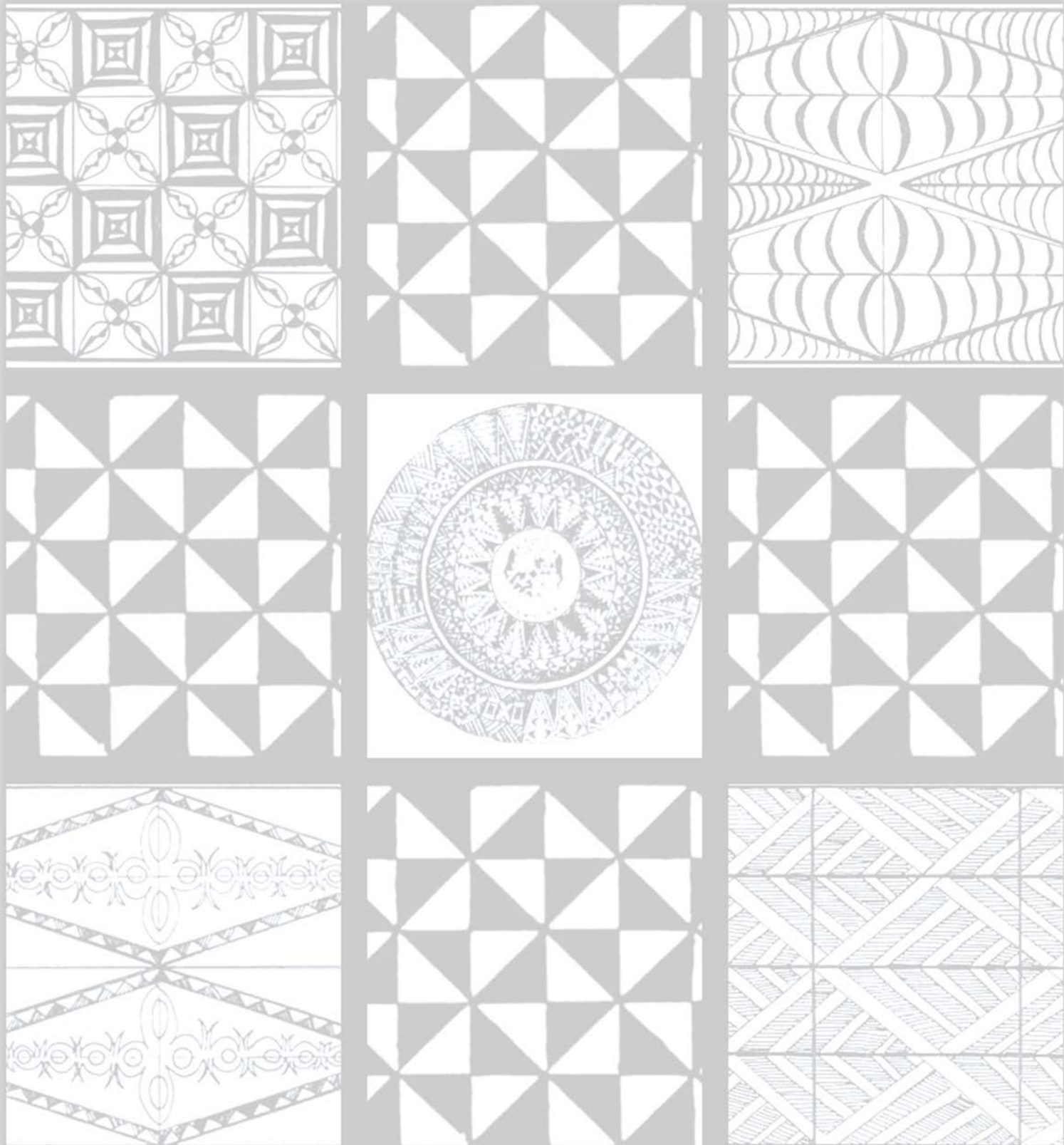


External Assessment:
**Pacific Parliamentary Effectiveness
Initiative (PPEI) 2016 – 2019**

