



PACIFIC IMMIGRATION
DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

NEWSLETTER

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A PACIFIC FIRST: PIDC - SUPPORTED MASTERS IN BORDER SECURITY COURSE NOW OFFERED AT USP

PIDC is thrilled to announce the launch of the University of the South Pacific's (USP) Master in Border Security (MBS) course in partnership with PIDC.

The MBS course built on the Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma in Border Security programme that was initially created and developed through the PIDC-USP partnership in 2019, successfully attracting a wide range of students across different sectors including immigration officials from across the Pacific. As with the Postgraduate Diploma, the MBS has been tailored and customised to build and enhance capacity, knowledge and skills in the Immigration and border security sector across the PIDC membership and guarantees admission to a regionally and internationally accredited and recognised Institution's higher-level qualifications.



Moemoe of Samoa Immigration, graduating with the Postgraduate Diploma in Border Security

The MBS is expected to equip officers with advanced skills, high level analysis capability, critical thinking and knowledge in border security. The MBS is now open for enrolment to immigration officers including law enforcement and border control agencies and stakeholder officials. In committing to supporting immigration officers' enrolment in this graduate course, PIDC is providing tuition scholarship with more than 10 Immigration Officers currently registered and admitted to the MBS program from semester 1, 2025.

The MBS is offered through two teaching modes, which are a taught Master and a Master by Thesis research. Available for full time (on campus) and part time through DFL (online), students are expected to complete the Masters programme in two to four years. For more information on the inaugural Masters in Border Security, please visit the USP website.

Voices from the Border TALIFAIA'S JOURNEY

Talifaia Faatonu, Principal Immigration Officer for Visa Operations in Samoa, has spent over 17 years dedicated to protecting the country's borders. From her early days as a new officer in 2007 to her current middle management role, Talifaia's journey has been shaped by her commitment to national security and continuous professional growth.

Talifaia's career in Immigration began after she graduated with a degree in Management and Public Administration from the University of the South Pacific, Fiji in 2006. Returning to Samoa, she was given the option to choose from two roles within the public service, and she selected immigration—a decision that would shape her professional life and career pathway.

“At the time, I didn’t fully understand what the job entailed, but as I gained more experience, I realised the importance and challenges of the work. Immigration is about more than just visa operations—it’s integral to the security of Samoa,” Talifaia reflects.

TALIFAIA'S JOURNEY continues...

*Strengthening Samoa's Border Security
through Education and Leadership*

Over the years, Talifaia has witnessed significant shifts in the Pacific’s immigration landscape, particularly as new risks have emerged. These include the rise in number of refugees and asylum seekers and transnational crimes; presenting challenges that were not present when she first entered the field. The evolving nature of these risks has highlighted the importance of staying ahead with up-to-date policies and legislation.

Four years ago, Talifaia played a role in the development of the Samoa Immigration Act 2020, which addresses many of these emerging threats.

Her contribution was greatly enhanced by the skills she acquired in 2016 through the Postgraduate Diploma in Border Security from the University of the South Pacific (USP), made possible through the Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC)’ scholarship program, in collaboration with USP and donor partners.

The Postgraduate Diploma program’s focus on policy development allowed Talifaia to understand how well-constructed policies can be used to mitigate risks and respond effectively to new challenges.

“Before the program, I had no experience in policy development, but I gained new skills in this area,” Talifaia explains. “I had the opportunity to hear diverse perspectives from Immigration officers across the Pacific, which was invaluable. It helped me understand the “why” behind many of our practices as Immigration officers, especially when viewed through a theoretical lens alongside my years of practical experience.”

In addition to her work on policy development, Talifaia’s team is responsible for managing vital functions such as the issuing of travel documents, permanent residency, and Samoan citizenship, as well as ensuring the security of Samoa’s national borders.

Through these responsibilities, Samoa Immigration continues to work closely with regional partners like PIDC and members to exchange information and stay informed on emerging risks in the region

“I learned the critical importance of staying connected, as we do through PIDC meetings and training, ensuring that immigration officers are continually updated on emerging challenges and threats. This experience emphasised the need for continuous learning, especially as some of us had been away from studying for a while. It made me realize there is still much more we need to do to protect our country—and we are capable of doing more.



Over her 17-year career, Talifaia Faatonu has witnessed significant changes in the workplace, particularly in terms of gender diversity. When she became a manager in 2014 for Visa Operations, she was the only woman in the Immigration management team, and at times, she faced challenges in having her professional opinions valued equally to those of her male counterparts.

