

## 10 Years to 2030: Shift the Power, Raise the Ambition

Between October 27th to the 30th, [Oceania Connect 2020](#) conference was held with the aim to empower and encourage change to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030. Organised by the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), the Council for International Development in New Zealand (CID), and the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO), the conference was a first for the international development networks in the region.

The Diplomacy Training Program (DTP), its partners and alumni hosted sessions on the impact of Covid-19 on Indigenous communities, and human rights and development challenges in West Papua.



One of the sessions hosted by DTP and [Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact \(AIPP\)](#) explored the challenges for Indigenous peoples during Covid-19 including the embedded racism and systemic barriers that have arisen and accentuated during this time, including discrimination and marginalisation.

Examples were shared of how Indigenous communities responded, organised themselves, utilised their resources, knowledge and power to ensure that “no one is left behind,” such as implementing effective lockdowns, quarantine arrangements, providing relief aid and contributing food to communities during the pandemic. The stories told from DTP’s Indigenous partners (AIPP’s Gam. A Shimray) and alumna Serama Gudjula (Eastern-Kuku Yalanji and Darnley Island woman) highlighted the importance of recognising Indigenous peoples rights in effective responses to COVID-19. This also applied to achieving the SDGs and closing the gap with current reality we are in today and the future the SDGs promise.

The session on accelerating the SDGs in West Papua, featuring DTP alumna [Rut Ohoiwutun](#), highlighted the problems with the current development approach which is destroying rainforests through logging and palm oil, displacing populations and contributing to global warming. The loss of traditional knowledge, languages and cultures, access to clean water and environment is collateral damage. This kind of development denies any prospect of achieving the SDGs.

From the other half of the island, PNG, DTP alumni Emmanuel “Manu” Peni ([Save the Sepik](#)) and [Jonathan Mesulam](#) ([Solwara Warriors](#)) led a session that looked at the Melanesian Resource Governance for Sustainability. Highlighting how traditional knowledge and practices have been and continues to be in use to sustainably use natural resources, their session illustrated how vital these practices are for sustainability and conservation today and the need for indigenous peoples to reclaim power over these.