



Media Strengthening

Pacific Media Assistance Scheme
IMPACT ASSESSMENT BRIEFING

DECEMBER 2015



PACMAS
Pacific Media Assistance Scheme



PACMAS Election Training, Tonga. Photo 1 and 2 by Peter Drought

ACTIVITY BACKGROUND

An independent and functional media sector is widely recognised as being critical to promoting better governance, which, in turn, can improve the quality of development outcomes. As part of its ongoing regional support, the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) has undertaken a media strengthening activity aimed at building the capacity of media and communication professionals to fulfill their roles.

The expected outcomes of this PACMAS activity were:

- 1. Increased quality and plurality (mix of public, commercial and community) within the media and communications environment.**
- 2. Needs-based training available for production, technical support and leadership in the media sector.**

The activity was designed to fill a gap in the region's training and professional development needs through the delivery of training, workshops, on-the-job mentoring and ongoing networking and mentoring. The activity targeted entry-level journalists, senior editors, media leaders, broadcast engineers and information communication technicians. Other expected benefits relate to economic development, such as supporting the sustainability of media organisations and creating employment pathways by ensuring the media practitioners are well skilled and networked within the region. PACMAS capacity building efforts were gender sensitive.

To assess the impact of these activities, PACMAS conducted research across three Pacific island nations (Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu). The study, conducted in July 2015, consisted of 64 semi-structured interviews with participants who had attended various PACMAS training courses. The following provides a summary of the targeted impacts of the activity.

A full report was produced, including details of the methodology, and can be accessed on request via: <http://www.abcinternationaldevelopment.net.au/contact-us>



PACMAS Camera & Audio Visual Editing Workshop. Photo by Mafi Fifita

IMPACT



PROMOTED EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

51% of all training participants were women¹. PACMAS has actively targeted qualified women to apply for media strengthening activities to ensure that women are equally represented and have access to relevant and scalable skills. For example, when low numbers of female applications were received for some technical training, female practitioners and students were contacted with information about the program and their eligibility. This has resulted in better representation in some technical and leadership areas that otherwise would have had lower participation rates. Female journalists who participated in the Budget and Finance workshop have produced relevant content targeted at female audiences for local publications.

*"I did not know that I was a leader ...
it was nice to have that highlighted."*



INCREASED SKILLS AND QUALITY OF MEDIA OUTPUTS

86% of participants said that the training they received from PACMAS has increased the overall quality of their work. The majority (83%) of respondents agreed that participating in a PACMAS training program has improved the content that they and / or their organisation produce. They suggested that this was due to improved technical skills and a better understanding of the needs of their target audience. It is likely that the skills gained through PACMAS strengthened organisational capacity, with 88% of respondents having shared their new skills with colleagues. It was reported that PACMAS has a very good reputation within the media industry and among those working closely with media. This was true regardless of the respondent's level of seniority, the type of media in which they work in or the type of course they attended.

*"The benefits to my organisation are significant.
What I learned I put to practice within the organisation".*

1. <http://www.abcinternationaldevelopment.net.au/activities/pacmas-gender-impact-assessment> This information is referenced from a separate PACMAS study on gender.



MET THE NEEDS OF THE MEDIA SECTOR

83% of respondents suggested that the training met the needs of their organisation. Many expressed that they felt PACMAS provides unique, high-quality and professional training that adds real value to the media in terms of capacity building. Most suggested that the trainings also met their own professional training needs. The response illustrates PACMAS success in delivering needs-based capacity building that filled a gap in the region.

"PACMAS has done excellent and outstanding work in the Pacific in relation to media development."



ENHANCED THE WAY THE MEDIA INDUSTRY IS PERCEIVED ACROSS THE PACIFIC

84% of participants suggested that the training has equipped them to use a diverse range of communication platforms. PACMAS training covered a range of thematic topics and media and communications platforms, including social media. By bringing people together and exposing them to new ways of operating PACMAS appears to have created quite a buzz about the industry. Several participants felt the media is an exciting industry to work in, although it's not without challenges (e.g. navigating politics, low pay and a perceived lack of value amongst the community). This is a positive shift which could enhance the appeal of the industry to quality graduates, promoting media as a viable and attractive career option.

"Training provided exposure to new ways of thinking and reporting and better editorial outputs".



NETWORK OF MEDIA PROFESSIONALS AND TRAINERS ESTABLISHED

95% of respondents reported growing their network as a result of the training programs. PACMAS has created vital links between professionals across the region giving rise to the "PACMAS network", which is very positively viewed. The growth of these regional networks resulting from attending PACMAS activities is considered an enabler to improved communication. This facilitates the exchange of ideas, knowledge and skills, sometimes resulting in collaborations. These networks have the potential to create enhanced career opportunities and economic development outcomes. Further, sharing of new skills and knowledge was rated highly, which indicates that the training is providing benefits beyond the individual.

"The training was very relevant, it helped me, I have new contacts and I can do more".



IMPROVED THE SUSTAINABILITY OF MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

Respondents who had undertaken PACMAS Media Marketing and Sales training reported that they had since applied media marketing and sales techniques, which, they felt, were improving revenue. As one suggested, "PACMAS has changed the way [that] we approach selling our products and branding and has changed the way we approach customers". Building capacity in this area was a vital aspect of media strengthening delivered to build the economic viability of the sector, in addition to media craft skills.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

In summary, the opportunities for PACMAS media capacity building activities were identified by respondents as deepening, broadening and better targeting training. Respondents requested more and detailed training opportunities to leverage skills gained through this round of support. The research findings highlight a number of key considerations for future work in this area.

1. Be clear about the link between media capacity building and good governance.

Participants are aware of the importance of professionalisation and skills building in fulfilling their roles. However, few were able to make the link between these and the broader governance goals of PACMAS. This could be addressed by ensuring that the goals of PACMAS are made explicit to training and workshop participants so that they are aware of how the media can promote better governance.

2. Consider training delivery mechanisms that are more closely linked to content outputs to ensure that training results in increased quality of media content.

Despite clear gains in the skills and capacity of media, some respondents remained concerned about the overall quality of media content across the region. They suggested that PACMAS could continue to support improvement in this area through practical and on-the-job training that directly results in content outputs.

3. Expand and target media training to media advisors, public relations officers and government officials.

A number of respondents reiterated the importance of continuing to include more media and communications advisors in PACMAS trainings. Some also suggested including government (senior) people who deal with the media. This exposure will help them break down 'jargon' and know how to work with the media in a way that is beneficial to the sector and the general public. This is seen as an important step to creating an enabling environment for media to contribute to good governance.

4. Build a network of local trainers by pairing local media practitioners with international trainers to build their capacity and experience and to ensure that training is localised.

Respondents were positive about the quality of training and expertise provided to them, however, many noted that having local trainers involved in each training would increase the relevance of examples given. They also commented that local trainers would have a better functional understanding of operating within the constraints of the Pacific regional context.

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Further information:

www.abcinternationaldevelopment.net.au



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