Despite these early disadvantages, Talifaia’s resilience and determination were key to her success. She worked hard to establish herself in a male-dominated environment, continually proving the value of her contributions. Today, she is proud to see more than 30 women in the department, reflecting the gradual shift towards gender equality in her workplace.

“When I started, it was a male-dominated environment, and there were times when I had to prove myself,” Talifaia shares. “But over the years, I’ve learned that confidence, adding value, and working hard are key to earning respect amongst your peers. I want to encourage everyone, not just women – to work on your confidence and your skills in order to survive and thrive in this environment.”

Looking ahead, Talifaia plans to continue her academic journey, with plans to pursue a Master’s degree in National Security Policy at the Australian National University in 2025. She is motivated by the desire to continue growing in her field and to contribute even more to the security of Samoa and the Pacific region.

“One of the best outcomes about completing my post graduate diploma was that it made me realise that I can do more, I can go further with my studies and deepen my understanding of national security”.

Samoa Hosts the PIDC Board Meeting

The Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC) Board convened in Apia, Samoa, from 3–4 March 2025 at the Sheraton Beach Resort for its second meeting of the 2024/2025 financial year.

The Board discussed at this meeting relevant issues and the development of programs encouraging and sustaining the PIDC's governance, finances and human resources.

It also discussed the implementation of the PIDC activities as outlined in its 2024/2025 Workplan, and as guided by the PIDC Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025. Consultations on the review of the current PIDC Strategic Plan, and development of a new Strategic Plan were therefore held on the 5th and 6th of March.

The Secretariat also presented for discussions its Financial Plan and Budget as well as Workplan for the next financial year, 2025 – 2026. This Workplan and Financial Plan will be confirmed at the RAM in June 2025. Preparations for the RAM to be held in Nuku'alofa, Tonga were shared by the Director of Tonga Immigration.



The next Board meeting will be held at Nukualofa, Tonga prior to the RAM in June 2025

PIDC Engages in Regional Security Conference at JHoPS, 2025



Leaders from Defence, Police, Customs and Immigration agencies as well as National Security directors and advisers from across the Pacific gathered in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea for the seventh annual Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHoPS) meeting, from 18-20 March 2025. Representing PIDC, the Head of Secretariat participated in discussions that reinforced the importance of regional cooperation in addressing security challenges. The meeting co-chaired by PNG's Commissioner of Police and Chief of Defence Force, focused on regional security collaboration under the theme "Align and Collaborate to Advance our Collective Security."

Key discussions covered maritime security, transnational crime, human trafficking and illegal fishing. Delegates endorsed drafting instructions for a Regional Operations Deployment Framework to enhance civilian, military, and police responses to crises. Participants also engaged in tabletop exercises simulating disaster relief and maritime security incidents.

JHoPS 2025 concluded with the endorsement of the JHoPS Governance Framework and plans for briefing national agencies on the proposed security framework. Australia was confirmed to host JHoPS 2026, with Cook Islands set for 2027. PIDC is dedicated to strengthening immigration systems and border security. PIDC also remains committed to supporting the collective efforts of JHoPS members. Our participation in JHoPS 2025 reaffirms our dedication to fostering partnerships, enhancing information-sharing, and advancing Pacific-led solutions to security challenges. We look forward to continuing our engagement in shaping a secure, open, and resilient Pacific region.

[Source: Australia Government Defence].



PIDC Participates in the World Border Security Congress

PIDC through the assistance of the UNODC Pacific, participated in this year's World Border Security Congress. The World Border Security Congress was held at the Eurostar Madrid Tower in Madrid, Spain from the 25th to 27th March 2025. This high-level gathering assembled senior border officials, policymakers, and industry professionals to discuss and debate current and future policies, implementation challenges and emerging technologies aimed at enhancing border security and migration management.



The congress featured a comprehensive agenda including site visits to key locations such as Madrid International Airport and the CECORVIGMAR National Co-ordination Centre and open and closed sessions on the key fundamental areas of border security. Attendees, mostly from Europe, the Americas and Asia, had the opportunity to participate in various workshops and sessions led by esteemed speakers from around the world. Key sessions related to Pacific security included sessions delivered by experts in Drugs and human smuggling, border management and biometrics, as well as leading experts in Open Source Intelligence (OSINT). The Deputy HOS as the PIDC representative attended these sessions. Leading experts in technological advances were also present.



