

**Multi-Country Reflection On  
UNDP Pacific Parliamentary Projects:  
Fiji Islands, Republic of Marshall Islands,  
Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea**

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*The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The purpose of this report is to review good practice and lessons learned across all four of the UNDP's Pacific parliamentary support projects under evaluation: Fiji, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, and PNG. It is intended to inform future program design and assistance decisions within Country Offices and the Regional Office, as well as to contribute more generally to regional learning in the area of parliamentary assistance. This Report does not dwell on the specificities of each separate Project, but draws out lessons from the Projects, individually, or comparatively where they have done similar things with varying results. It is recognised that success and failure are influenced by often unique local conditions, and the Report attempts to reflect these contextual factors in its analysis of the advantages, challenges and disadvantages posed by the various strategies and activities tried out in the projects.
2. The Evaluation Team examined three projects run by the UNDP Fiji Multi-Country Office and one run by the UNDP PNG Country Office. Each of the Projects has been in place for different periods – Solomon Islands started in 2003, the Marshall Islands in 2005, Fiji in its present form in 2006, and PNG in its preliminary phase in 2005 and in full operation in 2006.

## **OVERVIEW OF PACIFIC PARLIAMENTARY PROJECTS**

3. Chart One summarizes some of the comparative findings of the Evaluation Team. The Team found that initial ownership on the part of the Parliamentary hosts varied considerably, from strong support by the Speaker and Clerk in the Solomon Islands, to varying support in Fiji, to an initial lack of understanding of the parameters of the Project in the Marshall Islands, to a more challenging working relationship in PNG. In addition, the Projects varied in terms of the amount and nature of international legislative expertise that was available to them in the Project Structure: the Solomon Islands again had what proved to be a significant advantage in having a former senior legislative staff person with international contacts in their second Project Manager. Both Fiji and PNG had former senior in-country secretariat people on their Project teams, and the Fiji Project Manager has a good network of international contacts because of his previous role as Inter-Parliamentary Relations Officer.
4. Another important feature, and one that was closely associated with success (as measured by the delivery of functionality enhancing activities and sustainability) was the development of a “signature product” by the Projects. These were activities which were noticed by others, associated with the project in a positive way, and which proved to be useful to stakeholders in achieving their own goals. In Solomon Islands and Fiji these were the Induction Programmes that made the Projects visible to MPs, as well as the new graduates programs and in the Marshall Islands it was the Library and Research Centre. PNG has yet to identify such a product.

<b>Chart One: Summary of Pacific Parliamentary Support Projects</b>				
	<i>Solomon Islands</i>	<i>Marshall Islands</i>	<i>Fiji</i>	<i>PNG</i>
Initial ownership	Yes	No	Yes	No
Int'l expert in pjct leadership	Initially no, then yes	No	No	No
Signature product	Induction & new grads as new delivery system	Library and MP's Resource Centre	Induction & new graduates supplementing staff	None
Ownership increased	Yes (depth, and some spread to comm.. chairs)	Yes, modest increments	Very modest (time constraints)	No
Sustainability of major elements	Yes (incorporation of new staff into Secretariat)	Yes, library and researchers trained, structure adopted	No (insufficient time)	No

5. The four parliamentary strengthening projects under review – in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands and Papua New Guinea<sup>1</sup> – share several common characteristics. The projects use the same rationale for assisting legislatures, they rely on a similar set of policy tools, they draw from a generic list of standards for measuring success, and they are all shaped by a commonly shared strategy for creating and running these programs.
  
6. First, the programs share a common rationale. UNDP is involved in legislative strengthening because it believes that functional legislatures are essential to stable democracies and should play an important role in dealing with poverty, inequality and other societal problems. In this view, legislatures are valued in themselves as democratic institutions and for what they can do if properly developed. More specifically, all these programs seek to strengthen democracy by helping legislatures to become better representative institutions and by strengthening their collective capacities in lawmaking and oversight.
  
7. Second, all have relied on commonly used policy tools to achieve those goals including: motivating legislators through induction/orientation programs and other means to make them more aware of their roles and obligations as representatives, working on capacity problems through staff recruitment and training to make them more capable of supporting legislative functionality, assisting institutions capable of representing diversity and coming to agreement by focusing on developing committee systems able to consider legislation in an informed fashion, developing competence

<sup>1</sup> The commonalties were probably helped along by having been initiated at the same time, by similar groups. This set of programs grew out of a parliamentary conference in Nadi in 2002 where it was decided to conduct eight series legislative needs assessments throughout the region. These four programs resulted from the subsequent negotiations and discussions. TOR

through workshops and other means to enhance skills and policy knowledge, and creating venues to nurture working relationships with other parts of government and civil society.<sup>2</sup>