November 2018



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Executive Summary

UNDP's Pacific Parliament Effectiveness Initiative (PPEI), funded by New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is a three-year project supporting the strengthening of parliaments in 5 parliaments of the Pacific Region; Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu (Vanuatu was added to the original 4 beneficiary parliaments effective January 2018). The project has two overall objectives, a) to enable parliaments to better carry out their responsibilities of legislation, oversight, and representation, and b) to enhance the role of women in decision-making in the beneficiary countries. These two broad objectives are focussed on five planned results, three in the area of parliamentary strengthening: a) enhanced support to MPs enabling them to work more effectively; b) integration of development objectives into the work of parliaments; and, c) strengthening of parliaments' effectiveness in public financial management. In the area of enhanced roles of women in decision-making, the two results sought are: a) enhancement of the capacities of women candidates, and b) to work with political parties to increase the number of women chosen as candidates.

This external assessment was commissioned as a tool to identify the achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations for future support to the five parliaments. It was conducted in October and November 2018. The assessment methods included telephone, in-person, and written interviews of key informants including representatives of the 5 parliaments, MFAT, the NZ High Commissions in the beneficiary countries, project staff, and other key actors. Extensive project documentation was reviewed, including project planning and reporting documents, activity reports, and project products. The assessment reviewed the project from the perspectives of project design, project impacts, and project activities, based on the original project documents and the updated annual workplans. It also looked at each country individually in order to assess accomplishments, challenges, and impact at the country level. The assessment focused on overall project impact and did not review individual project activities in detail; these are described in the project annual reporting.

The assessment finds that the project has largely met the objectives contained in the original project document and agreement with the Government of New Zealand. The project design was realistic, and was updated in collaboration with the national partners on an annual basis. The workplans were followed diligently, with 84% of planned activities for the first two years fully completed, and 100% fully or partially completed. In year one 10 of 12 targets were fully met, and two were partially met. In year two, 11 of 13 targets were met. This is an unusually high delivery rate for parliamentary development programming, which is dependent on availability and engagement of, and close collaboration with, national partners. The high delivery rate reflects the professionalism of the project team.

Institutional strengthening projects have impact mainly through a gradual enhancement in the efficiency and professionalism of the parliament, and thus changes are observed over the medium and long term, often beyond the time frame of a single project. However, this project has had some notable and demonstrable short-term impacts that can be attributed largely or entirely to the project's inputs. These are detailed in the body of the assessment but include:

- Substantial enhancement in Cook islands' overall national public financial management framework through the activation of the parliament's Public Accounts Committee, and through detailed scrutiny of the budget proposal
- Establishment of an effective multi-country 'floating budget office' that brings together Pacific region and international parliamentary staff to enable intensive analysis of budget documents, enabling MPs to carry out effective scrutiny. This is a model for sustainable strengthening of budgetary work in small parliaments;
- Support to the revision of Tonga parliamentary rules that permitted efficient and timely resolution of a potentially dangerous constitutional conflict;
- In four of the five parliaments, enhancement of the institutional strategic planning process to enable nationally driven institutional development; key to sustainable parliamentary strengthening.

As is typical for projects of this type depending upon the governance situation in each of the five implementation countries, the project encountered challenges in some areas of activity implementation and objective attainment, which were discussed on a continuing basis with MFAT. Specific challenge areas included:

