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT

*In all countries studied there is a legislative framework regulating print, radio, and television sectors.*

*This is accompanied by a requirement for print media businesses to be registered and for radio and television broadcasting to be licensed. Most countries studied also regulate their telecommunications sectors, including the allocation of frequencies on the radio spectrum and licensing of telecommunication service providers.*



## Telecommunications legislation

Telecommunications infrastructure, including mobile networks and internet services, enables media outlets in the Pacific to reach remote and isolated communities and support mobile content offerings that include TV and Radio apps. The Pacific region is served by several key mobile telecommunication providers, with Digicel being one of the most prominent. Digicel operates in multiple Pacific countries, including Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu. Vodafone is another major player, particularly in Fiji, where it offers a wide range of mobile and internet services. Other notable providers include Our Telekom in the Solomon Islands and Bluesky in Samoa.

Media respondent practitioners noted that media across the Pacific rely significantly on the use of Short Message Service (SMS) and mobile apps to send news alerts, weather updates, and emergency information directly to people's phones. This is particularly important in remote areas where internet access may be limited.

In contrast with 2013, all countries now have laws that encourage competition in the telecommunications environment, as indicated in Table 3, signifying region-wide attempts to secure more equitable outcomes for users. Despite this, Nauru and Niue are each reliant on a single provider that is 20 per cent government owned in each case. The market has diversified in FSM, Kiribati, RMI, and Tuvalu. No new regulatory bodies have been established.

Table 3. Telecommunication regulation and competition

Country	Laws allowing competition		Competition in the market		Independent regulator		Starlink licence granted <sup>14</sup>
	2013	2024	2013	2024	2013	2024	2024
FSM	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fiji	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kiribati	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
RMI	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	In process
Nauru	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
Niue	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Palau	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Samoa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Solomon Islands	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tonga	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Temporary licence
Tuvalu	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	In process
Vanuatu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

<sup>14</sup> Detail on Starlink licensing agreements is provided in the Infrastructure section, above. Starlink is one of the prominent satellite internet providers in the Pacific region. It has been expanding its presence in the Pacific. Other companies, such as O3b Networks and Kacific, also offer satellite internet services in the region, although at this stage, on a small scale.

## Media freedom

As table 4 illustrates, the Pacific region is generally considered to have legislative environments that do not hinder media freedom. However, media freedom was a common concern raised in interviews and in the published research covered in the desk-based review.

Table 4. Media freedom

Country	Freedom House global freedom score (2023) <sup>15</sup>	Legislation to protect media freedom	Constitutional protection of free speech	Ratified International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	Right to information policy/legislation
FSM	92 (free)	No	Yes	No	No
Fiji	66 (partly free)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, but not legally enforced
Kiribati	90 (free)	No	Yes	No	No
Nauru	77 (free)	No	Yes	No	No
Niue	NA	No	No	No	No
Palau	92 (free)	No	Yes	No	No
RMI	93 (free)	No	Yes	Yes	No
Samoa	84 (free)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Solomon Islands	75 (free)	No	Yes	No	No
Tonga	81 (free)	No	Yes	No	Yes
Tuvalu	93 (free)	No	Yes	No	No
Vanuatu	82 (free)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Every country except Niue has constitutional protection of freedom of speech or expression. However, freedom of the press or media is not expressly guaranteed in most of the countries studied – the exceptions being Fiji, RMI, Palau, and Tonga, whose respective constitutions explicitly provide for freedom of the press. In the remaining eight countries, freedom of the press or media is inferred, as part of freedom of speech or expression.

Only four countries have ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), article 19 of which protects freedom of opinion, expression, and the media. 10 countries have restrictions or limitations on the right to freedom of speech, expression, and the press in their constitutions. Only FSM and Palau do not have any specific limitations. The common restrictions or limitations across the 10 countries relate to defamation, national security, public health, judicial independence, and confidentiality.

<sup>15</sup> [Freedom House - Global freedom scores, countries and territories](#), accessed September 4, 2024.

Except Samoa, none of the countries studied has legislation specifically protecting media freedom. Samoa's Media Council Act 2015 established a self-regulatory mechanism.<sup>16</sup> Almost every country has broadcasting, television, and print media legislation that regulates mass media. For example, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Tonga, and Vanuatu all have a Broadcasting Act that expressly recognises the role of radio as a means of "information, education and entertainment". In addition, Niue, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu recognise the editorial independence of the newsroom in gathering and presenting news and current affairs.

Despite the relative protection offered by Pacific legislative frameworks, restrictions on media freedoms exist. The prevalence of government-owned media outlets, which may be explained by the small populations and small scale of the media sector in these countries, was reported in interviews as a potential compromising factor.

Interviews and the desk-based review showed that the extent to which governments seek to influence the outputs of state-owned media differs across the region. For example, in 2022 the Solomon Islands government sought to exert more control over the material broadcast by the SIBC.<sup>17</sup> In Fiji, on the other hand, the government's repeal in 2023 of the Media Industry Development Act (MIDA) removed legislation that had previously been used to curtail media freedom.