8. Three, success is measured by program performance measured against a common list of short term and long term goals. The short term goals include process related indicators such as developing a sense of ownership and common commitment from within the legislatures under development, to increases in legislative effectiveness as measured by more informed participation in governing and legislating and advocating for a larger sense of public good. On this latter list are issues of special donor concern including poverty, gender, and HIV/AIDS. Parliamentary stakeholders, for their part, place a high value on project activities which provide practical assistance that helps them to do their jobs. The longer term goals include enhanced prospects for sustaining whatever is achieved and setting parliaments on a trajectory for continued improvement as representative, lawmaking and oversight institutions.
9. Four, these legislative projects—like many other capacity building approaches—is based on a widely followed strategic template. The process begins with a Legislative Needs Assessment (LNA) in which institutional characteristics are examined and stakeholders consulted. This is followed by discussions between UNDP, stakeholders including legislative leaders and the government, and sometimes outside donors. These discussions are supposed to bring together the three essential ingredients: host country political will (and access), the necessary capacity building know-how, and the requisite financial resources. If successful, the resulting agreement lays out a specific program of activities (specifying both means and ends/goals) with which the host country agrees cooperate, the UNDP agrees to operate through a stipulated structure, and outside donors (if involved) agree to support with resources (often dedicated to specifically defined purposes). If no such donors exist, then UNDP can also decide to support it with their own resources. Next comes a “mobilization” stage in which the necessary structures are put into place and delivery begins. The day to day operation of the program follows an annual workplan, which is in turn monitored by UNDP country offices, and an annual review which brings together the principals from the host country, UNDP and donors. Review processes include frequent formative reviews intended to shape program implementation and a final review at the end to derive lessons for subsequent programs. Progress is measured on a continuous basis through quarterly and annual reviews and adjustments are supposed to be made accordingly. At the end of the project period, an overall evaluation is conducted to make judgments about what has been achieved (against goals identified at the outset) and against a number of process and other criteria including sustainability, fidelity to initial plans, effectiveness, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example John Johnson, James Kent and Robert Nakamura, USAID Handbook on Legislative Strengthening.

## GOOD PRACTICE INITIATIVES

### *New graduates programmes*

10. New graduates or young professionals programs were tried in Solomon Islands, Fiji, and Marshall Islands. In these programs, a group of new, university or college graduates are selected for employment by the projects. They are mentored and trained to perform functions on the parliamentary staff and are often cross-trained as well.
  
11. Advantages: In the Solomons and Fiji, these young graduates constituted the delivery system for the parliamentary assistance program by providing—after an initial period of selection and training—direct support for committees, research, library, and a host of other functions.
  - They became the “signature activity” for projects in the Solomons and Fiji and were identified by interviewees as the project activity most were familiar with.
  - Their benefits were delivered relatively quickly, within months, of their deployment.
  - In Solomon Islands, where the young graduates were incorporated on to the Parliamentary staff, they became the means by which project achievements have attained a degree of sustainability.
  
12. Disadvantages: While successful, the projects reviewed suggest the need to consider some prerequisites and disadvantages of the new graduate programs if this modality is to be used in the future:
  - In the Marshall Islands, attempts to recruit new graduates proved futile because of the shortage of such people. Indeed the filling of many government staff positions by expatriates indicates a general shortage of such people.
  - In Fiji, the LNA had identified a problem with the Parliamentary staff in the form of over-reliance on a small core of capable and dedicated staff people. The new graduates program was implemented in an environment where there were already underperforming staff on board. An alternative would have been to focus efforts on choosing promising people on the existing staff and increasing their capacity.
  - A risk of the new graduates strategy is resistance and isolation by the rest of the parliamentary staff. (Some initial resistance was experienced in Solomon Islands and Fiji but seems to have been overcome in both places)
  - While the Solomon Islands PSP achieved sustainability for the new graduates program, this was contingent on the Government creating new staff positions and filling them with the new graduates. This, in turn, made sustainability vulnerable to government inaction and public service recruitment constraints, which had historically been a challenge..
  - A special requirement of successful implementation is that project must have the capacity to mentor and train this staff and have access to other training resources. Fortunately, the Fiji and Solomon Islands PSPs had managers who turned out to be effective mentors, though they had not been selected for those talents.

## ***Induction programmes***

13. Successful induction programs were conducted in Solomon Islands and Fiji. Following elections in 2006 in both countries, a large training programme was almost immediately held for MPs. Resource people were brought in from around the region, and key officials in the national bureaucracy (such as Ombudsmen or Auditors-General) were given speaking slots. A similar program is scheduled for the Marshall Islands and PNG.
14. Advantages: Inductions have several distinct advantages:
- There is MP and leadership demand for the activity, so cooperation is often forthcoming and participation high.
  - They prepare MPs, many of whom are new to their role and unfamiliar with the functions and operations of Parliament, to perform more effectively. This is particularly significant because there is a very high turnover of MPs in many Pacific parliaments. For example, there was more than a 50% turnover of MPs in the last Solomon Islands election, and an even higher number in the last PNG national election.
  - They usually occur in a timely fashion. There is a narrow window of time in which they must be conducted and this focuses the attention and efforts of the various key players (UNDP, the Project, the Secretariat, political leadership, outside donors and participants) on doing what is necessary by the required time.
  - Induction programs serve as venues to cover many substantive issues in a short amount of time. Inductions often include long, varied agendas covering such things as the functions of representatives and committees, codes of conduct, and exposure to societal problems (in health, poverty, education, gender, and so on).

