



FIRST REPORT

Solomon Islands National Parliamentary Strengthening Project Phase 2: 2008 - 2012

January – June 2011



Project ID:	00053845
Duration:	<u>April 2008 – March 2012</u>
CPAP Outcome:	SI demonstrates and upholds Forum principles of good leadership and accountability; SI is aware of and protects human rights and makes available mechanisms to claim them.
Total Budget:	US\$ 1,909,434
RAMSI/AusAID:	US\$ 1,509,434
UNDP:	US\$ 400,000
Total Received:	US\$ 1,909,434

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Preface

This is the first of 3 reports for 2011 mandated by the Parliamentary Strengthening Project Document. Two supplements will be issued later in the year. 2011 is the final full year of the 2nd phase of the project. Preparations for a 3rd phase were agreed by the Project Oversight Committee (POC) held in April marking 2011 as a transition year. Transition is therefore the context in which all project activities are currently taking place.

It is convenient in this first report to include activities in May/June because this includes the successful conclusion of the parallel drafting of the '5 Year Parliamentary Strategy 2012-2016' and the '3rd phase of the Parliamentary Strengthening Project 2012-2015' texts as agreed by the Project Oversight Committee in April. These related documents are important milestones in the last year of the present project phase, and their drafting provides a natural reporting break.

The project now produces monthly activity reports for circulation to all stakeholders (May/June appears as **Annex 3**) so this report should contain no factual surprises. It is intended to be primarily forward looking, focusing on issues and challenges faced by the Parliament, National Parliament Office, and the project over the reporting period within the general transition context. It seeks to extract 'lessons learned' by Objective to enable the project's direction of travel to continue to be well managed. The narrative has been kept brief; it is supplemented by a range of annexed documents for handy reference.

Finally, we are grateful to RAMSI and UNDP, the Solomon Islands Government, other project stakeholders, members of POC, and the Members and staff of Parliament for their continuing support.

Sir Allan Kemakeza KBE

National Project Director and Speaker of the National Parliament

Taeasi Sanga

Clerk to the Parliament

John Patterson

Project Manager and Chief Technical Advisor

Overview, challenges, responses

Overview

The Parliamentary Support Project (PSP) provides personnel and financial support to almost all departments of the National Parliament Office (NPO) and seeks to act as an agent of positive change throughout Parliament.

Project rationale

It may be helpful, first, to remind ourselves of the underlying project rationale as originally conceived.

In 1994, the Parliamentary House Committee, reflecting the work a year earlier of a delegation from the Solomon Islands to the 1993 Pacific Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, produced a report recommending Parliament's autonomy from the Executive branch. Autonomy in this context was conceived as freedom to set administrative, service, and human resource policies and to resource these with a separate budget.

That report was picked up in 2001 by the author of the Legislative Needs Assessment (LNA), 'Rebuilding Parliamentary Rule Post-Conflict', from which the PSP sprang three years later. The subsequent 'Communiqué' of the 'Consultative Workshop of Solomon Islands Parliamentarians' (20 February, 2008) acknowledged 'the ideal of independence of the parliament' and recommended that Parliament and Executive together 'take appropriate steps to ensure the autonomy of the National Parliament Office in budgetary and staffing matters and ensure that Parliament is appropriately resourced.'

Eleven years on, the practical autonomy of Parliament is no closer, but the need for it as an indicator of progress in democratic development has never been more urgently felt. Operationally, too, there is a more realistic prospect for such autonomy succeeding than in 2001 or, indeed, 2008. The demonstrable achievements of Parliament since 2004, the current embedding of a full Parliamentary Strategy, and in particular the potential of the current NPO staff make this clear, though serious challenges remain.

Much of the project's work in 2011 –the last full year of the present project phase – has been focused therefore on stimulating the conditions within which Parliamentary autonomy can be achieved by 2015-16, subject to the exercise of political will. This is not only a practical aspiration but provides clear

intellectual coherence to parliamentary development activities which is firmly rooted in Parliament's long standing initiatives and linked strongly to the original rationale for the project.

The goals of the '5 Year Parliamentary Strategy 2012-2016' and associated '5 Year Implementation Road Map', together with the coordinated project document for the 3rd phase of PSP, focus explicitly on the objective of enabling Parliamentary autonomy. Successfully implemented, Parliamentary autonomy will be an important landmark in the development of a maturing Solomon Islands democracy.

The LNA author noted in 2001 that the then Parliament had 'clearly failed to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities in ensuring good governance.' Progress has been made since then but significant challenges remain in what is in several ways a fragile organization. Support from SIG and the international community to Parliament in order to ensure the continued development of its proper role as the centre of the nation's political life will therefore remain essential for the foreseeable future.¹

Challenges

NPO

Throughout late 2009 and 2010, the project was maintained without a project manager. Nevertheless it managed to sustain a number of significant NPO activities, for example, the MPs' induction program post-General Election, though activity levels dipped as compared to 2009 and Parliament hardly sat. On the other hand, no project reports were produced which is indicative of significant capacity reduction.

It is clear that the National Parliament Office (NPO) rises well to specific programme requirements. The underlying structural challenges for the organisation relate to the need to embed sound, transparent, modern corporate management, project skills and programme management. Success on those fronts will enable NPO departments to assume and to sustain a progressively more substantial streamed workload which, for Parliament to develop further, will be essential.