Further restrictions on media freedom concern the use of defamation actions that discourage reporting that is critical of the government. For example, in Vanuatu, the Penal Code was amended in 2021 to include new provisions for criminal libel and criminal slander, covering newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet sites, social networking sites, blogs, and similar platforms available for public viewing.

Additionally, most Pacific countries have begun to develop regulatory frameworks to manage cyberspace, with a focus on cybersecurity. Currently, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, and Vanuatu have cybercrime legislation that implicitly addresses issues relating to defamation. Interview respondents expressed concerns that legislation regulating digital communications and cyberspace (designed to prevent online abuse and harassment) may translate into restrictions on media freedoms, if applied in an overly punitive manner.

There are also examples of the use of migration regulations to restrict foreign journalists' access to countries. These restrictions have impacted both domestic and international reporting and audiences.

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<sup>16</sup> *Although the act is still functioning, media practitioner respondents noted that there has not been much activity with the Media Council.*

<sup>17</sup> [Annika Burgess, ABC News - Solomon Islands orders national broadcaster SIBC not to report content critical of government, August 2, 2022.](#)

Self-censorship also threatens media freedom. Because communities are small, journalists are well known and accessible to other community members. While this can improve reporting, allowing journalists to keep abreast of recent developments, it can also inadvertently compel them to shape their reporting and coverage in specific ways. For example, interviewees highlighted instances where journalists face societal pressure not to offend other community members or report on matters that might generate community tensions. Overlaid on these pressures are cultural expectations arising from relationships, obligations, and longstanding familial bonds. As one respondent from RMI commented: “Everyone is related to everyone in our country. Many stories we report often conflict with our relatives. Then your morale [sic] is in question when you report on others and tend to not report on your relatives” (Marshall Islands 03).

## Right to information

Few of the countries studied have enshrined the right to access information in law. For example, Palau’s Open Government Act 2014 aims to create an open and transparent government accountable to its people. However, not all government information is accessible to the public and a list of excepted information is provided in the act. Vanuatu also has a Right to Information Act (2016) and has established a Right to Information Unit, in the Prime Minister’s Office, which implements the act, under which citizens can request access to government information. Tonga has an information disclosure policy launched in 2012, but its constitution does not provide for right to information or access to information. Samoa’s information access policy (2023) and the “informed Samoa” policy (2021) aim to promote the sharing of information about government activities across Samoa.

Media practitioner respondents noted that, even in situations where right to information laws exist, governments may not always provide public information in a timely manner or accede to interview requests, thus threatening media freedom. Protocols around the publishing of government documents (on government websites) are not always standardised, leaving media to work with incomplete information.

## Protection of journalists’ sources

According to respondents, the protection of journalists’ sources is a critical component of media freedom and essential to journalists’ capacity to do investigative reporting, while protecting whistle-blowers and individuals who provide information. Only Solomon Islands, Samoa, and Palau have legal provisions for such protection.



**top:** Gracelyn Garae recording at VBTC's radio studio. **middle left:** Solomon Islands filmmaker Georgianna Lepping behind the camera. **middle right:** Elizabeth Osifelo conducts an interview in Honiara. **bottom left:** Vahefonua Tupola gets creative with a mojo kit in Tonga. **bottom right:** Abraham Fatupaitu and Saunima'a Aiolutepoa work on a community film making project in Samoa.

# 05

## 5. MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

*Few policies across the Pacific specifically address misinformation and disinformation.*

*Legislation on defamation is the most common tool for tackling incorrect media reports.*

The extent to which mis/disinformation is perceived to be a challenge varies considerably and is generally related to the size of the population. For example, in Niue, where people are well known to each other, mis/disinformation is not perceived to be a problem. The personal nature of relationships means that any false reporting is quickly refuted, and, generally, an apology is made to anyone who has been negatively affected. However, in another small country, Tuvalu, respondents expressed concern that misinformation is becoming more prevalent on social media mostly from online narratives outside the island.

In larger countries, including those with active diasporas and higher penetration of foreign media sources, particularly on social media platforms, mis/disinformation is a more serious challenge. This was illustrated in Samoa, where mis/disinformation by anti-vaccination activists was a serious issue during the country's 2019 measles epidemic,



**top left:** Josaiia Nanuqa presents to camera in Fiji. **top right:** Hope FM announcer Man Karis, Solomon Islands (Facebook: Hope FM). **bottom left:** Fijian multimedia journalist Jale Daucakacaka reporting during the COVID pandemic. **bottom right:** Preparing an edition of Tia Belau newspaper in Palau.

negatively affecting vaccination rates. Low vaccination rates contributed to 5,707 measles cases and 83 measles-related deaths (87 per cent of which were children under 5).<sup>18</sup> It also led to vaccination concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mis/disinformation was also a challenge following the 2021 election in Samoa, when controversy over the appointment of the first ever female prime minister, Fiamē Mata’afa, was inflamed by debate on social media.<sup>19</sup> During the elections, Facebook, in conjunction with the Samoan electoral commission, successfully instituted a social media blackout which blocked content that was understood to breach local laws.<sup>20</sup> Media practitioner respondents noted that while the move may have improved political stability, it needs to be weighed against the consequences for media freedom and freedom of expression.