### Challenges:

- Follow through activities are necessary to consolidate the work of inductions.
- Programs may become too long, too diffuse, and too specialized to maintain MPs' attention.
- Unless induction programs are followed up with reinforcing and deepening activities, the lessons transmitted are unlikely to be reflected in MP behaviour.

## ***Support to Public Accounts Committees***

15. Support to public accounts committees were counted as successes in Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands and PNG. Typically, the public accounts committees work with an expert (usually the Auditor General, though in PNG, it was a Project staff member with the requisite skills) and provide a high profile public venue for showcasing findings and recommending corrective actions.
16. Advantages: Project support for PACs have proved useful in a variety of ways:
- When the PAC and Auditor General partnerships occurred, the relationship at best was mutually reinforcing. The capacity of the PAC to command public attention and the Auditor General to bring expertise meant that when their talents were combined the committee and Auditor General together were capable of informed, and potentially politically effective action.

- The results of successful partnerships are often dramatic and widely noticed by the attentive public. This, in turn, brings credit (and for some blame) to the project.

17. Disadvantages: There are some necessary conditions, risks and disadvantages of this approach.

- The partnership worked best in the Solomons where the parliamentary strengthening project was assisting the PAC at the same time that RAMSI and AusAID were assisting an energetic Auditor General. In the Marshall Islands, a less developed Auditor General's office was useful to the PAC and vice versa but the effect was less dramatic. In the case of PNG, the project staff member provided the necessary expertise but there is presently no plan to keep it up once that person leaves.
- Success in PAC activities can produce a political reaction from the Executive whose departments are often the target of PAC efforts. Political pressures from the Government may have led to some changes in PAC activities in Solomon Islands and Marshall Islands.
- Attention to the PAC may come at the expense of efforts to help other committees with greater potential to perform more general oversight functions.

### ***Training for staff***

18. All of the Projects have identified training for staff as a key output, in particular, in order to promote sustainability of outputs. In Solomon Islands, new graduates were given regular training directly by the Project Manager, as well as being sent on a couple of short courses and conferences. In Marshall Islands, the Project Manager has been alert to draw on the local USP campus to provide courses to staff. This approach has been particularly useful on two fronts: (1) almost all *Nitijela* staff have been provided with at least some training, even if it is relatively junior staff doing a simple English language course, as a means of building ownership across the *Nitijela*; and (2) because the courses are run by a university, participants can get a certificate upon completion which promotes greater commitment to the overall training programme.

19. The Marshall Islands Project also made it possible for the Legislative Counsel and staff in the Attorney General's office to enrol in a useful on-line Legislative Drafting Course run by the International Consortium for Law and Development at Boston University School of Law. To strengthen the buy-in to the course's ideas from government more broadly, the team from Boston University were also invited to RMI to undertake a 1-week legislative drafting workshop for key staff and other government stakeholders. Feedback on both activities was very positive from a range of interviewees. The training appears to have laid strong foundations for the Standing Orders review, because it is understood that staff have been taught not only to technical drafting skills, but have also been exposed to issues around critical legal thinking and participatory law-making and are keen to see those ideas integrated into the *Nitijela's* Standing Orders.

### ***Hansard and information management and access***

20. All four of the Pacific parliamentary projects recognised that information management was a key issue that needed to be addressed. For parliamentarians to be able to effectively discharge their law-making and oversight functions, it is essential that they have access to research and library services (including the internet, updated copies of laws, regulations and Hansard, and research assistance if possible). In Fiji, Solomon Islands and Marshall Islands, the projects all made bringing Hansard up to date a key priority. It was an important visible delivery for MPs, many of whom specifically commended the work as being useful for their own purposes. Work has also been done to upload Hansard onto parliamentary website so that the public can also easily access parliamentary debates and documents. Civil society representatives were keen to access such documents, and making Hansard accessible to the media in a timely manner was also recognised as important.
21. In Solomon Islands, the project has gone a step further and already commenced work on implementing a comprehensive information management system. The Project purchased a system called ISYS, which is a computerised document management tool. The team is currently working to upload all Hansards, reports and scanned daily newspaper clippings into the system. Significantly, ISYS allows for full-text searching of documents. When operational, it will allow parliamentary staff and MPs to search a wide range of local documents for quite specific data. At a practical level, storing documents electronically is useful in humid climates where people reported that documents have a tendency to deteriorate quickly. If ISYS is eventually uploaded onto the new parliamentary website it will be a useful tool for the public as well.