While such capacity development will not be achieved fully in the absence of autonomy, and an associated root and branch reconsideration of the resources available currently to the NPO will become necessary in the medium term, qualitative structural improvements can be achieved within the present arrangements. Sustained progress in the NPO's development and continued PSP project success are predicated on a number of internally based conditions:

¹ Quotations in this section are drawn from, UNDP, 'Legislative Needs Assessment: Solomon Islands' (2001)

- First, a culture of good basic management habits should be strongly learned and encouraged as the default mode of activity. For example, clear management structures and practices, and a powerful culture of supportive and challenging staff management need further development.
- Second, while it is essential to safeguard and develop the progress of the Committee Secretariat, the NPO must strive to provide the conditions in which all other departments of the Office can similarly flourish. Currently there is a noticeable imbalance in the quality of service provided across NPO departments, which in the long run is not sustainable.
- Third, the NPO contains talented and motivated individuals. The day to day management of the project can and should be effectively nationalised from April 2012. This can happen however only if a corporate structure is built to harness individual capacities within a progressively challenging and stimulating working environment. If this challenge is not met then there is some danger that progress will stall, frustration will set in, and talented people will leave leading to a spiral of decline.

NPO and Parliament

The NPO and PSP exist to serve the Members of Parliament in performance of their core legislative and oversight activities. The better the NPO performs, the better Parliament will be able to serve the people of Solomon Islands and contribute to improving the culture of overall governance. It is vital to deepening a culture of democracy that Parliament demonstrates progressive relevance to the lives of citizens.

Parliament can only achieve these goals with well developed oversight and legislative processes and structures, and by setting demanding standards of national leadership: for example, clear and thorough processes of legislative review, a strong sense of national ethical leadership set out in a transparent code of conduct, and a structure of highly active and vigilant select committees. There is some way to go before these goals are fully met.

Response

All key activities for 2011 – and those envisaged in the new 2012-16 Strategy and the 3rd phase project document - are designed to ensure that the challenges outlined above are understood and that the process of tackling them vigorously and building remedial management and resource structures is initiated. Full success will come only in future years. The next project report will elaborate on the main objectives of

the new Strategy and the 3rd phase, but two further immediate conditions for future success deserve to be highlighted here.

First, the project is currently directly executed (DEX) by the UNDP which means that much of its day to day operational activity is a collaborative effort with the local UN Joint Presence Sub office. The future phase of the project envisages a move from direct execution to a form of national execution (NIM) in which a significantly greater degree of administrative and financial responsibility is taken in-house and operated by the NPO.

The move to NIM is in principle eminently desirable and in our opinion the NPO has the capacity and ambition to make this a realistic and successful course of action. But it is vital that the mandatory preliminary **micro-audit** is undertaken quickly through the UNDP to identify the level of national execution freedom appropriate initially for the NPO. This should now be a UNDP priority in order to provide the project and the NPO with sufficient time to ensure that relevant resourcing arrangements can be put in place well before the end of 2011. (In parallel, the NPO should explore with SIG what scope exists for operational freedoms within the current administrative arrangements and prior to formal autonomy being agreed.)

Similarly, full time nationalised project management is envisaged from the start of the 3rd phase of the project in April 2012. For this to succeed, sound bridging arrangements are required in the form of a **part time national deputy project manager** post prefiguring the change envisaged from full time international to national management. Such an appointment was mooted in 2010 but not prosecuted to successful completion. A part time national appointment now needs to be pursued vigorously by the UNDP and the project with the objective of filling such a post in the immediate future.

Conclusion

The challenges outlined above mean that it is too soon to contemplate withdrawing UNDP project support from the National Parliament of Solomon Islands. This has been recognised by the PSP Project Oversight Committee. Not one of the many stakeholders to whom we talked in the course of the extensive consultations over the Strategy and 3rd phase wished to see the project close. On the contrary, the project is evidently well regarded and highly valued, and there is a clear consensus amongst those to whom we talked that it should continue beyond the current phase.

At the same time, the project needs to continue to be vigilant that it is stimulating activities which in all cases contribute directly to consolidating and developing the capacity of the Parliament to become self-sustaining and with progressively reducing external support over a realistic and consensual timescale.

Both Strategy and 3rd phase (not to mention present activities) are designed specifically to focus on this challenge and contain a suite of objectives, activities, and outputs directed at enhancing the outcome of a Parliament which is separate from the Executive, politically relevant, largely operationally self-sustaining, modern, outward looking, inclusive, and clearly the sole primary focus of national political debate for the vast majority of Solomon Islanders.

Achieving this will take more time with the full fruits unlikely to be seen before 2015-16. That such a goal can be contemplated at all however is a tribute to what has already been achieved and, more, to Parliament's continuing great potential.



'Consolidating and developing capacity': staff accountability and communications

Lisi Vave, Human Resources and Strategy Support Manager

Parliamentary Strengthening Project Team: presentation to the Speaker, April 2011

Objective 1: Effective project management, monitoring and evaluation

Project staff

Project Manager/ Chief Technical Advisor (1.1.1).²

Project management

The Project Manager/Chief Technical Advisor (PM/CTA) joined on 4 January, sixteen months after the departure of his predecessor (1.1.1).

He conducted an early review of the project in the light of the ‘UNDP Mid-Term Evaluation’ completed in late 2010 (Report agreed by POC, 19 April 2011). All project and NPO staff were individually interviewed and a project staff capacity building activity was held. Action to strengthen the NPO’s strategic, corporate, and management functions were identified as a priority (1.4.1) and was agreed with the Speaker and management of the NPO.

Regular monthly reporting of project activity was initiated from January onwards with bulletins issued to all project stakeholders. The PM/CTA has held informal meetings with stakeholders (1.4.3).

A POC was held on 19 April to approve transition actions from the present project phase to a future (3rd) phase from April 2012 – March 2015; and action to establish a wider, parliamentary, context for that phase – drafting of a first ‘5 Year Parliamentary Strategy 2012 – 2016’ - was agreed (1.4.2; **Annex 7**).

