Pacific Islands
Justice for the Poor

Promoting equity and managing conflict in development.

About the Program
Justice for the Poor (J4P) is a global research and development program that aims to make development projects more effective and equitable, and to manage the risk of serious conflict between the various stakeholders. It recognises that justice systems play an important role in shaping the distribution of rights, responsibilities and power, but also that there is often limited understanding of how equitable justice systems emerge, and how they can be supported. It operates in countries where engaging with multiple justice systems is a key development challenge.

An important focus of J4P is on building local capacity to both carry out research and to use that research to inform and implement justice reform. It promotes dialogue about justice and development issues and works in active partnership with local research organisations, and with World Bank and donor initiatives.

In the Pacific, the program is based in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste. Where common themes are identified across the region, the program carries out cross-country comparative work. Current themes include the development of land and natural resources, gender, the use of community-based paralegals, and multiple systems of law and justice.

At the global level, publications and events such as an international symposium on customary justice and legal pluralism in post-conflict and fragile states aim to share knowledge, foster ideas and create a community of practice.

J4P activities include:
• Comparative research on hybrid courts in Melanesia;
• Assisting with the development of legal empowerment strategies to support the Vanuatu Law and Justice Sector Strategy;
• Examining how business engages with customary authorities in Solomon Islands;
• Technical assistance to the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs in Solomon Islands on its Justice Delivered Locally initiative;
• Research in Timor-Leste into how decisions are made about the distribution of benefits from developments. The findings of this research will be used to improve how grievances are handled; and
• Research on how customary landholding groups negotiate land leases in Vanuatu.