Government and public concerns about COVID-19 vaccine mis/disinformation also arose in Vanuatu. The Vanuatu government considered passing legislation that would have required media outlets to have government authorisation to publish any information about COVID-19,<sup>21</sup> which raised media freedom alarm bells.

18 Adam T. Craig, Anita E. Heywood, and Heather Worth, *The Lancet Infectious Diseases - Measles epidemic in Samoa and other Pacific Islands*.

19 *Regulation No Match for Online Misinformation*, *Samoa Observer*, March 1, 2021.

20 Elijah Malifa, host, *Pacific Wayfinder*, podcast, episode 19, “Social Media Security (Part Two)”, *Pacific Security College*, July 26, 2022.

21 Tahlea Aualiitia, *ABC Pacific - Concerns about press freedom as pacific governments try to tackle coronavirus misinformation*, March 30, 2020.

# 06

## 6. MEDIA CONSUMPTION

*The audience survey was completed by 119 respondents across the 12 countries and captured top-level themes around audience media consumption patterns. It should be noted that, due to the diverse media make-up of each country, only preliminary observations can be made on audience media consumption and engagement patterns. The findings should not be viewed as exhaustive due to the limited sample size.*



## Radio and online platforms most used

Radio and online platforms (including social media) are the most frequently used sources of information for Pacific Islanders, with over 70 per cent of respondents highlighting these as preferred platforms. As the Pacific media sector embraces more multi-platform options, and more print and broadcasting organisations have online and streaming services, online media consumption is expected to increase regionally, in line with levels of infrastructure and investment.

## Audience trust in media informed by perception of media independence

Levels of trust in media are relatively high across all countries studied, although a considerable number of media practitioners and audience members who participated in this study expressed concern that the freedom of their local media is insufficiently protected, particularly from government control, affecting their trust in local media. There is preliminary evidence that suggests a link between higher audience trust in media and higher audience perception of media freedom.

## Remote and rural communities less likely to use media to express views

Audiences surveyed across the 12 countries noted that there remains a degree of reluctance in certain rural and remote communities across the Pacific to engage with media (including online channels) to express individual opinions on issues of public interest. Survey respondents mentioned that their reluctance to have a voice in media is in part due to respect for leaders and fellow community members, which sometimes stands in the way of personal expression. Respondents emphasised that the reluctance of members of remote and rural communities to participate in public debate and discussions means that the quality and depth of local media coverage of these communities is impacted.

## Media regarded as critical in civic education

In countries such as Vanuatu and Samoa, there was a general audience sentiment that the media could do more in fulfilling their mandate to educate communities on topics of public interest, such as the profiles of key ministerial leaders, the format of local elections, and the importance of transparency and accountability in government. Media information and stories are seen as fundamental for communities to take a more active interest in civic life.

## ABC and RNZ regarded as most credible foreign media sources

Across the 12 countries, ABC and RNZ were cited by audiences as having the most credible and relatable information and news and regarded as setting the benchmark for objective, evidence-based reporting. Over 65 per cent of respondents mentioned that they consume content from both broadcasters, particularly when seeking an objective take on key regional issues. Country-specific content offerings on both ABC and RNZ were cited as being critical in supplementing consumption of other local news sources.



# 7. MEDIA RECOMMENDATIONS AND VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

*This section consolidates overall observations and recommendations provided by media practitioner respondents on the needs of the media industry in a period of profound change, with the increasing proliferation of digital media and continued pressures to embrace new business models.*



*Headquarters of the Broadcasting Corporation of Niue.*

## **Media development should provide skills, knowledge and funds**

While acknowledging the support of development partners, respondents across the 12 countries recommended that greater technical and financial support be provided to both government-owned and private media companies. This includes:

- training for reporters and producers, ranging from basic reporting skills to more specialised topics, such as how to use quality reporting to counter mis/disinformation;
- training in the use of technology, including AI;
- supporting advocacy for stronger right to information laws, to improve media access to government information;
- assisting media leaders to develop clearer digital strategies, new digital content initiatives, online monetisation approaches and more robust audience research.

Financial support was identified as crucial in ensuring that media businesses remain operationally viable in the short to medium term, amid declining advertising revenues and increasing pressures to embrace online content monetisation opportunities.

## **Strong media associations can champion locally-led development and self-regulation**

An overarching recommendation by respondents was that the mechanisms for financial support from development donor organisations could be managed by media associations, so that local industry considerations are taken into account when the funds are distributed across the sector. It was acknowledged by respondents that most media associations will need significant strengthening in terms of governance and administration to take on this responsibility.

Most media practitioners interviewed also recommended that continued strategic support be provided to media associations, to develop and enforce codes of ethics for the media in each country. This is viewed as crucial in emboldening the media to address political pressure that can limit the freedom of their reporting.

## **Frameworks for government support of media are crucial for audience trust**

Government support is critical to media viability in most Pacific countries. However, this support can lead to – at least, the perception of – government interference in the media. Given the rising challenge of mis/disinformation, public confidence and trust in the media is vitally important.

Respondents recommended that Pacific Island country governments explore mechanisms under which they continue to provide financial support to media companies at arm's length. There is increasing interest among media practitioners across the region to work collaboratively in advocating for a regional shift that defines government/media relations and safeguards editorial independence.

