



Pacific Centre



Operationalising the right to information in the Asia-Pacific

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RTI in the (ICIC) Asia-Pacific

- **Constitutional Protection**
 - PNG – specific protection
 - Fiji – requires passage of an FOI law
 - Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Bangladesh – RTI as part of FOE
- **No legislation yet passed in PICs**
 - But NZ and Aust have had laws since 1982
- **SA & SEA more active**
 - Laws in India, China, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Pakistan
- **Draft Bills**
 - Civil society – Fiji, Vanuatu, PNG, Indonesia, Bangladesh
 - Govt – Fiji, Cook Islands

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Why is RTI important?

- Underpins human rights
- Strengthens democracy
- Facilitates participatory development
- Exposes corruption / promotes public accountability
- Strengthens the media
- Diminishes conflict



Context challenges

- Poverty (& illiteracy)
- Culture
 - “Culture of silence”
 - Respect for authority figures
- “Tyranny of distance”
 - 80% of people live in rural areas
- Weak governance
- Low awareness of “rights”
- Weak civil society



System challenges

- Poor records management
- Limited resources
 - Personnel – senior managers, lawyers
 - Financial – stretched budgets
- Multiplicity of accountability institutions
 - Pacific: 7 Ombudsman, 1 (2?) Anti-Corruption Institutions, 1 Leadership Code Commission, 1 Human Rights Commission
- Very limited internet connectivity
 - But radio can't be underestimated
 - Could use churches/NGO networks to get info out



The road ahead?

- Awareness raising
 - For governments, CSOs and public
 - Developing RTI campaigns
- Information Disclosure Policies
 - Sectorally or across govt
- Draft Bills
 - Provide support to govts / AGs Offices
 - Explain to policy-makers



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