In the case of the Solomon Islands, there is an exceptionally close relationship between Parliament and the Executive with the NPO technically a department of the Executive with the Prime Minister being the responsible minister. This very close relationship encroaches somewhat on modern notions of the separation of powers. The rationale for both Strategy and new project phase is therefore an autonomous parliament which is administratively, financially, and operationally separate from the Executive branch.

Consultancies were let to assist in the drafting of a Strategy and project document. Initial drafts were submitted on 25 May and revised drafts have been circulated to the Parliamentary House Committee and UNDP respectively for further action (1.5.1).

The objective is to have the Strategy formally agreed and in place as quickly as possible; and for the UNDP to secure funding arrangements sufficient for a 3rd phase of the Project well before the end of the calendar year.

² References are to activity and sub-activity lines in the ‘PSP Annual Work Plan 2011’ (**Annex 2**)

Further output comment

- A great deal of care has been taken to ensure that the project has worked collaboratively with our colleagues in the New South Wales Twinning project and this has resulted in the successful completion of a number of inward and outward staff attachments in the reporting period.
- The project has reached out to the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI), Australian National University, with which collaborative work is underway with more activities in prospect.
- Initial discussions with CDI have been held on collaborative activities to support Members in the context of a 3rd Project phase (1.3.3).
- Both the NSW Twinning project and the CDI are proposed for representation on a 3rd phase Project Oversight Committee (1.3), though this remains to be discussed with them.
- A mission from Pacific Community ICT staff was hosted from 14-20 June to initiate assistance with the drafting of a NPSI ICT policy and explore ways in which ICT can assist all Parliament activities in the specific context of the new 5 Year Strategy and Implementation Plan. (1.3.4). A draft is underway and will be circulated in due course.
- Contact has been established with the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) with the objective of exploring the possibility of the NPSI joining (1.3.2). There is a possibility that the NPSI could bid to host the 3rd regional IPU conference in 2012.
- The project is always keen to seek opportunities to collaborate within the UN Family and work with UNWOMEN is a notable aspect of activities in this reporting period (see report under Objective 6).
- A substantial amount of work will be required of the Project to support the NPO in negotiating a progressive transfer of staff from the UNDP to the SIG payroll as a part of the staged nationalisation of the support to Parliament process (1.3.5).

Objective 2: Strengthened procedural support services

Project staff

Budget provision for one procedural post (2.1.3)

Standing Orders

NPO/Project work on this output has two main thrusts: first, is a review and implementation of Standing Orders (2.2); second, support to the development of a procedural office within the Secretariat (2.1.2).

A new set of draft Standing Orders (SOs), commissioned from a consultant, has been in development over a number of years and was completed prior to this reporting period. The draft Orders are more extensive and in some respects more technically complex than the current set whose origins lie in the provisions for the Parliament made through subordinate legislation of the UK Parliament in 1978 (with subsequent revisions).

Any attempt at wholesale replacement of the present Standing Orders with the new version would prove impractical and there has been no implementation activity since the last draft in 2010.

A proposal has been made and accepted by the Parliamentary House Committee (PHC) to promote piecemeal introduction of new Standing Order provisions on a priority basis over the life of the present Parliament. Filtering in appropriate amendments in this way provides an opportunity for staff and Members to reflect on each suggested amendment. The Secretariat now meets regularly with the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, and PM/CTA to conduct an initial selection of proposed new SOs for the PHC to discuss, a process designed to promote the progressive renewal of the Standing Orders.

Procedures Office

Support to the development of a Procedures Office (PO) within the Secretariat, under the direction of the Director-Secretariat, is a main plank of NSW Twinning project support, and budget provision from the PSP for staff costs and facilitation support has been made available.

The creation of a PO will involve, first, the staffing of a dedicated office; three posts are budgeted for between the NPO and the PSP. Second, the design of an easily accessible 'bank' of material which provides ready access to the core procedural 'memory' of Parliament and which is updated regularly.

A good start has been made on the latter with the mission earlier in the year of a procedural officer from the New South Wales Parliament under the auspices of the Twinning project. This relationship will continue in future. Some useful proposals were made and one result has been a rationalisation of the procedural material currently on the Office shared drives by the NPO ICT Department which will facilitate future expansion and make for easier access.

Procedural advice is highly specialised. For the immediate future, therefore, the present staff arrangements for the provision of procedural services will continue. Later in the year, and dependent on other staff moves, recruitment may be initiated.

Further output comment

- The Clerk commissioned a Parliamentary Calendar from the Secretariat and this has now been drafted (2.1.4). It is essential to making full use of such a tool that the Executive participates in using the Calendar and the intention is that talks with the Prime Minister's Office to achieve this goal will be initiated immediately.
- Discussions with the Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) about the development of legislative Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) will be initiated this year (2.1.5). Though of great help to parliamentarians in assessing the likely efficacy of legislative proposals, the drafting of RIAs is a matter primarily for the Executive. The prospects for achieving RIAs will therefore require discussion with the AGC and it is likely that progress will be incremental and will extend into a 3rd Project phase.
- A 'Parliamentary Precincts Bill' (2.2.2) has been drafted by the Secretariat which is a notable achievement. Progress is currently being made in revising it preparatory to presentation to the PHC for discussion and promotion. The intention is to involve the Attorney General's Chambers fully in the process of revision in order to ensure good progress and a consensual approach.
- The PHC has a draft 'Code of Ethical Conduct' before it (2.2.1).

Objective 3: Strengthened committee services

Project staff

Three Legal Officers/Committee Secretaries.

Committees

The importance of select committees to the effectiveness of modern democratic parliaments is not in dispute. Under appropriate circumstances oversight by committees can have a tangible effect on enriching public policies which are of direct relevance to the electorate. But the appropriate structure and substance is important to the degree of policy impact which they may be able to achieve.

