

The PJDP Tokelau Judicial Orientation Workshop held in Apia last week from 9-13 February.

The objectives of the workshop were to build the competency of the judicial officers of Tokelau namely the Law Commissioners and Court Clerks to perform their judicial roles effectively; and secondly to develop a shared vision and collaboration between the court actors and court users being police, Taupulega Appeal Village Committee representatives and NGOs representatives (youth; women and men) to promote excellence in the delivery of justice in Tokelau. The third objective was to build the capacity of the courts of Tokelau and Samoa to deliver orientation training locally.

As Tokelau PJDP National Coordinator, in my opinion the workshop was a big success and special acknowledgements must be given to Dr Livingston Armytage PJDP Team Leader and the lead facilitator for the Tokelau workshop and also our judges from Samoa: Judge Nelson Clarence; Supreme Court of Samoa and Judge Vaepule Va'ai, District of Samoa and PJDP Coordinator. It was indeed a rewarding experience for me as the co-facilitator and a trainer to the workshop. The wide topics relating to justice and fairness were very relevant for Tokelau and refreshing to the participants.

The last workshop of this nature was held was a couple of year ago and this workshop is timely to ensure quality justice is being delivered for the people of Tokelau and especially the judicial officers knowledge needs to be refreshed and enhanced. The opportunity to enhance the knowledge of our judicial officers on their jurisdictions; fundamental rights and fundamentals of judicial life were all crucial to promote excellent performances and therefore quality justice being delivered for the people of Tokelau. During the workshops, the participants actively shared their experiences and the challenges they encountered due to their limited knowledge on the systems and procedures and because of these they were not able to access justice in a timely manner neither were responsive to the judicial needs of the people. The big and favorable saying of the workshop “ It is all about Fairness”. The judicial officers and police must work together and must inform every one of their rights to justice and knowing the fundamental rights of people as referred to in the Constitution of Tokelau and also Bangalore Principles.

To ensure the knowledge gained from the workshop will be put to good use, the participants were given the chance to list at least 5 things they would do differently when they return to their respective judiciaries and they all made a commitment on paper by listing 5 things they will do

differently when they go back to Tokelau. I made copies of everyone's paper and this will be used to monitor and follow up on the progress made by all participants and it will be useful for future workshops. The participants were very pleased with the huge amount of information and skills received during the workshop. All the respective judiciaries shared that they have yet decide on civil matters and even to hear any appeals on decisions of the Law Commissioner. The procedures of lodging a criminal offence and a civil matter were covered thoroughly in the training and likewise the procedures for an appeal and these are some of the new information and learning provided to the participants and especially on improving their people's service to meet the judicial needs of our people.

I believe the participants walked away with a new attitude towards their roles and how they must be seen to be fair and just when performing their judicial roles. The one word to sum it all up, it is all about "FAIRNESS". It is important for the judicial officers to know and do their job well; their powers and authority; the need to read and know their working tools; the laws of Tokelau; the Constitution and the Crimes Rules and so on and the need to be good role models as they are expected to behave and perform their judicial roles to a particular standard. In doing this, the message to the community and outside Tokelau is that the rule of law is a serious matters in Tokelau and justice does prevails.

The workshop was held in the Supreme Court of the Samoa, and the services provided and hospitality by the Samoa Ministry of Justice was excellent. Tokelau and Samoa has a special relationship. The Chief Justice of Samoa conveyed to the participants in his closing remarks that his Ministry is there to support Tokelau whenever Tokelau needs the support in relating to judicial matters. This was a very generous offer for Tokelau.