## **Laws that counter mis/disinformation and defamation need refinement**

The potential use of defamation laws – particularly criminal laws – against journalists continues to curtail media freedom in the region. While defamation laws play an important role in protecting reputations and can help counter mis/disinformation, they can also be used punitively to constrain media reporting.

Respondents recommended that a better balance needs to be found between media freedom and protections against defamation and mis/disinformation in several countries. Respondents asserted that national governments and media industry bodies should continue to work collaboratively to ensure that proper guidance is provided around the exercise of defamation laws to allow media to report freely without legal implications.



Fiji Times newspaper for sale, Savusavu Market, Vanua Levu, Fiji. (Tom Perry)

# 08

## 8. REFLECTIONS ON THE PACIFIC MEDIA LANDSCAPE

*This section consolidates the reflections and recommendations of the research team, based on the findings.*

### **Media resilience has a public value**

Despite the fragility of the Pacific media sector, it remains resilient. Most media organisations across the region have survived the downturn associated with the pandemic and other threats. Media practitioner respondents noted that this is a remarkable feat when considered in conjunction with the digital disruption of the sector. This resilience should be celebrated and valued.



*Fiji Sun reporters Asenaca Ratu and Kelera Sovasiga expand their storytelling skills through video.*

## Remuneration of media workers must improve

Young graduates are likely to leave the media industry in the early years of their career due to the lack of staff resourcing and low remuneration. Increased viability of media organisations and diversified income sources are critical if Pacific media organisations want to retain a skilled workforce.

## Self-regulation is critical

Ongoing audience trust is not guaranteed. Pacific media must proactively self-regulate using locally-established media ethics and standards, “before somebody else does it for them” in ways that hamper media freedom and further erode audience trust.

## Pacific media must be a watchdog and a development partner

The line between holding decision makers to account and the media’s obligation to contribute to national development goals is a fine one to navigate, particularly in the context of smaller Pacific Island countries with strong cultural obligations and commitments to mutual respect. The findings in this report suggest that Pacific media need to find a middle ground to perform their fourth estate role, while remaining relevant and committed to the cause of improving the lives of Pacific Islanders.

# 9. CONCLUSION

*The Pacific media landscape has evolved significantly within the past decade with increased digital connectivity and infrastructure, vastly improving digital access and reach throughout the region. Media organisations have leveraged digital platforms and mobile telecommunications to continue delivering news and information to their audiences. Despite the significant impact of the pandemic on the financial viability of media and challenges around staff resourcing, the sector has shown remarkable resilience and adaptability; a testament to its relentless commitment and passion towards serving Pacific audiences and communities.*





*Young journalists interview veterans of the Tongan media.*



*Samoan content maker Lars Bell performs a sound check.*

# APPENDIX 1 – PROJECT TEAM

## Research lead

Priestley Habru, PhD Candidate, School of Social Sciences, University of Adelaide.

## Nominated principal investigator

Joanne Wallis, University of Adelaide, Professor of International Security, Director of the Stretton Institute’s Security in the Pacific Islands research program.

## Research team

Claudina Aitorea Habru, Research Associate, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Adelaide.

Jope Tarai, PhD Candidate, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Australian National University.

William Waqavakatoga, PhD Candidate, School of Social Sciences, University of Adelaide.

## Expert advisers

### ***Dominic Appi, Nauru***

Mr Dominic Appi is currently serving as the manager of Mwinen KO, Nauru Media’s fortnightly online publication, and Nauru Media’s Facebook page. He obtained his tertiary education at the then-Fiji Institute of Technology, laying the foundation for a successful career in media. His extensive career spans over 15 years with Nauru Media, in areas of administration, radio management, and television. Mr Appi has played a pivotal role in shaping the online publishing landscape in Nauru. Additionally, his appointment as the television representative on the board of the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) underscores his commitment to regional collaboration and advocacy within the media industry.

### ***Bernadette Carreon, Palau***

Bernadette Carreon has spent over two decades living and reporting on Palau and the Pacific. Bernadette is an investigative, breaking news reporter and a Palau media trainer. She has reported on various topics including organised crime, fisheries, local politics, environment, and human rights. Bernadette also wears the hat of a project manager and coordinator of the Pacific media watchdog, Pacific Freedom Forum. Bernadette holds a journalism degree from the University of Santo Tomas, Philippines.

***Derek Gwali Futaiasi, Solomon Islands***

Derek Futaiasi holds a PhD from the School of Regulation and Global Governance at the Australian National University. He previously completed an LLM (University of the South Pacific) on non-state mechanisms dealing with customary land disputes, with an emphasis on Malaita. He is a former deputy secretary to the prime minister (Solomon Islands). Currently, he is Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs in Solomon Islands. His specialised knowledge on media legislation in Solomon Islands and the region was critical in informing this research.

***Hilary Hosia, Republic of the Marshall Islands***

Hilary Hosia is an investigative reporter and photographer for the Marshall Islands Journal. Hilary has been covering a wide range of issues in the islands since 2012, including the exposure of the human trafficking ring on Majuro and the illegal adoption of Marshallese babies between the United States and Majuro.