Structure

For example, where committees are permanent not *ad hoc*, and where their structure parallels government departments, then parliamentary influence on policy is likely to be strengthened. The permanency of a committee allows it to return to enquiry subjects to follow up on recommendations made to government more easily than an *ad hoc* body.

Where no select committee exists at all to inquire into a particular sector of government then parliaments have difficulty in making informed policy contributions or exercising effective oversight. Effective oversight is also dependant on committees having the power to select inquiry subjects for themselves, and not rely solely on referrals by government.

Substance

The selection of topics for inquiry is important in the impact which any committee may have on policy. Where policy issues are contested, controversial, or new, and where such issues engage diverse and numerous publics within an electorate, then parliament's policy activity through committee work is likely prove particularly important.³ In the context of the Solomon Islands Parliament, recent examples of both structural and substantial considerations and developments can be identified.

The main overall point about committees however is that these have a crucial role to play in the fundamental issue of *parliament's continuing relevance to the electorate*. Constitutional prerogatives by themselves are insufficient to establish this relevance fully. An appropriate structure of committees set up

³ Olsen, David and Michael Mezey (1991) eds., Legislatures in the Policy Process, Cambridge: CUP, pp.208, 210, 214

to parallel government departments, and a vigorous and thorough, politically relevant, and well publicised programmes of activities on the part of such committees will assist immeasurably over time in deepening the roots parliament has within society and strengthening its overall relevance to the lives of citizens.

We suggest that it is against this background that the present position of committees in the National Parliament of Solomon Islands should be assessed.

Challenges

It is a given that NPSI committee work has undergone a renaissance in recent years. While this is unarguable and welcome, a comparison across time reveals some interesting challenges (3.1, 3.1.2).

First, by no means all committees meet frequently or (annually) at all. For example, the Constitution Review Committee did not meet at all in 2010; the Foreign Relations Committee met only once. Second, a majority of meetings for some committees tend to be focussed on one inquiry, for example, the Foreign Relations Committee's 2009 meetings for the 'RAMSI' inquiry. Third, in quantitative terms, from a notable high in 2009, 2010 witnessed a sharp decline in standing select committee meetings overall – from 129 to 30.⁴ The score of committee meetings in 2011, so far, has been modest.⁵

This recent lessening of activity coincided with a general election year (August 2010). The absence of much government legislative activity since then would also have had some effect on certain committees, Bills and Legislation Committee in particular. It is not clear however the *degree* to which these factors should be relevant to declining committee activity levels overall. There are few more important indicators of the health of a democratic parliament than select committee activity so it is important to monitor the state of committees carefully and routinely. Where activity levels are falling the reasons should be understood and remedial action taken.

There is of course an intimate and direct relation between government activity and the activity of parliamentary oversight organs. It is not particularly unusual in a parliament at a early stage of its development to see the relative absence of government legislative initiatives having a depressant effect on the activity level of committees.

There may be a tendency however for Parliament to rely overly on government initiatives when considering committee work. The Standing Orders under which committees work provide sufficient

⁴ Source: draft 3rd Phase PSP Project Document, version 27 June 2011. Excludes Special Select Committees, Standing Order 68 (3), (6); and Standing Order 73

⁵ In 2011, the Public Accounts Committee met on 38 occasions; and the Parliamentary House Committee on 6. No other committees have met so far

freedoms to meet on their own initiative;⁶ and when Parliament is adjourned.⁷ Exercising those freedoms with progressively more vigour will be an excellent indication of a maturing parliamentary culture. The staff of the Committee Secretariat has a particular responsibility - with the essential leadership of the Chairs of committees - in stimulating such activity. In particular, committees should meet between plenary sessions.

Successes

It is therefore good to report that the Foreign Relations Committee staff are taking a major initiative in planning a 2 day workshop for the committee and relevant stakeholders, including SIG, in the immediate future which is designed in part to map a work programme for the committee over the course of the present parliament.

Another particularly positive development was the performance earlier in the year of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in its examination of the government's Estimates (Appropriations Bill 2011). These hearings have been described by the Auditor General (PAC Secretary) as the best to date.



'Oversight in action': Challenge - questioning from the Public Accounts Committee

Public hearing on the Government's 2011 Budget Estimates, March 2011

⁶ Public Accounts Committee, SO 69 (1) (h); Parliamentary House Committee, SO 70 (1)(a)-(f); Bills and Legislation Committee, SO 71(f); Constitution Review Committee, SO71A(a); Foreign Relations Committee, SO 71B.

⁷ SO 72(2)



‘Oversight in action’: Response - Ministry of Finance officials responding to the Public Accounts Committee

Public hearing on the Government’s 2011 Budget Estimates, March 2011

Ways forward

NPSI committees work well in comparison with a number of parliaments, and at their best stand comparison with select committees in any parliament. A true measure of committee performance overall however is meeting regularity and quality report production. By those measures, NPSI committee activity is in general unfortunately failing currently to live up to its very considerable potential.

A number of initiatives need to be taken forward swiftly to reverse the trend identified above:

- One solution lies with the development of a more driving management style in approaching committee scheduling. This is something that the Secretariat can influence, indeed is responsible for. But increasing activity levels will be achieved only with the active leadership of the committee members themselves, in particular the Chairs.
- Second, each committee should have a rolling inquiry programme on a permanent basis in the day to day ownership of the Committee Secretary and Chair. These programmes should be publically available, published on the Parliament’s website, actively promoted by the Parliament’s new

Media Officer when in post, and eventually included in the Parliamentary Calendar which is currently being developed (see report for Objective 2).