Strengthening Pacific Partnerships

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) on February 17th, 2025, reaffirmed its commitment to supporting migration governance and border management in Samoa. Solomon Kantha, IOM Chief of Mission and Sub-Regional Coordinator for the Pacific, presented his credentials to Prime Minister Le Afioga Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, emphasizing the organization's dedication to addressing migration-related challenges.

With a local office established in Samoa, IOM actively collaborates with government agencies and stakeholders to promote secure labor migration, enhance border security, and tackle climate change-induced mobility concerns. Aligning with Samoa's national priorities, the organization ensures that migration processes are managed effectively while safeguarding human rights.



Key ongoing projects include strengthening border control capabilities to address infectious diseases and implementing technology-driven solutions to enhance migration efficiency. IOM's initiatives also focus on capacity-building for frontline officers, contributing to improved border security measures.

Solomon Kantha also paid a courtesy visit to PIDC office. During this visit, discussions centered on strengthening collaboration to enhance migration governance, border security and capacity-building initiatives across the Pacific region. IOM's commitment to supporting PIDC's efforts in addressing regional challenges, highlighted the shared vision of fostering secure and efficient migration systems in the Pacific.

[Source: IOM LinkedIn]

Strengthening Border Management in the Marshall Islands



The International Organization for Migration (IOM), in partnership with the Embassy of Japan and the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), has delivered essential equipment to enhance border management and prevent infectious disease spread. Funded by Japan under the Enhancing Border Management Capacity for Responding to Infectious Diseases in Pacific Island Countries project, the initiative aims to ensure safe and efficient border operations post-COVID-19.

Upgrades at Majuro and Ebeye ports include air purification systems, sanitation stations, contactless health screening kiosks, and enhancements to the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS). Japan's Ambassador to RMI, Soma Hirohisa, praised IOM's efforts in strengthening the country's resilience. With project completion expected by July 2025, upcoming activities will focus on additional installations, border governance reinforcement and capacity-building through training and health strategy improvements.

[Source: IOM News <https://roasiapacific.iom.int/news/iom-and-japan-support-marshall-islands-enhance-border-management>]

Palau Advances National Migration Policy Development



In February 2025, the Government of Palau, with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), organized a workshop in Malakal to validate research findings that will guide the country's first national migration policy. The study, conducted by IOM, involved consultations with nearly 30 stakeholders and a thorough literature review, ensuring the policy is evidence-based.

The workshop brought together participants from government agencies, civil society groups, migrant associations and other key stakeholders to discuss critical themes such as emigration, diaspora engagement, migrant worker issues, trafficking in persons, internal migration and border management. Stakeholders examined solutions for reintegrating Palauans living abroad, managing foreign workers, addressing climate induced displacement and strengthening border systems.

This initiative is part of the 'Building Bridges' project launched in 2024 by the IOM Development Fund and it highlights the commitment of both Palau and IOM to creating robust framework for migration governance.

[Source: Palau Bureau of Customs & Border Protection Website]

Australia, PNG and Solomon Islands Collaborate on New Visa System

Immigration Officials from the Solomon Islands, Australia, and Papua New Guinea (PNG) convened in Honiara to advance the Solomon Islands' Border Management System (BMS) project. This initiative, announced in May 2024 during Australia's Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles' visit, includes the development of a new visa system.

The teams collaborated on training and the redesigning of visa regulations, aimed at increasing revenue and ensuring the safety of Solomon Islanders by improving border security. The updated visa system seeks to enhance economic opportunities tied to cross-border activities while maintaining security measures.

Australia's High Commissioner to the Solomon Islands, Rod Hilton, expressed satisfaction with the progress, emphasizing the importance of the partnership between the Solomon Islands, Australia and PNG in promoting security and prosperity across the Pacific.



In addition to the visa system development, officials from PNG and Australia provided training to the Solomon Islands immigration officers. This training covered the establishment of border management policies, procedural enhancements, and visa processing criteria.

[Source: Solomon Business Magazine]

For Seamless Travel, Australia Pilots a Digital Incoming Passenger Card



In a significant step toward a more modern and digital border experience, Australia continues to roll out its Digital Incoming Passenger Card (DIPC), gradually replacing the traditional paper-based system. Since its initial introduction last year, the initiative continues with its aim to support streamlining passenger processing, enhancing border security, and improving the overall travel experience for international arrivals.

Passenger feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with many welcoming the change as long over- due. Responses such as “about time” highlight the demand for modern solutions that align with today’s digital world. The transition to a paperless process enhances efficiency, re-duces environmental impact, and ensures a seamless journey for travellers entering Australia. The current phase of the pilot will serve as a crucial testing ground to refine the system and inform future expansion plans. Insights gained from this rollout will guide the inclusion of more travellers arriving at other international airports and on different airlines, with the ultimate goal of a nationwide implementation.