***‘Ungatea Kata, Tonga***

Rev. Dr ‘Ungatea Fonua Kata has been an educator in Tonga for 38 years and is committed to appropriate education for the local Tongan context, the importance of leadership development, improving women’s voices, and the importance of careful stewardship of our environment, especially that of our oceans.

***Georgina Kekea, Solomon Islands***

Georgina Kekea is a journalist with over 20 years of experience in the media industry, having served as president of the Media Association of Solomon Islands for four years. During her tenure, she collaborated closely with all media outlets in the Solomon Islands.

***Ongerung Kesolei, Palau***

Ongerung Kambes Kesolei is an editor and reporter for Tia Belau, Palau’s oldest newspaper, and produces and hosts a weekly radio show, The Ongerung Show, focused on culture and history. He also co-hosts Kausisechakl, a weekly cable talk show on politics and current affairs. On social media, he manages the most popular YouTube channel in the Palauan community, boasting over 9,000 subscribers. A photography enthusiast, he has documented Palau’s night market events for over a decade. In 2016, he co-founded the Pacific Note online news outlet.

***Victoria Lepou, Samoa***

Misa Victoria Lepou is Assistant Chief Executive Officer of Broadcasting Division, which is responsible for Radio 2AP and TV9 in the Samoa Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. She is the former head of journalism studies at the National University of Samoa.

***Richard Naidu, Fiji***

Richard Naidu is a partner of the law firm of Munro Leys of Suva, Fiji. A former journalist in Fiji and New Zealand, he advises news media organisations and writes opinion columns for The Fiji Times, Fiji’s biggest newspaper.

***Gustava Esther Pavihi, Niue***

Esther Pavihi has been involved in the media industry in Niue since 1998, working first on radio and producing/presenting TV programs for five years. A career public servant, she has worked in government departments, been elected to parliament, served as a commissioner of the public service, director of the chamber of commerce board, and acting CEO. She often helps to present as stand-in BCN news presenter and since 2017 has hosted the live coverage of Niue general elections every three years. In 2019, due to staff shortage at BCN, she joined the news team and in 2020 became Senior Producer/ Head of News. Esther was educated in Niue, New Zealand, and Australia and is an alumna of the University of the South Pacific.

***Puaseiese Adrienne Pedro, Tuvalu***

Puaseiese Adrienne Pedro is a journalist from Tuvalu and the former news editor for Tuvalu TV.

***Akka Rimon, Kiribati***

Akka Rimon is an I-Kiribati scholar and researcher at the Australian National University. Her research explores labour migration as an option for climate-induced displacement in Kiribati. As a journalist and political scientist by training, Akka served for over 15 years in the Government of Kiribati as a senior administration officer and, in 2013, was appointed secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration. Prior to undertaking PhD study, she led the World Bank Kiribati country office from 2016 to 2022.

***Peterson Sam, Federated States of Micronesia***

Peterson Sam currently serves as the commissioner of Pohnpei Public Broadcasting Corporation (with the radio station call sign V6AH) and as an expert adviser for the Federated States of Micronesia State of Media report.

***Christina Thyna, Vanuatu***

Christina Thyna Gesa is a legal expert adviser from Vanuatu who contributed to the Vanuatu State of the Media project.

***Lanuola Tusani Ah Tong, Samoa***

Lanuola is an investigative journalist and sub-editor for the Samoa Observer newspaper group. She is a recipient of the UNDP Media Award for Excellence in Gender-Sensitive Election Reporting in Samoa. She has close to 20 years' work experience in the private media.

***Divine Waiti, Republic of the Marshall Islands***

Mr Divine Waiti has more than 20 years of legal experience as parliamentary counsel, constitutional adviser, policy and legislative adviser, corporate attorney, civil and criminal attorney, in-house legal counsel, defence counsel, and maritime attorney. He manages the law firm Marsol Lawyers & Consultants and is currently the legal counsel for the parliament (Nitijela) of the RMI. He has in-depth knowledge on the laws of the RMI.



*FBC reporter Josaia Nanuqa sets up for an interview in Navotua, Fiji.*

# APPENDIX 2 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## Research questions and methods

This project sought to address three core research questions:

1. What is the current media policy and legislative environment in the Pacific?
2. What policies are there at both regional and national level to address mis/disinformation?
3. What is the current and emerging media landscape of the Pacific, taking into account media access and coverage across print, broadcast, and digital?

As noted, the main research methods were semi-structured stakeholder interviews, a detailed online survey, feedback and advice from country expert advisers, and desk-based research. Some methods were more relevant than others to address each key question. For example, desk-based research on each country's legislation was needed to answer question 1, augmented with advice from our expert advisers and interview participants. Weekly meetings were held with the ABC International Development (ABCID) partners to discuss progress.

The first step in the research process was to obtain University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee approval to undertake the research. This involved designing the research methodology, identifying questions for the participant interviews and online survey (see appendices 3 and 4), and creating a participant information sheet that would provide information relating to the project to research participants. That application was submitted to the Human Research Ethics Committee in October 2023. Approval was granted in January 2024.