- Resistance to formal approaches to increasing gender equity in representation (for example opposition to temporary special measures such as legislated gender quotas). In this circumstance, the project has focused particularly on working with political parties in PNG and Solomon Islands to build support for inclusion of women on party lists, and also supporting women leaders both at the political and the senior staff level;
- Slower than anticipated implementation in Papua New Guinea. This is partly due to the elections held in mid-2017, and partly a result of the complex institutional and governance environment. The unavailability of certain actors was addressed by reaching out to different interlocutors, and by focusing on work areas where there were change champions and where progress could be made;
- Tendency for parliaments to request support on an ad hoc basis. This common issue in parliamentary support programming requires a flexible response. On the one hand, requested support is typically for a legitimate priority, and responding to that request helps parliament to address specific issues (for example, technical advice on the constitutionality of a government decision). On the other hand, it is important that support has a developmental and sustainable objective. This can be attained through working with each parliament to develop and/or enhance a strategic plan or reform roadmap that sets a clear direction while allowing flexibility to address emergent issues;
- Integrating development objectives such as the SDGs into parliamentary work. Here the project evolved significantly during its implementation, away from a focus on the SDGs as external objectives, and towards the integration of development objectives, selected and tailored according to the needs of the specific context, into the oversight and legislative work of the parliaments and particularly of parliamentary committees. Effective functioning of parliamentary committees is generally an indicator of overall institutional effectiveness, and support to committees and tying their oversight activities to development outcomes of government programming will be an important feature of a second project phase.

In summary, a solid base for parliamentary development in the five parliaments has been established by the PPEI project. Its results establish a strong justification for continuing support which will build on the institutional development framework and relationships of confidence that have been established. Governance strengthening is a long-term process that involves the gradual building of effective and accountable institutions. One factor to be further emphasized in a second phase is the need for the role of parliaments to be better understood by citizens, as well as for parliaments to increase opportunities for citizen engagement in decision-making. This is important in countering informal decision-making which inevitably reduces governance transparency, solidifies existing power imbalances, and can hamper needed reforms.

In planning for future work, the following key recommendations are proposed:

1. Support development and enhancement of medium to long term institutional development plans by each of the five parliaments, fostering national ownership, enabling the planning of development activities within a structured framework, and avoiding ad hoc initiatives;
2. Build upon the innovative and sustainable strategy of shared learning piloted in the floating budget office, in which key staff from the five parliaments, from developed country parliaments (and where appropriate, other non-focus country Pacific Islands parliaments) work together to develop and implement enhanced parliamentary functions. This collaborative approach would be relevant in further programming areas including enhanced committee oversight work, and citizen engagement and dialogue initiatives;
3. Deepen the process of translating global and national development objectives (such as the SDGs) into the practical work of parliament, particularly through integration of development goals into the oversight work of parliamentary committees. The project has demonstrated the viability of this approach, and a next phase should support development and implementation of medium-term committee plans that use SDG and national development goals as a framework for evaluating legislation, policy, and government programmes;
4. Review and enhance the strategy for enhancing women's political representation and leadership. The project has efficiently carried out the planned activities and has enabled women leaders to strengthen their skills, and increased attention of parties to the need for gender equality in political life and tools to achieve it. Gender inequality in political leadership in the region remains a major outstanding development and governance issue. A next project stage should look at means to expand the project partners engaged specifically on this issue, to include civil society, relevant government ministries, and other key social actors. This will enable activities to be planned that follow up on and maximize impact of the practice parliaments.
5. Enhance the understanding of citizens and civil society on the roles of parliament, and develop opportunities for structured citizen engagement in parliamentary processes through tools including parliamentary hearings, outreach to constituencies, and improved two-way parliamentary communications using both traditional and new technologies. Youth engagement should be a priority focus;

6. Foster closer engagement of the New Zealand House of Representatives as a project partner, potentially as part of the future project governance mechanism, and participation in annual project planning workshops with the beneficiary parliaments, allowing enhanced planning of NZ technical support;
7. An enhanced system for developing and tracking country-level objectives and impacts, with clear integration into each parliament's institutional development strategy, with support to that strategy development and implementation as needed and requested. The annual PPEI planning process includes bilateral discussions with individual parliaments and agreement on an annual workplan, however in reporting the activities are grouped across countries under the 5 results areas. This will enhance the project's institutional development focus;
8. Enable non-focus parliaments within the region to benefit from PPEI-II support on an as-needed basis. This could take two forms; staff from non-focus countries could participate when multi-country activities are conducted such as the 'floating budget office', thus benefitting from PPEI core capacity-building; and, one-time support could be provided for specific strengthening activities engaged by non-focus country parliaments that are also not covered by other UNDP strengthening projects, which could include Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Palau.