- Third, consideration should be given to regular meetings of all committee Chairs in order to promote a sense of solidarity in what is a key part of the parliamentary structure. Once the three new select committees (Police and National Security, Health and Medical Services, and Education and Human Resources Training) are ready to meet, the Speaker might consider convening such a meeting.

We are able to report that measures are now under active consideration on all these fronts and will be reported on next time

Even if such measures stimulate increased levels of committee activity in the medium term however, we consider that there will be a continuing need for Parliament to invest resources and energy for the foreseeable future to ensure that this important area of activity continues to move forward. In a very real sense the broad reputation of any modern democratic parliament as the political fulcrum of the nation depends upon the success of its select committee 'brand'. Consequently the proposals for a 3rd project phase from 2012 place committees and their continued development at the heart of activities.

Further output comment

- The PSP and the Secretariat proposed, and the Clerk and Speaker accepted, that a new **Chairs of Committee Group** under the Speaker's chairmanship should be set up to provide cohesion to the operations of committees in the NPSI. A detailed TOR has been drawn up.
- The Parliament has embraced the Executive's proposals for 3 new committees, as noted above (3.3.1). The PHC reported on this development and the point was made strongly in the report that sufficient resources had to be made available by the government for those purposes if the initiative was to succeed.⁸ In addition, the new TORs should enable the committees to select their work programme independent of government.
- A short Secretariat professional development 'retreat' is at the planning stage (3.2.4).
- A 'Committee Guidebook' covering administrative and other procedural advice for Secretariat use is substantially complete and will be published in the near future (3.2.1).

⁸ NP-Paper No.13/2011, Chapter 5, Recommendation 2, page 13

Objective 4: Strengthened information services

Project staff

Two Hansard Principal Reporters; one ICT Officer; one Media Officer; one temporary (3 month) Library Data Input Officer.

Information Services

‘Information services’ comprises Hansard, Library, ICT, and the Media Office. The latter has yet to begin operations but a new Media Officer and a Camera Operator (SIG funded) have been selected in the last few weeks. In all these areas the PSP has played a major role in pushing forward as noted below and will continue to do so.

Hansard

In the recent past the Hansard Department has exhibited a number of serious structural and operational challenges and consequently has received priority attention in the reporting period. A comprehensive NPO/PSP Review of Hansard was undertaken from February to May and a ‘Summary Report’ issued on 15 May containing a number of far reaching recommendations which have been accepted by the Clerk (4.1.1, 2). (The Report may be found at **Annex 6**).

Action on the recommendations has begun swiftly and a cross-departmental **Hansard Support Committee** held its first meeting on 14 June to oversee and assist with their implementation. It will meet fortnightly. Amongst many actions to be taken, Hansard management arrangements have been overhauled; serious work on style and other manuals has begun; an external mentor from the Parliament of New Zealand will arrive for an initial visit on 25 July (requested by PSP through the New South Wales Twinning project); the physical location of Hansard will change in due course.

The Review recommendations are set within the frame of a tight but manageable timetable spread over the next year. It is likely that Hansard will relocate to the space currently occupied by the Library in the course of 2012.

The Review Team is confident that, subject to sound implementation, the recommended actions will result in an improved and cost effective service operating to a higher operational standard than is currently the case and enjoying improved morale and management confidence.

Hansard equipment was reviewed and renewals procured where required (4.1.2).

Library

The Library is the ‘Cinderella’ service of the Office: it has no adequate location within the NPO organisational structure, no dedicated budget, no acquisition policy, a poor stock (with no exact total of items), staff who require to leave specific Library duties when the House is sitting, and a less than optimal location. It is used much less by Members than is desirable, and has at present to share space with ICT and Secretariat staff (until early 2012 when the new Members’ office block opens and the Secretariat and ICT relocate). This position is unsustainable.

On a positive note, the Library enjoys the services of two talented and well motivated staff who have maintained morale and forward impetus in trying circumstances and who remain eager to improve the impact of this vital parliamentary service.⁹ Both are undergoing further professional library studies locally (4.3.1). A temporary member of staff has been appointed through the PSP for 3 months from June 2011 to assist with a backlog of material to be filed electronically (4.3.5).

The Senior Librarian outlined the present unsatisfactory situation at the June Management Group meeting chaired by the Speaker and was asked to produce a business case for improving the Library (4.3.3). This has been done, was considered and accepted in June by the Executive Group which has asked for a Review of the Library along the lines of that carried out for Hansard earlier in the year by the Director-Secretariat and the PM/CTA. The Review will focus on identifying the conditions in which a modern parliamentary research library can be created. It is hoped that this work can start in mid to late July and finish in September/October. It is likely that the Library will relocate to the space currently occupied by Hansard in the course of 2012.

ICT

Overview

The most significant structural development has been the creation of a cross departmental **ICT Steering Committee** under the chairmanship of a Secretariat member.

⁹ Senior Librarian and Library Assistant

The role of the Committee, which meets fortnightly, is to provide management with advice on a rational framework for future ICT developments in Parliament, and to work closely with the ICT Officers in operational matters.

The Committee's work plan includes ensuring the speedy creation and acceptance of a comprehensive Parliamentary ICT policy, and scoping work for a National Parliament Office intranet facility. The Committee and the PSP have sought to work on these tasks with the SIG ICT Support Unit (relational issues with SIG ICT resources: presentation to the Committee in early June), the ICT Project of the Pacific Community (4.2.2, ICT policy: inward visit 14 – 20 June), and the ICT Manager of the New South Wales Twinning project (4.2.3, intranet: visit scheduled for late July). The rationalisation of assistance offered to the NPSI is a major task of the Committee in order to avoid duplication of effort and ensure that assistance and support is targeted according to locally identified priorities.