While waiting for ethics approval, the University of Adelaide research team began desk-based research, covering information on legislation, addressing misinformation on health, disaster, geopolitical, and security issues, and access and coverage across the print, broadcast, and digital media landscape in the Pacific.

The research team also began to engage expert advisers from each of the 12 Pacific Island countries being studied. This involved identifying advisers with relevant expertise on the media and/or legislative landscape of their country who were willing and available to be involved in this project. Specific efforts were made to engage experts with recent or current experience in the Pacific media sector (across news/legal/business operations) to ensure relevance of insight to current industry trends. In alignment with the State of the Media study objectives, these experts were selected to reflect a diversity of voices in the media space, including new and upcoming subject specialists who bring in a variety of perspectives that both reinforce and challenge mainstream opinions on the state of Pacific media. Each expert adviser reviewed the desk-based, interview, and survey findings and

advised whether our research had missed or misunderstood anything about the media landscape in their home country. The expert advisers also provided recommendations for potential interview participants in their home country.

Once ethics approval was obtained, the research team focused on primary data collection, including stakeholder interviews, the online survey, and media monitoring of news and events in the region relating to media policy legislation, addressing mis/disinformation, and the media landscape in the countries being studied. The Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) and PACMAS were also valuable sources of contextual information. The online survey used the Qualtrics web-based survey tool to which the University of Adelaide has an unlimited subscription.

Domestic political and social issues challenged data collection, particularly in countries where the media operates under government constraints. Therefore, while this study draws upon the perspectives, experiences, and knowledge of the project team, research interviewees, survey participants, and expert advisers, by necessity the findings are not exhaustive.

As noted, project fieldwork and analysis was conducted entirely by scholars from the Pacific Islands region. This helped to ensure that relevant customs and protocols were appreciated and respected throughout the research process.

The research team was guided by Massey University's Pacific Research Guidelines and Protocols,<sup>22</sup> which are based on scholarship about Pacific research practices and a substantial consultation process. Importantly, these guidelines outline the following research principles that guided the University of Adelaide project team:

- **Respect for relationships**, including ensuring that cultural protocols and processes are followed and that research participants are respected
- **Respect for knowledge holders**, including prioritising research partners and participants as knowledge holders and being guided by a participatory approach that seeks informed consent
- **Reciprocity**, ensuring that reciprocity is integral to the research project, including that participants and communities benefit from the research
- **Holism**, including that the interconnected nature of the physical, social, environmental, cultural, and spiritual aspects of research with Pacific communities is understood and acknowledged
- **Doing no harm and using research to do good**, including that the wellbeing of Pacific communities and their environment is central to why and how the research project is conducted, while ensuring that it is also rigorous and scholarly

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<sup>22</sup> [\*Pacific Research Guidelines and Protocols\*](#).



The research team was also guided by the second edition of the Cultural Etiquette in the Pacific Islands handbook, developed for Pacific Community staff who work in Pacific communities.<sup>23</sup> This handbook provides guidance on topics such as:

- leadership protocols;
- engagement and relationship building;
- ceremonies and religious beliefs;
- appropriate dress;
- how to behave in people’s homes; and
- norms and cultural nuances governing everyday behaviour.

Research participants were selected because they met either of the following criteria:

- (1) media practitioners who work as journalists, editors, or are otherwise involved in the production of media products in the 12 Pacific Island countries we were studying, and therefore have knowledge of the media landscape in their particular country; or
- (2) media audiences who actively engage with the media (including social media) in the 12 Pacific Island countries we were studying. To obtain a cross-section of this group’s views, understandings, and perspectives we spoke to:
  - a. tertiary students – as they are well educated and highly literate they are expected to be regular consumers of different media sources;
  - b. civil society representatives – as civil society plays a vital role in the public sphere in the Pacific Islands region,<sup>24</sup> and therefore its representatives are expected to regularly consume and, at times, participate in different media outputs that may have bearing on their organisation’s goals and objectives; and
  - c. private sector representatives – as they are also likely to be educated and literate and to have a vested interest in the public sphere, and are therefore likely to regularly consume different media sources.

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<sup>23</sup> [Pacific Community - Cultural Etiquette in the Pacific: Guidelines for staff working in Pacific communities.](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Pacific Islands Forum - Civil Society](#), accessed September 4, 2024.

## Risk mitigation

We acknowledged that participation in this study would, for some respondents, involve managing competing priorities and necessitate investing at least an hour of their time in their participation. The research team was particularly sensitive to the fact that Pacific communities have been subject to much study over the last two decades, leading to possible survey exhaustion.

We attempted to mitigate this risk by making clear to research participants that participating in this research would provide them with an opportunity to contribute to insights on the strengths and challenges faced by the media industry, which are imperative in solidifying what support around media strengthening should look like in the medium- to long-term future. Understanding the broader media landscape continues to be vital for practitioners, audiences, and supporting NGOs, considering challenges relating to mis/disinformation, the rise in digital transformation, and shifting development goals, media policies, and legislative environments.

There was also a remote possibility that certain participants might face risks associated with the nature of the discussions themselves, as in certain Pacific Island countries there are sensitivities over media freedom and the government's role in media regulation and funding.