The Australian Border Force remains committed to leveraging innovative technologies that strengthen border control while providing a convenient and efficient experience for incoming passengers. The digital transformation of travel documentation is a step in the right direction, ensuring that Australia’s border operations remain at the forefront of global advancements.

[Source: Australia Border Force]

Freely Associated States Assert Compact Rights amid US Policy Changes

Diplomats from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Palau and the Marshall Islands have reassured their citizens in their rights under the Compacts of Free Association amidst confusion surrounding U.S. immigration policy changes. In January 2025, Freely Associated States (FAS) Ambassadors met with U.S. State Department and Department of the Interior officials to address concerns over an executive order that sought to tighten immigration laws, including pausing birthright citizenship for certain groups.



[Source: <https://islandsbusiness.com/news>]

The Ambassadors emphasized that FAS citizens are not affected by these orders due to their legal rights to live, work and study in the U.S. without visas or restrictions. The compacts also provide economic aid to the FSM, Palau and the Marshall Islands in ex-change for exclusive U.S. defence rights.

Pacific Nations on Edge Over Trump’s Deportation Countdown



The US President Donald Trump administration’s aggressive deportation policy has sparked fear and uncertainty amongst foreign country communities in the U.S. and governments in the Pacific. The crackdown targets undocumented migrants and those with criminal records, with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) conducting door-to-door raids.

Fiji (353), Tonga (151), Samoa (57), and the Marshall Islands (39) have the highest numbers of Pacific people marked for deportation. Pacific nations, already struggling to reintegrate deportees, fear an overwhelming influx of returnees, including those convicted of serious crimes.



Tonga's Police Minister Piveni Piukala has expressed concerns that the country's law enforcement and social services can- not handle a mass deportation wave. Around 50% of deportees to Tonga have criminal records, and without reintegration pro- grams, many have re-offended, adding pressure to overcrowded prisons. Tonga plans to negotiate with the U.S. to manage the return process more effectively.



Experts like Dr. Danielle Watson says many criminals deported to Pacific countries end-ed up reoffending due to lack of reintegration programs and police capacity. Therefore, Pacific governments, NGOs, and community groups need to cooperate more effectively, to address reintegration challenges and prevent social destabilization caused by the sharp increase in number of de- portees.

[Source: abc.net.au/news/pacific-united-states-trump-deportations-immigration/]

Celebrating Pacific Women: International Women's Day 2025

On March 8, 2025, the Pacific joined the world in celebrating International Women's Day (IWD) under the theme "Inspire Inclusion." This year, the focus was on empowering women, amplifying their voices, and breaking barriers in leadership, climate action, and economic opportunities.

Across the Pacific, women are the backbone of communities, driving progress in governance, business, education, and cultural preservation. From village leaders to entrepreneurs and activists, Pacific women continue to shape resilient societies despite on- going challenges.

IWD 2025 was marked by diverse and astounding celebrations across the Pacific. These celebrations recognised the resilience, strength, and leadership of women in various sectors, from the village women tending to her family every day, the market vendors, law enforcement agencies and Immigration officers

In the security sector, 30 emerging female Customs Officers from across the Pacific including Samoa graduated from the 2025 Pacific Women's Professional Development Program (PWPDP). This initiative supported by the Australian Border Force, Oceania Customs Organisation, and RMIT University, is dedicated to equipping women in Customs with leadership skills to excel in a male- dominated field.

In Samoa, the Markets for Change (M4C) project honoured the remarkable women market vendors from three major markets. These women have overcome economic challenges and are emerging leaders in their respective communities. M4C, implemented by UN Women in partnership with UNDP and the Government of Australia, continues to promote gender equality and economic empowerment in Samoa, Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.



Additionally, Fijian women in security roles were acknowledged, with events highlighting their contributions to peacekeeping, law enforcement and anti-corruption efforts. The UN Development Programme's Pacific Anti-Corruption Project hosted a regional webinar focusing on the role of women in combating financial crimes, emphasizing the need for greater representation of women in leadership positions within security and governance. These initiatives across the Pacific demonstrate the region's commitment to advancing women's rights, equality, and empowerment, ensuring that women have the resources, opportunities, and support to succeed in every field.

[Source: Australia Border Force Facebook & UN Women Pacific]

