

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

### Remarks of the Ombudsman

Malo e Lelei from Tonga,

The first quarter of the calendar year 2024 has flown by in a whirl-wind of domestic, regional and international engagement.

The integrity industry is gaining momentum with its core values of being independent, objective and free. COSP10, Pacific Triangle of Integrity, Human Dignity and outreach island hopping are the highlights.

Our pick of a 'local resilience star' is Ms. Melaia Moala from the Island of Tungua, Ha'apai. Her inspirational smile of resilience notwithstanding major challenges saying "I am good, looking ahead, planning my future". Fakafeta'i e ma'u koloa Miss Melaia Tuaime'i'uta.

Be inspired.

Mrs. 'Alisi Numia Taumoepeau, KC  
**Ombudsman.**

### Faces of Integrity



**Above: Pacific Triangle of Integrity**

This 3-day regional workshop was facilitated by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Global Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) in Port Villa, Vanuatu on the 13—15 February.

The workshop centered around the importance of collaboration amongst integrity agencies in building integrity and raising awareness on corruption. The Tongan delegation of integrity agencies included Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC (Ombudsman) and Mr. Roman Vaihu (DOI) from the Ombudsman Office, Dr. Pingi Fasi (MP) from the Legislative Assembly and Mr. Sefita Tangi (Auditor General).

### Resilience Star



**Above: Local resilience star Ms. Melaia Moala Tuaime'i'uta (FWCT, Emergency Response Report)**

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"I am looking for my school bag" says 5-year-old Melaia Moala Tuaime'i'uta, of Tungua, Lulunga, Ha'apai; Survivor of Hunga Tonga and Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami.

Five-year-old Melaia poses with an innocent smile, with a bundle of papers in her hand and the elastic of what appears to be a skirt draped on her head as protection from the sun and heat. The background of dry, dead plants, rocks and sand is a stark contrast to this inspirational smile of resilience, and message ***“I’m good, looking ahead and planning my future.”***

In the aftermath of a major natural disaster, a 5-year-old Tongan’s response to emergency responders of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (FWCT) reminds us all that with the mindset of unwavering resilience comes the ability to overcome the toughest challenges.

## Island Hopping



*Above: Tungua beach ‘accommodation’ where Investigating Officers stayed from 4am until daylight.*

As an island nation spreading out over more sea than land, it is always a dilemma when it comes down to delivering services to the small islands, where all transportation relies on boat. On 30 January 2024 an investigation team was sent to Tungua island as island hopping via MV ‘Otuanga’ofa for the second time.

They departed from Tongatapu about 6 pm and arrived at Ha’afeva about 3 am. Ha’afeva has no wharf. The unloading of cargos and the disembarking of passengers both at Ha’afeva and Tungua are always done at the seashore.



*Above: Investigating Officers ready to disembark the boat at the seashore of Tungua.*

Our investigation team, Roman Vaihu (DOI), Pilimisolo Tamo’ua (Investigating Officer) and ‘Etivoni Pifeleti (Investigating Officer), disembarked during the dark of night. The investigation team was then ferried by a small boat driven by the Tungua Town officer, accompanied by his teenage son. It took about an hour to reach Tungua, arriving at approximately 4 am.

The team rested on the beach in an open small veranda of a storage hut at the beach awaiting day-time.



*Above: Investigating Officers Pilimisolo Tamo’ua (image on left-hand side) and ‘Etivoni Pifeleti (image on right-hand side) at Tungua, Ha’apai educating young students and elderly members of society alike on the functions of the Office.*

## 10th Conference of the State Parties



The Dep. Prime Minister; Chair of the Legislative Assembly's Anti-Corruption Committee and; the Ombudsman took part in the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) Atlanta Conference, on the 11—15 December 2023, focusing on advancing anti-corruption obligations and policy priorities.

## Staff

### Annual Service for 2024



The Tongatapu Staff enjoyed a prayer service for 2024 at the Gospel Church at Touliki while the Vava'u staff attended the Gospel Church at Leimatu'a on Sunday 16th January 2024. An inspiring message was delivered by Reverend Penitoa Katoa befitting the need to be uplifted, encouraged and revitalized for the 2024 journey.

## Honouring Diligence/Staff of the Month Award

During the quarter, staff are acknowledged for their dedication and commitment to their respective work and upholding the values of Integrity.

### January—Tevita Kafoa

(VIP Driver) was awarded Staff of the Month for January, 2024.



### February—'Akanesi

Fa'otusia (Assistant Secretary) was awarded Staff of the Month for February, 2024.