We sought to minimise this risk by ensuring that all interviews were conducted by Pacific researchers who were well placed to judge the political, social, and cultural landscape and the responses and comfort of our research participants. We did not pursue a line of questioning or a topic of discussion that we identified was likely to lead to anxiety or negative consequences for our research participants. If such a topic was raised during the interviews, we steered the conversation away from any potentially harmful topics. At the same time, we respected the agency and intelligence of our research participants and, while attempting to minimise any risks to them, we did not prevent them speaking about sensitive or controversial topics if they had a strong desire to do so.

There is also a limited possibility of third-party identification for interview participants, particularly those from countries with very small media sectors. For example, an interviewee might be identifiable to third parties by their comments about experiences, locations, or events or by the month and year in which they were interviewed.

We tried to minimise the above risk by preserving the anonymity of participants, who are referred to by pseudonyms and were advised to avoid making statements that could identify them to others.

Measures to protect the confidentiality of participants were taken at all stages of the research process, including during data collection, analysis, and presentation of the research findings. Interviews were only recorded and/or transcribed upon obtaining informed participant consent.



*Shooting vertical video at the Pepeyo Cultural Village in Port Vila.*



*Mobile journalism training at the Fiji Sun.*

# APPENDIX 3 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Each interview began by discussing the participant information sheet and obtaining written consent for participation.

As part of that process, the interviewer explained the project and their role in it. The interviewer then began the discussion. The following are indicative questions that the interviewers used, although the interviews were semi-structured, and discussion was open-ended to reflect the interests and perspectives of the participants.

## QUESTIONS FOR MEDIA PRACTITIONERS

### Background

1. *Please tell me about yourself and your role as a media practitioner. Looking for:*

- Name
- Media organisation
- Role
- Qualifications
- Years (months) in the media industry

### Successes

- 2. *What kinds of stories or news articles are most popular?*
- 3. *How do you get feedback from your audiences?*

### Challenges

- 4. *What challenges do you face in your current role?*
  - In your newsroom?
  - In your media organisation?
  - As a journalist in your country?

## Types of coverage produced

5. *What content do you produce for your media platform?*
6. *How do you decide what stories to cover?*
7. *What is the process of getting news stories into your news bulletin?*
8. *Who are your target audiences?*
9. *Do you feel that your organisation is producing quality news content?*
10. *Can you please give me examples of new content you are particularly proud of?*

## Staff composition in workplaces

11. *How many reporters/journalists are there in your newsroom?*
12. *What is the composition of your newsroom team? Looking for:*
  - male
  - female
  - people living with disabilities
  - others

## Coverage of gender equality, disability and social inclusion issues

13. *Do you prioritise GEDSI – by which I mean gender, disability, and social inclusion – issues in your news coverage?*
14. *How do you cover issues relating to gender, disability, LGBTI, and other forms of social inclusion?*
15. *Do you receive any training to cover these issues, such as on gender equality, disability, social inclusion, and/or sensitivity training and trauma-informed training?*

## Perception of the role of media in their communities

16. *What do you think is the role of the media in your country?*
17. *How can media improve its role?*

## News digitisation

18. *How are online and social media being used and managed as distribution platforms?*
19. *Is AI being used by your organisation to produce online and social media content? If so, how?*
20. *How is this affecting newsrooms and audience engagement?*

## Funding

21. *What funding does your media organisation get?*
22. *Who do you think should assist media organisations like yours financially and how?*
23. *What kinds of assistance would be helpful to your media organisation?*

## Salaries

24. *Are media workers receiving salaries that allow them to live comfortably in your country?*
25. *Is there a gap between what men and women media workers are paid?*

## Government regulation/legislation

26. *Should journalists be regulated and by whom?*
27. *Self-regulation versus government regulation – which one do you think should be done and why?*
28. *How does government legislation assist, guide, or affect the role of media?*
29. *Is there an alternative to government legislation and regulations?*
30. *Is there any policy or set of guidelines in place to guide the work of journalists? Is your organisation guided by a code of ethics? Does the media sector generally comply with relevant guidelines or codes of ethics?*
31. *If journalists break relevant guidelines, codes of ethics, or general principles of good journalism, what should be done to them?*

## Media freedom

32. *What are the limitations/challenges the media face in their role of educating the public about current events?*
33. *How easy/hard is it for you to access information from government departments when you wish to do an investigative story?*

## Misinformation and disinformation

34. *Is misinformation – by which I mean people publishing information that is wrong – an issue in your country’s media? How about social media?*
36. *Is disinformation – by which I mean people publishing information that is false and intended to mislead people – an issue in your country’s media? How about social media?*
36. *How well is your government responding to the challenges of misinformation and disinformation? Are you aware of the specific legislative and policy instruments that relate to misinformation and disinformation?*





## QUESTIONS FOR MEDIA AUDIENCES

### Background

Name:.....

Occupation:.....

