

FAST FACTS

United Nations
Development Programme



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Support to Pacific Parliaments

Parliaments play a fundamental role in establishing peace and stability, protecting human rights, overseeing national governance institutions and processes, and ensuring national compliance with international obligations. Parliamentarians – with respect to their law-making, oversight and representative functions – can actively engage in the development and implementation of pro-poor laws and policies and the promotion of democratic governance.

Parliamentary development activities, which form part of UNDP's work in the area of democratic governance, recognise that support to the Executive needs to be complemented with support to parliaments and parliamentarians to discharge their functions and duties effectively. The interaction of these governance institutions together offer equal checks and balances and avoid arbitrary use and abuse of power.

National parliamentary support projects

Recognising the importance of the legislative branch as a partner in development, UNDP, since 2003, has mobilised national parliamentary support projects in Palau, Kiribati, Tonga, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Fiji (now closed) and Papua New Guinea (now closed). These projects were designed to respond to critical capacity constraints identified through a series of country-based legislative needs assessments (LNAs) undertaken by UNDP in partnership with Pacific parliaments from 2001-2002.

UNDP is also currently developing parliamentary projects in Samoa and Vanuatu and is exploring options for support to Cook Islands. All of UNDP's Parliamentary Support Projects have been designed to respond to their local context. Broadly, all of the Projects have aimed to ensure capacity is built amongst Members of Parliament (MPs), as well as their Secretariat staff, in order to (i) support the

MATTERS OF FACT

- **12** Pacific Parliaments supported
- **12** MPs induction workshops conducted
- **404** Parliamentarians have increased understanding of their legislative, oversight and representative functions
- **20** Parliamentary Standing Committee increased the effectiveness of their work following the provision of specialised and targeted capacity development

Parliament to more effectively play its oversight, representative and legislative functions, and (ii) develop the public's awareness and commitment to democratic rights and responsibilities.

Training for MPs

In supporting MPs to more effectively perform their constitutional duties, UNDP has partnered with a range of parliamentary organisations to run post-election Induction Seminars for MPs, covering both procedural and substantive development issues, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), climate change, youth, gender and HIV. UNDP has also organised more focused training workshops on procedural issues such as Committee oversight, as well as on topics such as the UN Convention Against Corruption. The latter trainings directly led to ratification of UNCAC in Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia.

Committee Strengthening

UNDP has provided key support to strengthen the effectiveness of parliamentary committees, recognising that the oversight role of parliament is crucial to a well-functioning democracy. Initially, Public Accounts Committees, which are responsible for the oversight of Government expenditures, were targeted for priority

support, but in more recent years, MDGs-related committees have also been supported. For example, in Solomon Islands, the Project supported the Foreign Affairs Committee to undertake public hearings on the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, and supported an ad hoc inquiry into the National Referral Hospital. In Tonga, targeted support is being provided to the Social Services Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Environment and Climate Change Committee.

Public Outreach

Complementing efforts to strengthen the legislative and oversight work of Pacific Parliaments, UNDP has also supported Parliamentary Secretariats to strengthen the effectiveness of their parliamentary outreach. For example, quarterly Parliament newsletters have been published in Kiribati and Annual Parliamentary Open Days have been held in Kiribati and Solomon Islands. School visits, radio and TV outreach have been facilitated and supported in a number of Parliaments. To provide strategic guidance for such activities, UNDP has also supported the development of Parliamentary Public Education and Outreach Strategies.

Fostering Parliamentary Partnerships

In recent years, UNDP has developed very strong partnerships with various development partners in the Pacific that either have active engagements with Pacific Parliaments or have specialized expertise including: the Commonwealth Secretariat; the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; the Pacific Commonwealth Governance Facility; the Secretariat of the Pacific Community; East West Center, Hawaii; University of Guam; University of the South Pacific; Hawaii State Legislature; Centre for Democratic Institutions; and the Australian and New Zealand Parliaments.

In particular, UNDP has developed a strong partnership with the Australian Parliament through AusAID's Pacific Public Sector Linkages Programme (PSLP). Under PSLP, the Australian Parliament (with support from UNDP) secured two grants worth \$700,000 over 3 years, to support parliamentary support activities in Tonga, Kiribati and Tuvalu under the first grant, and Cook Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu under the second grant. The bulk of these activities will focus on the provision of technical training of MPs and parliamentary staff. The activities are implemented in close partnership with UNDP's own parliamentary support activities, to maximize ongoing impact. The PSLP grants are also being used to strengthen the Australian-Pacific Parliament's Twinning Programme,

Supporting Women in Pacific Parliaments

The Pacific Island Forum countries (not incl. Fiji) have only 3.5% women MPs, the lowest average in the world. Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Micronesia and Nauru have no women in Parliament, and Vanuatu, PNG, Tonga, Marshall Islands and Cook Islands have only one female MP each.

In an effort to address this problem, UNDP worked with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) to support considerable work to raise awareness with policy-makers about the need for temporary special measures (TSM) to promote women in politics. In partnership with PIFS, UNDP supported a sub-regional consultation on TSM in Melanesia in 2009 and a Small Island States consultation in 2010. UNDP and PIFS also developed publications on TSM options for the Pacific countries and on campaigning tips for women.

In a very novel initiative, in 2011, UNDP and PIFS supported the first ever Mock Parliaments for Women, in Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Palau. In each Mock Parliament, women participated from throughout the country, learning about parliamentary work, issues, as well as campaigning tactics. Their training culminated in an actual Mock Parliament in the chamber of the House. Following the Mock Parliaments, one new women MP was elected in both Kiribati and Marshall Islands – both of whom were involved in the Mock Parliaments.

whereby Australian state/territory parliaments have been twinned with Pacific parliaments to promote more sustainable support partnerships for delivering transformational results.

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