Operations

In May, the ICT Department took delivery and began installation of 28 computers, a number of UPS units, and associated equipment for Members and staff requested in 2010 after procurement delays were unblocked (4.2.5,6). Procurement for a new telephone system with additional, much needed capacity is underway (4.2.4).

The Department provides an essential and much valued service to all departments of the NPO. For example, ICT staff:

- Maintain the shared drives on which all staff rely, but the Secretariat in particular.
- Assist with the rationalisation of the files of the Procedures Office.
- Arranged the provision of a lap top in the Chamber during sittings to ease the provision of procedural advice to the Speaker and the Clerk.
- Provide computer capacity to the Opposition and Independent Offices.
- Oversees the ICT for the new Members' office building.
- Provide essential back up to the UN Joint Presence Sub office when required, and subject to Parliament's priority demands.

Currently the two man team is based in the Library which is unsatisfactory and a new secure location will be found for them, probably in the new Members' Office building from 2012.

Media Office

Parliament has reached a point in its development where the services of a dedicated Media Officer are required to ensure that all activities including, plenary sittings, committee meetings, civic education events, and generally all aspects of Parliamentary life, are properly presented to the public within an agreed and well thought through Communications Strategy. In addition, development of an in-house capacity to produce material for TV and radio is required to reduce current outsourcing costs. Cameras have been supplied by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and will be utilised for this purpose. Competitive boards were held for (a) Media Officer and (b) Camera operator (SIG funded) positions in May and June and offers have been made to the successful candidates.

This is largely new territory for the Parliament which has never had a dedicated Media Officer, and time will be required for staff to integrate their work with a Media Plan and to utilise the facility fully. The successful candidate will require further professional training, and expectations of the post's impact across parliamentary activity over time will need to be carefully calibrated.

Despite the successful candidate having yet to take up her post full time, an early start has been made with the immediate drafting of a communications and media plan for consideration by the group taking forward the forthcoming 'Parliament-Stakeholders Programme' workshop on 29 and 30 June.

Objective 5: Strengthened corporate services

Project staff

Human Resources and Strategy Support Manager; Budget provision for a Corporate and Human Resources Support Officer.

Priority of corporate services

The PSP has supported the NPO and the UNDP in organising the drafting and processing of a new fully comprehensive ‘5 Year Parliament Strategy 2012-2016’ together with an associated ‘5 Year Implementation Plan’ detailing the roll out of activities over the Plan period (5.1). This has absorbed a considerable proportion of PSP energies over this reporting period and represents a major step forward for the Parliament which at the time of writing remains to consider and accept the Strategy.

At the same time, such an initiative poses considerable challenges for the NPO. It is the first such full Strategy here. Without drafting that seeks to reflect as accurately as possible Parliament’s own aspirations and careful preparation of structure and staff, the introduction and roll out of so major a document could prove problematic.

With this in mind, the Strategy has self-consciously sought to absorb and base itself on prior NPO corporate work where that has seemed sensible and appropriate. The objective has been to move forward with modernisation as challengingly as seems appropriate but in the full light of what has gone before taking careful account of local priorities, the organic integrity of Parliament, and the way Parliament wishes to operate.

In particular, full account has been taken of the ‘National Parliament of Solomon Islands: Corporate Plan 2008-2012’. This was not a full strategic plan as commonly understood as it lacked objectives. It was also focussed on the NPO and not the Members and Parliament as a whole. Nevertheless, it has the imprimatur of Parliament and was an entirely appropriate and excellent point of departure for the Strategy drafting exercise. Another relevant contextual source was the ‘Report of the 2010 National Parliament Office Strategic Planning Retreat’, held 6-9 May 2010. Finally, the ‘PSP Annual Work Plan 2011’ also provided a corpus of activities from which to draw strategic ideas.

In addition, prior to drafting great care was taken to consult as widely as possible, both in Parliament and outside from a range of key stakeholders, including the Speaker, Parliamentary House Committee, Prime Minister, Leader of the Official Opposition, Leader of the Independent Members, Chief Justice, the heads

of other legal bodies, heads of oversight and accountability bodies, and many other individuals and groups.

In addition, and as detailed in the next section (*NPO Management*), a number of significant preparatory structural management and administrative changes in the National Parliament Office were implemented ahead of drafting in order to ensure, so far as possible, that the NPO would be fully prepared to receive and operationalize the Strategy and Implementation Road Map from 2012 onwards. Most importantly, the creation of the **Strategy Support Unit** provides a specific driver for the changes of organisational culture implicit in the Strategy.

Certain associated staff changes and training arrangements have been made also. For example, a new HR and Corporate Support Officer post has been created; the present HR Manager's role was expanded to include strategy support; relevant training has been requested from the New South Wales Parliament Twinning project for the Deputy Clerk and HR and SS Manager from 25 July; a locally sourced change management seminar will be arranged for key NPO senior staff. More training and support will be offered as appropriate.

NPO management

The Project assisted the National Parliament Office (NPO) to review and conduct a restructuring of the management of the Office (5.1.5, **Annex 5**). This was designed to modernise arrangements and, as noted, to assist in the eventual roll out and successful implementation of the Strategy and to reflect the design of the new project phase from 2012.

A NPO board (**Executive Group**) was established to meet weekly under the chairmanship of the Clerk comprising: Deputy Clerk, Director-Secretariat, HR and Strategy Support Manager, Head Accountant, Graduate Accountant, assisted by the PM/CTA. A **Management Group** chaired by the Speaker of the National Parliament and comprising all departmental heads was established and meets monthly to receive verbal reports in power point presentation form from all departments on the progress of agreed work objectives (5.1.5).

