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## FAQs on Solomon Islands Practice Parliament for Women

### 1. What is a Practice Parliament?

Practice Parliament is an activity that national Parliaments can undertake as part of their citizen engagement and awareness raising activity, and is carried out in two phases during a workshop. The Practice Parliament 'training' is a "learning by doing" activity for groups that have an interest in the role of their national parliament, and in developing their skills relevant to public policy and law reform. The activity provides an opportunity for participants to apply these new skills immediately during the Practice Parliament session usually held on the final day of the workshop where participants play the role of national members of their Parliament.

### 2. Why is there a Practice Parliament for women?

The Pacific as a region, has the lowest number of female parliamentarians in the world. Solomon Islands currently has only one women MP out of a total of 50 members of parliament (MPs).

The idea of a Practice Parliament for Women drew on the positive experiences reported from youth parliament forums in the region and elsewhere. The idea was first proposed in 2010, at a Pacific Islands Forum Small Island States Meeting on "Advancing Women's Participation in Decision Making Processes", where delegations endorsed the convening of a Practice Parliament for Women in their respective countries.

### 3. How many Practice Parliaments for Women have since been organised in Solomon Islands and the region?

Since 2011, UNDP in partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) have facilitated Practice Parliaments for women leaders in Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Tuvalu, and Nauru.

In 2014, the Solomon Islands Parliament, through the UNDP Parliamentary strengthening project, successfully facilitated a 4-day Practice Parliament session for 40 women from 8 provinces in Solomon Islands. A concerted effort was made to target women from rural as well as urban areas.

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#### 4. What feedback have been received from women who have participated in previous practice parliaments?

Feedback from the Practice Parliaments for Women has been positive. Women participants commented on their increased confidence in being a part of parliament, and a number of women indicated their interest in running as candidates in the future, either in local government or for their national parliament.

Subsequently, at least four women involved in the Practice Parliaments – Honourable Maere Tekanene in Kiribati, Honourable Hilda Heine in Marshall Islands, Honourable Loujaya Toni in Papua New Guinea, and Honourable Gabrissa Hartman in Nauru – were elected to their national legislature. Three were appointed as Ministers in their Governments. In February 2016, Honourable Hilda Heine made history by becoming the first ever female head of State/Government of an independent Pacific country.

#### 5. Who can participate in a Practice Parliament for Women?

This exercise is primarily directed at:

- Women who are considering standing for the national elections or local elections;
- Women community leaders who wish to develop their leadership, advocacy and policy skills;
- Women who have a commitment to supporting women/gender equality, in partnership with national / local government bodies.
- Consideration was made to women that have provincial representation, as well as the inclusion of young women of all diversity.

Learning from the last practice parliament for women in Solomon Islands, 50 women participants will be invited through the National Council of Women's list of registered women interested to stand as election candidates.

Efforts were made to ensure the participants are from diverse backgrounds and with a mix of young and older women. Special efforts were made to target women leaders from outside of Honiara municipality/province, as well as targeting special groups.

A template application form was designed by the national partners and distributed through the national Council of Women networks, as well as public calls through the newspapers, radio, and targeted e-mail messages.

#### 6. How can the public tune in and watch the Practice Parliament session?

A live broadcast of the Practice Parliament session on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018 will be done by the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, and on Telekom Television. The session will also be livestreamed on the National Parliament of Solomon Islands Facebook page.

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## 7. Who are the partners for this year's Practice Parliament for women?

The workshop is being co-funded by the UNDP Pacific office in Fiji, and the National Parliament of Solomon Islands.

The UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji funding is through two Pacific regional projects under the Effective Governance programme, namely the **Strengthening Legislatures in the Pacific (SLIP)** Project funded by the Government of Japan, and the **Pacific Parliamentary Effectiveness Initiative (PPEI)**, funded by the Government of New Zealand.

National partners for the 2018 Practice Parliament are the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, the Ministry of Women Youth Children and Family Affairs, the National Council of Women, Vois Blo Mere, Women's Rights Action Movement, Young Women Christian Association, UNWomen and the Young Women's Parliamentary Group.

## 8. What issues will be discussed for this years Practice Parliament for Women?

The 5-day agenda was developed in a robust and participatory way, with the first four days being the training aspect of the workshop, and the fifth day as the Practice Parliament session for the participants.

Aside from learning about the important role of Parliament in law making, oversight, and representation, the women participants will also be exposed to topics around elections, political parties, and key development issues, and experiences of women campaigning during national and provincial elections.

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Countries	Number of MPs	Number of Women
Fiji	50	8
Kiribati	46	3
Niue	20	5
PNG	111	0
Palau	29*	4
Cook Islands	24	4
Samoa	50	5***
Tuvalu	15	1
Tonga	26**	2
Marshall Islands	33	3
Solomon Islands	50	2
Nauru	19	2
Tokelau	20	3
Federated States of Micronesia	14	0
Vanuatu	52	0

\* This number refers to both Houses of Congress in Palau – the House of Delegates with 16 members, and the House of Senate with 13 members.

\*\* This includes the elected representatives of the Nobles (9 members) and the people (17 members).

\*\*\* This includes the 4 elected women representatives together with the next highest polling woman included as part of Samoa’s ‘special measure’ for 10% of womens representation in Parliament.

Source: <https://www.pacwip.org/women-mps/national-women-mps/>

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### For more Information:

1. Duane Baiabe, Chief Media officer, National Parliament of the Solomon Islands. E: [duane.baiabe@parliament.gov.sb](mailto:duane.baiabe@parliament.gov.sb), P: (677) 28520 Ext: 109, M (677) 8794203
2. Isikeli Valemei, Programme Associate, Effective Governance Team, UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji. E: [Isikeli.valemei@undp.org](mailto:Isikeli.valemei@undp.org)
3. Jone Raqauqau, Communications Associate, Effective Governance Team, UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji. E: [jone.raqauqau@undp.org](mailto:jone.raqauqau@undp.org), P: (679) 3227 552, M: (679) 9936 744

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