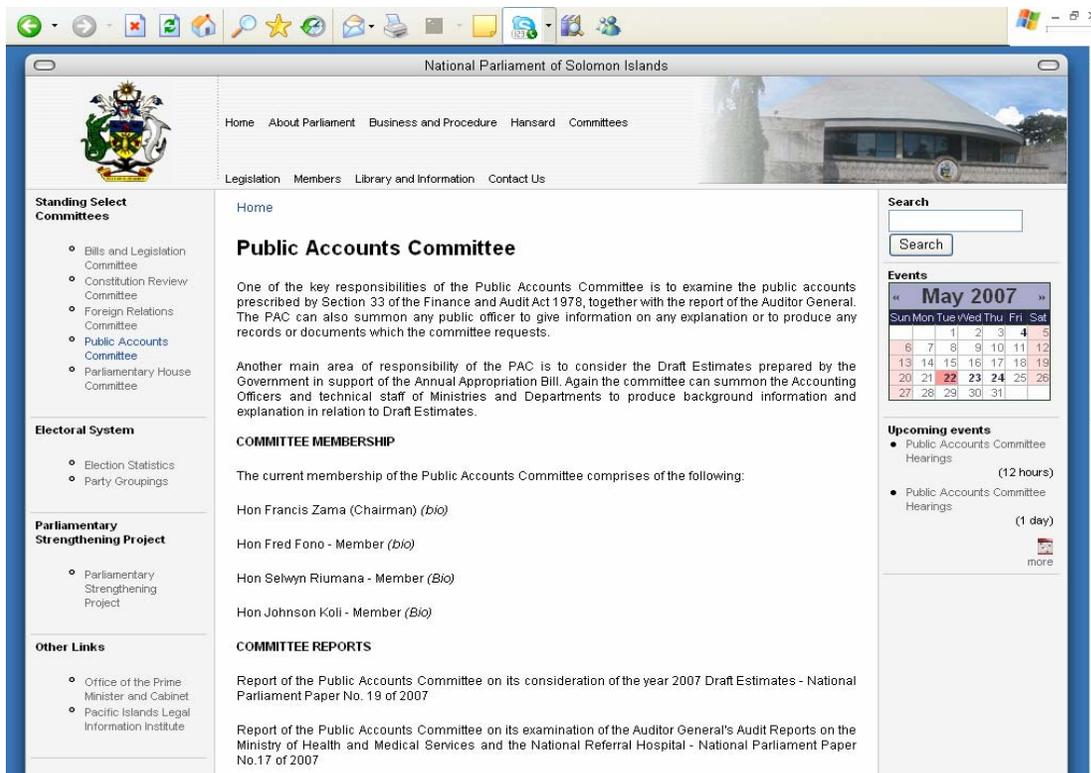
### ***Public outreach and parliamentary websites***

22. Each of the Project Designs recognises that in addition to strengthening the legislative and oversight roles of parliaments and MPs, the Projects also need to support the representative role. Although in the early stages of the Projects, the primary attention has been on strengthening the law-making process and oversight, nonetheless some innovative outreach work has commenced. For example, in Marshall Islands, the Project has facilitated three Parliamentary Roundtables, whereby the leadership of the *Nitijela* met with: (i) Permanent Secretaries of Ministries; (ii) heads of agencies and statutory bodies; and (iii) members of civil society and the media. While the Marshallese pay a lot of attention to politics (and to *Nitijela* debates which are broadcast on the radio), the actual institution and its powers are remote to many. The Roundtables were mentioned by several people as the first time they had had the opportunity to formally interact with many of the other attendees. There was considerable interest in undertaking the Roundtables more regularly and trying to involve a broader range of people, including non-Majuro based citizens.
23. The Marshall Islands Project also made the development of the parliamentary website a priority as a means of communicating information to the local public, the media, other government departments. It also served as a means for communicating with the large population of Marshallese who live outside of the Marshall Islands. In common with many other Pacific island countries, thousands of Marshallese actually live off-

island, but are still entitled to vote in local elections. As such, it was recognised early on that it was important to ensure that off-island voters could nonetheless follow the parliamentary process and debates, so that they could make an informed vote. In this context, in particular, the Project Manager made sure that parliamentary debates were uploaded as audio files, so that voters can now download each day's discussions in the Chamber at their convenience.



24. The Solomon Islands Project has also made the development of a parliamentary website a priority for outreach efforts. The website has been designed so that it is simple to update, because it was recognised that sustainability and usefulness will depend on the website being kept current. Special web design tools were used to maximise the ease of updating the site, and all of the graduate staff working at the Secretariat have been trained on updating. One notable feature of the site is the parliamentary calendar that has been included (see right sidebar below), which is now being utilised to flag upcoming parliamentary sessions, committee meetings and the like.



## ***Working with other parliamentary assistance organisations***

25. No single organization can deliver an effective programme of parliamentary support and there are a number of bodies working within the region whose experience and resources can be usefully drawn upon. The Solomon Islands and Fiji programmes drew effectively on regional and international organisations to supplement training resources – both in terms of expert resources who were sourced and financial support. In particular, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) have been brought into training programmes to very good effect. To a lesser extent, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) could also be tapped in Solomon Islands and PNG.
26. Notably, it can sometimes be difficult for non-Commonwealth parliaments, most of which are found in the North Pacific, to access international parliamentary assistance. Alternative approaches needs to be explored to tap support for such projects in future. The UNDP's own resources, including the Pacific Centre and UNDP global parliamentary support networks can be very useful in this context, it terms of providing additional technical expertise and developing alternate networks. Moreover, the projects themselves have schooled a cadre of project personnel who have now developed considerable expertise in the difficult business of managing such enterprises. These personnel should also be drawn upon in the future when practical expertise is needed to assist programs in other places. It is essential that good links are maintained with relevant international and regional organizations.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### ***Project Design Template***