A **Strategy Support Unit** (5.1.2) under the direction of the Deputy Clerk (DC) and reporting to the Clerk has been created to oversee in detail the operation of the new Strategy and associated Implementation Road Map from 2012. The Unit comprises the DC, HR and SSM, Senior Administration Officer, and a new HR Corporate Support Office post funded by the UNDP.

In addition, a number of cross-NPO support groups have been set up *ad hoc* (in one case continued)¹⁰ to provide focussed support to NPO management on particular challenges or projects as follows:

- **ICT Steering Committee** - Chaired from the Secretariat, this Committee will oversee the development of an NPSI ICT policy and resource allocations (4.2.1).
- **Security Oversight Committee** -Chaired by the DC to oversee all aspects of security, in particular modernisation of precinct access arrangements (5.4.2).
- **Hansard Support Committee** - Chaired from the Secretariat to ensure that the recommendations of the ‘Hansard Summary Review Report’ (**Annex 6**) are prosecuted according to the agreed timetable.
- **New Building Committee** – Chaired by the DC to ensure that the new Members’ office block is brought on stream satisfactorily and to time in early 2012, to hear regular updates from the new Building Project Manager, and to manage all consequential implications for the present building (5.7, 5.7.2).
- **Autonomous Parliament Group**- Chaired from the Secretariat and tasked with reporting in detail on the implications of moving to an autonomous parliament to NPO management (5.5).

All such groups and committees report to the Clerk and Speaker through the **Management Group** and their TORs are kept under regular review by the **Executive Group**. The PM/CTA has an advisory role on all for the time being.

Strategy and PSP 3rd phase project

Mention has already been made under the section on Objective 1 of the way in which the Strategy and the PSP 3rd phase project have been designed to complement each other.

One point to make strongly is that the design of the 3rd phase project (2012-2015) seeks to increase the capacity of the NPO to sustain eventual autonomy in 2015-16 by moving from reliance on the UNDP for procurement and financial management (DEX) to being more self sustaining (NIM).¹¹

The Graduate Accountant has been tasked with equipping himself with the requisite information and expertise to tackle the demands of NIM, although the UNDP requires to make arrangements for a micro-audit in order to ascertain the exact quantum and level of financial expertise which will be required to

¹⁰ Autonomous Parliament Group

¹¹ See Page 7, above

proceed. He has done so successfully and was commissioned to write and deliver a short series of presentations to the Speaker, Clerk and NPO staff for this purpose (5.6.1) of which he has presented the first 2 in the present reporting period:

- ‘SIG/NPO Financial Systems’
- ‘NIM Requirements’
- ‘Financial Management in an Autonomous Parliament’

He will give the third presentation in July.

Strategy: next steps

The Strategy has been presented to the Speaker and it will now be referred to the Parliamentary House Committee as a first stage towards formal adoption as soon as possible.

In operational terms, the next steps are to consider an annualised work plan for 2012 together with a suite of NPO departmental plans based on the Strategy and the Implementation Road Map. This should be complete well before the close of 2011 (5.1.2, 5.1.3). In future, these plans will provide the basis of the monthly reports made by departmental heads to the Speaker at Management Group.

In terms of Strategy roll out, 2012 should be seen as a year of ‘acclimatisation’ for the NPO. Success will be measured by the extent to which the Strategy becomes the blueprint and point of reference for the work of the NPO and Parliament as a whole; and is also seen as the public document in which all citizens are able to find the vision, mission and objectives of their Parliament set out in relevant, transparent and locally realistic terms.

Partnering with the Executive to promote positive change

Power in Solomon Islands belongs to the People and is exercised jointly under the Constitution by the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary.¹² Naturally therefore many of Parliament’s and the project’s development activities cannot take place without the active cooperation of government as an essential partner. The project has the privilege of enjoying excellent relations with government colleagues.

Looking to the future, this collaborative approach will be required to make good progress on a number of fronts. For example, the progressive transfer of staff in the interim period as the project reduces its

¹² National Parliament of Solomon Islands, Constitution of the Solomon Islands, *Preamble*, p.13

responsibility for staff working alongside SIG funded colleagues in the NPO and progress towards the creation of an autonomous parliament from 2016 gathers pace;¹³ and in the creation of a fully comprehensive and transparent Parliamentary Calendar published and setting out for the people of the Solomon Islands the programme of legislative and oversight work its parliamentarians are undertaking on their behalf. We look forward to working closely with SIG on those and other fronts in the forthcoming period.

Further output comment

- Human resource policies drafting underway (5.3)
- Parliamentary autonomy work is being progressed through the relevant Group (5.5)

¹³ See report on Objective 1 above: ‘A substantial amount of work will be required of the Project to support the NPO in negotiating a progressive transfer of staff from the UNDP to the SIG payroll as a part of the staged nationalisation of the support to Parliament process (1.3.5)’

Objective 6: Strengthened parliamentary education and community engagement services

Project staff

Two Civic Education Officers.

Civic education programme

Over much of the reporting period the Civic Education department was at 50% strength, the second of the two Officers on the establishment joining only in April. Despite that, and largely as a result of the highly collaborative and corporate way the NPO operates, and active leadership from the department head, this did not impede a range of successful activities being undertaken. A sampling of main activities is noted below.

Role of Parliament, Schools Outreach, Community and Media Outreach, Public Awareness sub-programmes

Under the 'Role of Parliament' sub-programme intensive planning has continued for the projected Speaker's and Parliament week long constituency visit to South Malaita, now planned for July. Under 'Schools Outreach', the texts of 2 interactive textbooks have been developed which are designed to introduce primary and secondary students to parliament are about to be despatched to the SIG Curriculum Board prior to being brought into service. In addition, a series of half day visits to Parliament for Form 3 pupils has begun. Approximately 1,800 students will visit the precinct between May and September to receive talks from the CE Officers and department heads on the roles and responsibilities of Parliament to coincide with the state schools examination on civics set for September.

