

# Governance reassessed in the Pacific's troubles

In recognition that sustainable and appropriate development is founded on 'good governance', and given the perceived failure of governance in many Pacific states, over 50 academics, indigenous representatives, and development practitioners met on 3 October in Fiji at the Suva Development Research Symposium under the banner: 'Governance in Pacific states: reassessing roles and remedies.'

Jointly organised by the Australian National University, the Foundation for Development Co-operation, and the University of the South Pacific, the agenda included corruption, media censorship, conflict resolution, governance, economy, and sustainable development.

A common theme in many presentations was that the social and environmental issues in the Pacific, be they deforestation, corruption, or revolution, stem from inappropriate systems of socio-political representation inherited from previous colonial powers.

The Executive Director of the Foundation for Development Co-operation, Beris Gwynne, said '... it is clear

from recent developments in the Pacific that, despite decades of international assistance, Pacific states continue to face enormous challenges in a number of areas. Political instability has been added to the list of perceived constraints. In these circumstances, good and bad governance will make or break Pacific futures.'

Alumita Durutalo, a PhD student at the ANU, suggested that traditional systems of governance in Melanesia are conflicting with those imposed by European civilisation. He described how 'the fight for sovereignty in Bougainville, the struggle for democracy in Tonga, and the overthrow of democratically elected governments in Fiji and the Solomons exhibit...extreme forms of conflicting legitimacy'.

Other papers described the existence and emergence of decentralised non-Western systems of governance in the Pacific suggesting these might better cater to the needs of society in the sustainable management of resources and development planning.



Development delegates from Papua New Guinea highlighted the corruption epidemic undermining their country's progress.

Corruption was a major theme at the symposium and, according to Albert Ayius of the National Research Institute in Papua New Guinea, 'has become a widespread epidemic that is stifling investment and development'.

Joseph Hasiaiu, representing the recently formed Indigenous Marau Community Association located in southern Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, described how the failure of central government and the police had caused his people to develop their own defense force and local government in order to provide for the concerns of the local community. A school and clinic have been built with funds and labour provided by the people themselves where previously government

assistance had been promised but never delivered.

Also announced during the symposium was the launching of the Oceania branch of the World Bank funded Global Development Network (GDN) which, according to Beris Gwynne, has in mind to provide 'more and better quality research and policy analysis...within the region rather than from outside it, with better links between researchers and policy and decision makers'.

The GDN was established in 1999 and gives development practitioners, researchers, and academics the ability to share and access information and network with others in their field via the website: [www.gnet.org](http://www.gnet.org).

● Julian McKinlay King

## Global marine census role begins

**AUSTRALIA has officially commenced a significant role in the global \$1 billion, 10-year Census of Marine Life, a massive international effort to assess the diversity, abundance and distribution of biodiversity in Earth's oceans.**

A national steering committee of representatives from state and federal agencies, universities, museums, the CSIRO, and other research organisations met in early

October to begin coordinating the national and local contributions, and to develop a five-year execution plan.

Along with 100 institutions in 20 countries contributing to the Ocean Biogeographical Information System supporting the Census, Australia will provide biological and geological inventories compiled on key areas such as the Great Barrier Reef, Torres Strait, and the North West Shelf.

Announcing the committee meeting, which was convened by the Government's National Ocean's Office, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr David Kemp, said 'Australia is uniquely placed to contribute to the Census. We have strong credentials in marine science and information management, and we occupy a vast ocean territory with a high level of unique species amid the relatively unexplored Southern Hemisphere oceans.'



Spiny stone or king crab, *Lithodes longispina*, a species from underwater seamounts south of Tasmania.

More information: <http://www.coreocean.org>