27. The Evaluation Team understand that UNDP uses a template to develop its legislative assistance programs. And while this template performs some useful functions (in creating opportunities to build support and legitimating subsequent activities), the evaluators believe that it does not serve as an adequate guide to the development and management of actual project operations and should be supplemented with a broader understanding of how programs actually develop.
28. The template divides the process of putting together a legislative development project in a sequential manner which sharply distinguishes activities at each phase and demarcates areas of responsibility and expertise.
- The LNA is the expert phase: Expert analysis of problems facing parliament and identifies areas for programming.
  - The participatory planning phase: Consultation with stakeholders, recognition of different goals and common approach, outlines commitments of parties and produces ownership of the project plan. This is a political negotiation phase intended produce a sense of ownership
  - Project plan: A signed contract specifying activities, dividing labour, outlining obligations.
  - Implementation:
    - Project staff carry out the plan through annual workplans, and are overseen by a combination of monthly, quarterly, and annual project meetings.
    - Problems are identified and dealt with through this oversight process.
29. In two cases (Marshalls and PNG) the plan did not produce the required sense of “ownership.” In two other cases (Fiji and Solomon Islands) project activities started with ownership but were stalled for particular reasons:
- Fiji by slow start up process and the rather vague nature of the program itself
  - Solomon Islands by project management problems.
30. Another problem lies with the division of labour in the template. The LNA is treated as the expert phase, and the Project planning phase is the political discussion agreement building phase. The Evaluation Team believe that there should be more comparative legislative expertise employed in project design. And the designs themselves should be more attuned to the targets of opportunity offered by the institutional and political arrangements of the places where the projects are implemented.

### ***Project Implementation***

#### *High Level Engagement by UNDP Offices*

31. In two of the projects—Solomon Islands and Fiji—important decisions were made at the Tripartite Review by the Resident Representative. In both cases, these decisions—which had been discussed beforehand and were acceptable to the other

parties (parliamentary leadership, and other stakeholders including donors) – broke the logjam of inaction which had characterized those projects previously. The TPR (or its equivalent) seems to have been a key oversight/monitoring/decision making committee that has functioned to produce the desired results. The convening of principals at TPRs means that those involved are empowered to make broad decisions, which enables decisions to be made in a timely, decisive manner. TPRs are a forum for dealing with problems that have “matured” to a point where there is enough support for actions to resolve them.

32. The nature of parliamentary projects, which usually involve engagement with the most senior decision-makers in the country, mean that they often demand more sustained high level engagement by the UNDP to move issues forward. Parliamentary work is sensitive and involves senior national political figures, such that high level engagement can be crucial to promoting continuing buy-in and support. High level involvement can be invaluable in catalysing major decisions and to provide support for Project Managers in relation to more complex activities, such as organisational reform. High level UNDP engagement is a mechanism for flagging the importance of certain activities to senior officials. While UNDP staff handle most operational decision-making and backstopping for projects, nonetheless, they should be supported and encouraged to rely on senior managers for support as necessary, because there will be times when high level attention is an essential requirement for dealing with project issues.

*Better communication between UNDP and Project Teams*

33. The Evaluation Team realizes that the relations between Project teams and their UNDP managers often involve difficulties over: the time that elapses between making requests for and the release of funds, between the needs for timely delivery and the requirements of following organizational procedures. Nevertheless, there are a number of areas where the gap can and should be narrowed. In many of the projects there were the inevitable discontinuities between UNDP country office staff and the Project, often as a result of staff turnover or reassignment. Transitions would be facilitated by better record keeping so that new managers can get up to speed more seamlessly without having to revisit decisions already made.
34. In other areas—processing of compensation and “hard” delivery dates imposed by legislative calendars— accommodation or anticipation of project priorities for urgency would facilitate the achievement of common goals. While the Evaluation Team appreciates the maxim “where you stand depends on where you sit”, the Team also believes that a better system of communications than simple reliance on official emails can be implemented. Face to face meetings where possible, and telephone conferences where necessary, would be useful. Presently, the project reporting structures envision a demanding regimen of meetings at the project level (sometimes as many as 16 a year), but relatively infrequent contacts between MCO and projects its personnel oversee and whose resources they control.