Normal tours of Parliament have been progressing under 'Community and Media Outreach', particularly fortnightly IPAM group visits. In addition, in this sub-programme work is progressing on arrangements for a Parliamentary Press Gallery with the drafting of a concept note, and rules of behaviour proposal and plans to consult with local media being advanced.

'Public awareness of parliamentary debates and proceedings' is fulfilled by the PSP's support for the broadcasting of Parliamentary proceedings which was completed very successfully for the Parliamentary session which ended on 13 April. A highly successful event took place in May in which local journalism

students were able to question a panel of senior parliamentary officials on relations between the media and Parliament.

This whole sub-programme will require to be reviewed in the light of the new Media Office (see below). One of the outcomes of the Media Office being established is likely to be to free the Civic Education Department of first line responsibility for communications and media related tasks enabling further CE activities to be undertaken using the current level of staff resources.

Gender

The sub-programme designed to 'Reduce barriers to women in Parliament' had to be placed largely on hold in late 2010 and early 2011 due to the departure of the second CE Officer but a major effort has been made to develop this over the latter part of the reporting period.

A two day event is planned for 29 and 30 June, the first under 'Parliament's Stakeholder Programme', which, overall, is designed to strengthen the links between Parliament and a wide range of aspects of Solomon Islands society and progressively to deepen the relevance of parliament within the country's social fabric.

This first activity is designed to enable the wives of MPs to meet and engage with a variety of Solomon Islands and international women's organisations and parliamentary officials. There are 2 main objectives: first, to build the client group's information about the high role and responsibilities of Parliament; second, to enable MPs to seek ways in which MPs spouses can be utilised as an informal but potentially powerful 'ambassadorial' resource for Parliament. The event will extend to a range of Solomon Islands women's organisations and is conducted in active collaboration with UNWOMEN.

Second, and notably, the period saw the creation of the first ever women's group centred in Parliament, the parliamentary 'Young Women's Group' formed under the auspices of the Speaker of the National Parliament. In addition to the Speaker, patronage for the Group will be sought from the relevant Minister responsible for Parliament and the Parliamentary House Committee.

The Group, drawn from women working in public, private, and voluntary sectors, has held two well attended and vigorous meetings in the reporting period, and has the potential to become a major platform for highly imaginative gender related activities. The second meeting was held in collaboration with the Ministry for Women and focussed on the issue of domestic violence.

The aspiration of the Group is to act as a vector for national debate and action on a range of gender related issues. It also seeks to act as a structure bridging the national/provincial divide using the

successes, concerns, and views of women at the provincial and local level to illuminate the potential for realistic development at national level. Maximum use will be made of the location of the Group within the National Parliament to engage with a range of national stakeholders.

The project will seek in future to be more active in the area of issues relevant to Solomon Islands women than hitherto. Such activity is embedded deeply in the draft project document for the project's 3rd phase.

2011 Provincial Speakers and Clerks Attachment programme to Parliament – a new approach

This workshop event was held in Honiara in two cycles, 11-15 April and 10-14 June, and involved Speakers and Clerks from all provinces of Solomon Islands, the Secretariat of the NPO, the Chairman and members of the Public Accounts Committee, the Auditor General, staff of the Attorney General's Office. A full report of both cycles is in preparation and will be published in due course.

More limited related events held in 2008 and 2009, focussed exclusively on enabling Provincial Speakers and Clerks to enhance their knowledge of financial procedures and understanding of financial public accountability. But this year saw a major expansion of the programme which now aspires to join up the work of procedural modernisation underway in Parliament through the NPO Secretariat with procedural revitalisation and capacity building within the Provincial Assemblies, in particular modernisation of Assemblies' Standing Orders. A series of meetings to plan this expansion was hosted by the NPO earlier in the year.

The activity is noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, it draws together collaboratively the resources of PSP in the National Parliament Office and the UNDP Provincial Governance Strengthening Programme (PGSP) based in the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS). In doing so it enables the deployment of the strengths and resources of both institutions and both projects to build a broad range capacity at the provincial and national governance levels in a complementary and cost effective way.

Second, it permits the NPO/PSP to adopt the role of 'mentor' to provincial colleagues utilising capacity already built within the NPO Secretariat. Specific Secretariat staff have been assigned as mentors and points of contact for specific Provincial Assemblies, and arrangements have been made with IPAM to provide the Secretariat staff with appropriate coaching in July in preparation for this role.

Third, the working relations forged provide a sound basis to plan further cross governance capacity building activities. Such activity is already underway drawing on the resources of additional partners. For example, in partnership with the NPSI PAC, PGSP, and the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI),

based in the Australian National University, the NPO is participating in an intensive programme designed to revitalise public accounts committees in Provincial Assemblies. This activity which will involve all Provincial Assembly PAC members is presently planned in 2 cycles starting on 25 July.

There is likely to be an annual 'Parliament – Provincial Assembly Conference' from 2012 and Western Province has taken the initiative in offering to host the first of these events.

The Future

The civic education aspect of parliamentary life is fundamental to positioning Parliament in a positive relation to both the 'political nation' and the entirety of the Solomon Islands population. The ties that bind the national assembly to those it represents can be strengthened almost infinitely by judicious use of this facility.

Further, the entire national effort to promote civic education cannot be contemplated in the absence of the parliamentary aspect. It is open to debate therefore whether the centre of this effort should rest formally in Parliament with this highly successful and vigorous Department. That apart, the PSP 3rd phase project document contemplates a deepening of the focus on civic education as one important means of developing democratic legitimacy progressively throughout the Solomon Islands.

REPORT ANNEXES