1. *What do you think is the role of the media in your country?*
2. *How can media improve its role?*
3. *Which media do you go to if you want to give a story? Why?*
4. *How well does your government regulate the media in your country? Are you aware of the specific legislative and policy instruments that affect the media?*
5. *How well is media freedom protected in your country? Are the media in your country free to report on whatever issues they identify as newsworthy?*
6. *Is misinformation – by which I mean people publishing information that is wrong – an issue in your country’s media? How about social media?*
7. *Is disinformation – by which I mean people publishing information that is false and intended to mislead people – an issue in your country’s media? How about social media?*
8. *How well is your government responding to the challenges of misinformation and disinformation? Are you aware of the specific legislative and policy instruments that relate to misinformation and disinformation?*
9. *How well developed is the media infrastructure in your country? Can people easily and cheaply access media products? What media products do you access most? Radio? Newspapers? TV? Social media? What kind of coverage do these different products have?*
10. *What sort of media content do you mainly consume? Locally produced content by journalists in your country, or content produced overseas? If you consume media content from overseas, which countries does it come from? Do you favour any particular country’s media content? Which country does the best job of producing media content relevant to you and your community?*
11. *How many hours per day do you consume media content? What kind of content do you consume most?*
12. *Do you generally trust the media in your country? Why, or why not? If you don’t, what would help to improve your trust in your media?*



*Learning to shoot with a mobile phone at Tonga Broadcasting Commission.*

# APPENDIX 4 – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1. Which age group do you fall in?

- 18–25  
 26–35  
 36–45  
 46–55  
 56+  
 Prefer not to say

Q2. Do you have difficulty with any of the following?

	No difficulty	Some difficulty	A lot of difficulty	Not able to do this	Prefer not to say
Walking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hearing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concentrating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q3. *What gender do you identify with?*

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary/third gender
- Prefer not to say

Q4. *Which country do you come from?*

- Federated States of Micronesia
- Fiji
- Kiribati
- Marshall Islands
- Nauru
- Niue
- Palau
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Tonga
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Q5. *How would you describe your current location?*

- Urban
- Rural
- Prefer not to say

Q6. *What is your highest level of formal education?*

- University
- School
- No formal education
- Prefer not to say

Q7. *How important are the following sources of information to your daily life?*

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important	Prefer not to say
Friends and family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chiefs and/or elders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People from work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People at university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government officials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online news websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Television	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Radio	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Newspaper	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8. *What are the names of the main media platforms (television and radio channels, newspapers, social media, and online news sites) that you regularly access?*



Q12. *If you consume media content from overseas, which countries does it come from? Please select as many as relevant.*

- Australia
- New Zealand
- China
- United States
- Other Pacific Island countries
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Q13. *If you consume media from overseas, which country's media produces the most relevant and relatable content to you and your community?*

Q14. *If you consume media from overseas, which country's media broadcasts seem the most trustworthy and credible?*

Q15. *When you consume media, what are your preferred topics?*

- Local news
- Regional news
- International news
- Health
- Sport
- Environment
- Religious
- Entertainment and lifestyle
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Q16. *If you answered 'Other', what other topics would you like to see discussed in the media?*

Q17. *How well does your government regulate the media in your country so that the media is free to serve the public's interest?*

- Not well at all
- Slightly well
- Moderately well
- Very well
- Extremely well
- Prefer not to say

Q18. *How does your government's regulation (through government legislation or media policy) of the media affect how the media operates in your country?*

Q19. *How well is media freedom (journalists can publish without fear of punishment) protected in your country?*

- Not well at all
- Slightly well
- Moderately well
- Very well
- Extremely well
- Prefer not to say

Q20. *Do you have any comments on the impact of the level of freedom of your country's media on social and political life in your country?*

Q21. *Is misinformation (people publishing information that is wrong, either accidentally or on purpose) an issue in your country's media?*

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Not at all
- Prefer not to say



Q22. *How easy is it to identify misinformation in your country's media?*

- Extremely difficult
- Moderately difficult
- Slightly difficult
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Slightly easy
- Moderately easy
- Extremely easy
- Prefer not to say

Q23. *What impact does misinformation have on social and political life in your country?*

Q24. *Is disinformation (people publishing information that is false with the intent of misleading people) an issue in your country's media?*

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Not at all
- Prefer not to say

Q25. *How easy is it to identify disinformation in your country's media?*

- Extremely difficult
- Moderately difficult
- Slightly difficult
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Slightly easy
- Moderately easy
- Extremely easy
- Prefer not to say

- Q26. *What impact does disinformation have on social and political life in your country?*
- Q27. *What should be done to address misinformation and disinformation in your country's media?*
- Q28. *How well is your government responding to the challenges of misinformation and disinformation?*
- Not well at all
  - Slightly well
  - Moderately well
  - Very well
  - Extremely well
  - Prefer not to say
- Q29. *Do you generally trust the media in your country?*
- Definitely not
  - Probably not
  - Might or might not
  - Probably yes
  - Definitely yes
  - Prefer not to say
- Q30. *If you don't generally trust the media in your country, what would help to improve your trust in your media?*
- Q31. *Have you tried using an AI (artificial intelligence) tool or app (like ChatGPT or Siri)?*
- Yes, have tried and use regularly
  - Yes, have tried and don't use regularly
  - No, have never tried
  - Prefer not to say
- Q32. *If you could change one thing about the media in your country, what would it be?*



*Reginald Chandar from Fiji Live sets up for an interview.*