### Communication between Project Teams

35. The induction process first tried in the Solomons has had a serendipitous result in that it has acquainted the three MCO project teams with one another. The Solomon Islands team assisted the Fiji team in its subsequent and also successful induction and both will be useful to the Marshall Islands should that induction develop. While there are no formal processes to facilitate interaction between the project managers, they have taken advantage of the informal opportunities to meet and discuss presented by regional conferences, email and other means. This is a potentially significant development as the number of UNDP legislative projects increases in the region. These project teams now have considerable on the ground experience with legislative development and could, in the aggregate, provide UNDP with the legislative expertise that is currently lacking in the country offices.
36. In the Evaluation Team's exit briefing with the Fiji MCO, the Resident Representative noted the expense of international legislative expertise as a reason why it is used so sparingly in program design and implementation. One possible means of dealing with this acknowledged deficiency would be a combination of "grow your own" with supplementation from international experts simultaneously advising several projects. Moreover, using experienced project managers to assist in design (as in using the Solomons PSP manager in Fiji) proved a practice worth emulating elsewhere as the store of experience grows.
37. Much of success can be explained by effective management. It is a rare skill but elements of it can be taught. The Evaluation Team urges recognizing that legislative project management is a skill that can be taught. There are now good project managers who have already dealt with the tasks that will confront new managers. Projects all most confront a host of generic problems (in starting up, in building support, in clearing bureaucratic hurdles), and some generic lessons can be usefully taught. Create induction processes for those who will manage programs. Provide projects with experienced assistance at start up. Work out more action friendly templates and procedures for project-UNDP relationships based lessons gained.

### Maintaining support

38. As indicated above and in the individual country chapters, the Evaluation Team observed that ownership of the projects on the part of parliamentary political and staff leaders was not always deep, consistent, nor stable. The Team observed that the building and expansion of the sense of ownership was a feature of successful projects. The following strategies were observed:
- **Orchestration:** Start with things that show fast results.
  - **Marketing:** Development of signature activities and publicizing achievements.
  - **Communicating:** Giving credit to political and administrative authorities and partner organizations.
  - **Time on task:** The recognition of project manager that building, widening and maintaining support is a critical goal of project operations and key to sustainability.

*Visible, quick delivery - signature activities*

39. An important lesson from Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands and Fiji is the importance of showing quick results and of developing signature activities by which projects become known. All these projects were very much on probation at the point they were established. Whatever sense of ownership their hosts had was provisional and in some cases virtually non-existent.
40. The more successful projects defined some immediate goals, for example, providing direct assistance to committees and others using the new graduates in the Solomons and Fiji, and the library and research centre in the Marshalls. They delivered on these goals often in the first few months, and then subsequently hung several subsequent project activities on the structures created. So, the newly created website in Solomon Islands was subsequently updated by information from the new graduates operating in committees and elsewhere. The Library in the Marshall Islands has been established alongside a Research Centre with computer facilities for use by members.
41. Another signature product, discussed elsewhere, is the induction process. Here the benefits to members are more direct, though in the form of a short but intense period. It has the advantage of introducing new members to the project and therefore becoming one of their first memories of their lives as legislators.

## **INTEGRATING CROSS-CUTTING DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

42. All of the countries of the Pacific have endorsed the Millennium Declaration<sup>3</sup> and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To this end, national development plans, poverty reduction strategies and the like have been developed across the region which identify key development goals for achievement. It is recognised that Parliaments have a crucial role to play in national and local development activities. Parliamentarians – with respect to their law-making, oversight and representative functions – can actively engage in the development and implementation pro-poor laws and policies. However, realizing that potential has been problematic. Just as there is a gap between the constitutional responsibilities of parliaments and their practical capacities, there is sometimes a gap between what they might do to redeem broad commitments and what they are capable of and willing to do. In this respect, it is essential that work with parliaments and MPs on these issues recognises local opportunities and constraints and is responsive to the local context.
43. The Evaluation Team understands that the integration of development issues into parliamentary work can be a sensitive area, in that the priorities of different stakeholders – donors, government, elected members of parliament – may not always be the same. The Evaluation Team also realizes that a commitment to democratic rule means accepting the right of elected representatives to make own choices. At the same time, international assistance also has its own rationale and commitments to fulfil. Successful development programs balance and accommodate those tensions by developing participatory relationships and working approaches.