### March—'Etivoni Pifeleti

(Investigating Officer) was awarded Staff of the Month for March, 2024.



## In-House Monthly Devotions

### January

The first monthly devotion of the Office of Ombudsman for 2024 was led by Investigating Officer, Mr. 'Etivoni Pifeleti and attended by all staff. His text was based on Psalm 100:1-5 "***A Hymn of Praise***". His essential message was to praise God for the blessing of a new year and the blessings to come.

## February

The February prayer devotion was led by the Vava'u Team: Mrs. Tepola Fonongaloa (Vava'u Officer in Charge) and Fifita Fili (Driver). Their text was based on: James 1:4 *"Make sure that your endurance carries you all the way without failing, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."* They highlighted the importance of consistent hard work, doing everything in a good natured spirit.

## March

The monthly devotion for the last month of the quarter was led by staff members Tevita Kafoa (VIP Driver) and Konikotia Taunaholo (Accountant). Their text was based on John 13:35 *"If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciple."* They emphasized the importance of love as the driving force behind all good work.

*Below: Staff of the Ombudsman Office gathered for the monthly devotion.*



## Training

The Office of Ombudsman conducts in-house training for staff members to enhance relevant knowledge on outputs of the office, principles of good governance and solutions to issues that may assist the staff and the work of the Office. During the quarter, staff members took part in three in-

house trainings as follows;

### i. Corporate Plan

The corporate plan is an annual output of the Office. Mr. Roman Vaihu (DOI) and Mrs. Luseane 'Aho (Senior Accountant) led an all-staff training elaborating on the significance of the corporate plan to the operations of the Office of the Ombudsman.

### ii. Legal

This training session was targeted at legal and professional staff and led by the Ombudsman, 'Alisi Numa Taumoepeau KC, and Director of Investigations, Roman Vaihu on 13 March. Participating staff consisted of Mr. 'Etivoni Pifeleti (Investigating Officer), Mr. 'Ofa Tu'ionetoa (Investigating Officer), Miss Hengihengi Fifita (Returning scholar), Mr. Hamani Topui (Legal Officer) and Miss 'Akanesi Fa'otusia (Assistant Secretary & Law student).

The session was split into two parts. Part 1 was led by the Ombudsman focusing on the *Ombudsman Act 2001*. Part 2 was led by the Director of Investigation focusing on the investigation manual which guides investigations of the Office of the Ombudsman. The session spurred spirited legal discussions and is only the beginning of a series of legal staff training.

## Outreach

Outreach programs are carried out with the purpose of raising awareness on the functions of the Office of Ombudsman and how our operations can assist the people of the Kingdom. There were 2 outreaches programs carried out in this quarter;

### i. Ombudsman Regional Pacific Outreach

Members of Ombuds Offices throughout the Pacific region came together in an online zoom on 27 February. Participants included Ombuds Offices of Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, Cook Islands, Timor-Leste and New Zealand. The zoom was centred on sharing the progress and significance of outreach activities and how it facilitates awareness of the operations of the Ombudsman Office.



From left to right: Sisilia Tokai (Senior Assistant Secretary), Sateki Ahio (D/CEO) & Akanesi Faotusia (Assistant Secretary).

Staff members Mr. Sateki 'Ahio (Deputy CEO), Mrs. Sisilia Tokai (Senior Assistant Secretary), Miss Hengihengi Fitfita (Returning Scholar) and Miss 'Akanesi Fa'otusia (Assistant Secretary) took part in sharing the outreach activities and productivity of the Office of the Ombudsman Tonga.

### ii. Radio Talkback program

Radio talkback programs provide an opportunity for staff members of the Ombudsman Office to engage

with the public in sharing vital information of the operations of the Office and takes awareness to a whole different level. A radio talkback program was conducted on 22 March. The panel included Mr. Roman Vaihu (DOI), and Investigating Officers Mr. Moses Uili and Mr. 'Ofa Tu'ionetoa. Callers asked questions on the functions of the Office.

### iii. Quarterly Newsletters

The Office of the Ombudsman produces newsletters every 3 months publicizing staff events allowing the public to stay engaged with the activities of the Office.

### Themes of the Quarter

Monthly themes are used to guide the operations of the Ombudsman Office.

**January—Rule of Law**

**February—Integrity**

**March—Good Governance**

### Public Holidays of the Quarter

**January 1** — New Year's Day

**March 29** — Good Friday

**March 29 to April 1**— Easter Weekend

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