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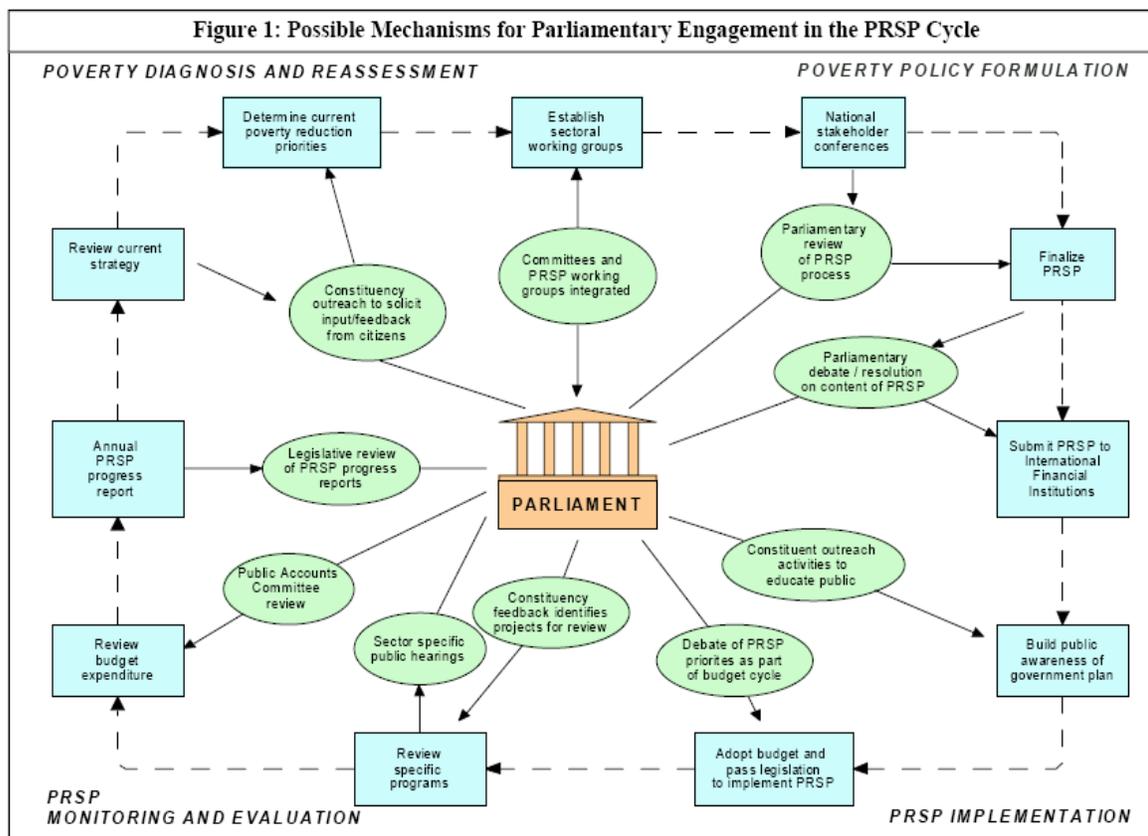
<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/millennium.htm>.

## ***Integration of MDGs***

44. In 2000, all of the countries of the Pacific endorsed the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. In support of this commitment, the UNDP's activities in the Pacific are directed at poverty reduction in line with the Millennium Development Goals. Support to parliamentary development can be effective in supporting the achievement of the MDGs because MPs represent the very constituents who are supposed to benefit from the MDGs. They understand their communities and can be supported to represent their interests so that development is more equitable and effective.
45. Although the Executive has a key role in implementing poverty reduction policies, the Parliament can play a key role in overseeing such programmes to ensure they actually work. At a very basic level, projects can provide training on the MDGs in terms of achievements and comparative understanding of how other parliaments have promoted the MDGs, and consider including permanent secretaries and secretariat staff so they know what to do if/when the parliament asks for such information. In 2005, the UNDP GOLD Programme released the publication, "Building Political Governance Frameworks: Advancing the Millennium Development Goals in the Pacific Islands through Parliamentary Strengthening". That report details a number of recommendations for promoting the MDGs and should be read and actioned (at least over time) by Pacific parliamentary projects.
46. Parliamentary support projects can support the MDGs by helping legislatures, should they choose to do so, to hold the government accountable for policy commitments and the use of budget resources to meet poverty reduction goals. In particular, the budget analysis capacity of the parliaments' budget committee can be strengthened to help it ensure that national allocations match MDG plans and commitments. The same capacity can be reinforced in health and education committees of parliament to ensure that progress toward MDG achievements are on course and appropriately resourced. It may also be useful to review Parliament's rules and procedures with a view to promoting substantive issues such as the MDGs as well as clarifying procedural issues. These interventions can strengthen the national democratic process of oversight and accountability for MDGs. In some countries, such as the Philippines, a specific MDGs parliamentary committee has even been established. MDG country reports submitted to strong, functioning parliaments for scrutiny mean that governments will be held better accountable for their poverty reduction commitments, budget allocations will be scrutinized to ensure allocation of budget resources in most effective possible support to MDGs.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.undp.org/governance/mdgs.htm>



**Note:** Multiple actors are already involved in each stage of the PRSP process - civil society, IFIs, local government, the ministry of Finance, Sector-specific Ministries, even the academic community each have specific roles to play. In an effort to highlight just a few of the points at which a national legislature might strengthen the PRSP through their own activity, this diagram has been highly simplified. Though the basic order of the PRSP process has been preserved, the actions of other players has been omitted.

Extract from Hubli, K.S & Mandaville, A. (2004) "Parliaments and the PRSP Process", WBI, p.5

## Integration of human rights

47. Part V of the Millennium Declaration, which all Pacific Island Governments have endorsed, specifically commits governments to "spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms..."<sup>5</sup> The UNDP is also committed to implementing a human rights based approach to development (HRBA). Parliaments play a crucial role in the promotion and protection of human rights. Parliament is the state institution representing the people and through which it participates in the management of public affairs and therefore has a special responsibility to ensuring respect for human rights.<sup>6</sup> UNDP projects need to integrate an HRBA approach into their design and implementation.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/millennium.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/iss-e/hr-law.htm>

48. The Office of the Commission for Human Rights has produced the “Human Rights Handbook for Parliamentarians” which could be used by parliamentary support Project Managers when developing workplans, training activities and other interventions.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, in cooperation with the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, has produced a set of training modules for use by MPs wishing to be more effectively promote and protect human rights.<sup>8</sup> Both resources recognise that parliaments and individual MPs can be supported to discharge their human rights responsibilities through a variety of mechanisms. For example, Standing Orders can be amended to require that when Bills are referred to committee, committee reports must comment on whether they are human rights compliant. Committee support can also be targeted as a priority towards committees with a specific human rights mandate if they exist, or at least to the commonly-found Foreign Affairs Committee which is usually responsible for considering the ratification of international human rights treaties. Project staff can also provide research to MPs on human rights issues and developments and ensure that training activities include human rights issues.

### ***Integration of gender***

49. Experience has shown that there is often resistance to integrating gender into parliamentary activities. Nonetheless, if undertaken sensitively and constructively, work can very usefully be done in this area at all stages of project implementation. Parliamentarians should act as the voice for all women and men in society, especially vulnerable groups. At the outset, it should be recognised that gender mainstreaming in parliaments does not only relate to increasing the representation of women in politics or establishing women-centred laws and committees. This was a misunderstanding the Evaluation Team encountered in the field. UNDP projects must promote a genuinely mainstreamed *gender* perspective by analyzing the different impacts that parliamentary institution and its functions, organisation and members have on men *and* women.<sup>9</sup> Gender does not mean women only and training activities need to recognise this. High level support from the UNDP in this vein is also helpful.

50. At a very practical level, working towards gender equity can be incorporated into the work of parliamentarians through a number of less controversial venues than elections and the ballot box. Most obviously, induction training can kick-start some of the activities around gender. In the PNG Project, a Gender Advisor has actually been appointed who will be responsible for some such activities. Additionally, gender can be considered in committee work, for example, by using Standing Orders reviews to consider the requirement that gender impact analyses be attached to Bills and considered by committees when they are reviewing Bills or budget documents. Budget and expenditure committees could also be briefed to specifically ask questions about the impact of proposed policies/programmes on women and men (and children).

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.ohchr.org/english/about/publications/docs/ipu\\_dh.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/english/about/publications/docs/ipu_dh.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/publications/hradvocacy/cpa\\_chri\\_human\\_rights\\_module.pdf](http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/publications/hradvocacy/cpa_chri_human_rights_module.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.un.org.vn/undp/projects/vie02007/Downloads/Gender%20EN%2026.6.pdf>

51. Public outreach activities could also be targeted to ensure they include specific training for women and women's groups on the parliamentary committee system and how they can interact with parliament to promote their own issues. For example, both PNG and Solomon Islands anticipate that a CEDAW Report will be submitted by Government in the next 12 months or so. Women's groups could be supported to work with MPs and Parliament to raise awareness around the Reports, and to encourage the Reports to be tabled in Parliament and considered in detail in committee. Exposure study tours of parliament for women could also be run, Roundtables could be organised between women's groups and parliamentarians and mentoring programs could be piloted whereby interested women could be mentored by male MPs and/or encouraged to volunteer to be support staff for MPs (as a work experience opportunity).

### ***Integration of conflict programming***

52. It is notable that some of the Pacific parliaments which are implementing UNDP projects have suffered from instability and conflict over the last decade. In 2006, Fiji underwent a coup and Solomon Islands suffered from rioting following national elections. In this context, it is very significant that over the last decade there has been an increasing global recognition that Parliamentarians can play an important role as peace-builders.<sup>10</sup> Strong parliaments have vital contributions to make to peace-building and the democratisation process. After conflict, however, parliaments are weak in relation to the executive branch, armed groups and other non-state actors.

53. Building enduring peace and democracy requires timely and dedicated support to the development of parliaments and MPs' capacity to act as peace-builders. As UNDP's 'Guidelines for the International Community on Parliaments, Crisis Prevention and Recovery'<sup>11</sup> make clear, the international community needs to increase its support to, and liaison with, parliaments in conflict-affected countries. Otherwise, investments in elections and transitional processes risk being undermined. It is notable, though disappointing, that prior to the coup in Fiji, the Pacific Centre was working with the Fiji MCO to follow up earlier work with Members of Parliament regarding the Peace, Stability and Development Analysis completed by the Centre in 2006. MPs had recognised the importance of discussing issues around Fiji's peace and stability.

54. More work could be done with parliamentarians in support of conflict programming. For example, when committees are being chosen for priority support, consideration could be given to targeting a law and order or security sector committee. Members of Parliament themselves could also be given training on mediation, dialogue and communication skills, so that they can play a constructive role in handling divisive issues. Support for increased public outreach and information dissemination could also be useful, because conflict can sometimes be exacerbated if information is not available which the public can use to understand the parliamentary decision-making process.

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<sup>10</sup> UNDP Initiative on Strengthening the Role of Parliaments in Crisis Prevention and Recovery, papers from Brussels Donors Conference (19-21 April 2006), <http://www.parlcpr.undp.org/brusselconf.htm>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.parlcpr.undp.org/docs/GPPS\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.parlcpr.undp.org/docs/GPPS_Guidelines.pdf)