PPEI Assessment

1. PPEI Background and Assessment Methodology

Both New Zealand and UNDP have a long history of support to strengthening democratic governance in the Pacific region. New Zealand's geographic aid priorities focus on the Pacific region, and a key long-term thematic area for support has been improved governance, security, and the conditions for peace. New Zealand's parliament, the longest continually functioning parliament in the region, is globally acknowledged as a leading innovator in parliamentary democracy.

New Zealand and UNDP's Pacific Region Office have worked closely together for a number of years in support of democratic governance strengthening in the region. From 2006 to 2011, New Zealand provided funding for the UNDP Pacific Regional Programme. New Zealand also supports UNDP's Fiji Parliament Support Project which has played a key role in accompanying Fiji's return to democracy, through the establishment of an accountable and effective Parliament.

While most countries in the Pacific Islands have relatively stable democracies, parliaments tend to be small and under-resourced, and often find it difficult to effectively carry out their mandate, particularly in terms of financial and programme oversight, and also suffer from continuing low levels of women's representation and political leadership in general. A number of countries that do not benefit from in-country parliamentary support programmes have requested support to strengthen their institutions. Following careful analysis, UNDP Pacific Region Office identified Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Tonga as countries that would benefit from a regional capacity building and gender enhancement programme. Following discussions, New Zealand and UNDP signed a contribution agreement in which New Zealand is providing NZ\$3,000,000 over a three-year period from 2016 to 2019 to support these parliaments through the Pacific Parliamentary Effectiveness Initiative (PPEI). In 2017, it was agreed to add Vanuatu to the national parliaments benefitting from PPEI, effective at the beginning of 2018.

The overall goal of PPEI is to increase the capacity and effectiveness of Pacific Parliaments to engage and respond to key development issues, and to increase the political participation of women. This goal was aligned with Outcome 2 of the UNDP Regional Programme for Asia Pacific 2014-2017, which defined the work of the (then) UNDP Pacific Centre. The project implementation period is from May 2016 to early 2019, with the period after December 2018 being allocated to completing project activities and reporting.

PPEI aims to achieve the following results:

- **Result 1:** *Members of Parliament are supported more effectively by the parliamentary secretariat through the provision of induction training for first time members, research and briefing materials;*
- **Result 2:** *Cross cutting development issues are mainstreamed in Pacific Parliaments*
- **Result 3:** *A participatory and transparent national planning and budget process is developed*

- **Result 4:** *Capacity of potential women candidates are increased through provision of training and capacity building activities*
- **Result 5:** *An increased number of women candidates is selected by political parties in selected Pacific countries*

The specific objectives are further defined in the *UNDP Pacific Parliamentary Development Programme – New Zealand Investment Proposal (26 01 2016)*:

- Parliamentary secretariats in Cook Islands, PNG, Solomon Islands and Tonga are better able to provide MPs with adequate support, including the delivery of induction training for new members, research and preparation of briefing on key development issues
- Parliaments in the four countries will have consistently stronger budget debates and effective public accounts committee processes in operation
- Six practice parliaments for women will have been held in the four countries – two in 2016, two in 2017 and two in 2018.
- An increased number of women candidates are selected by political parties in at least two of the four countries and political parties in all countries better understand issues related to women in politics.
- Improved information exchange and south-south cooperation between the Parliaments across the Pacific in utilizing Parliament to engage with key development issues.

Project assessment

With the project in its final implementation phase, it was agreed to carry out an external assessment of the project that would review its progress and provide recommendations for future support to the PPEI parliaments and to parliaments of the Pacific more generally.

An external consultant was engaged to carry out the assessment. He was asked to focus particularly on the following issues:

In writing the project assessment report, the consultant should pay particular attention to the following criteria:

- **Relevance:** Evaluate the logic of the process in planning and designing the activities for supporting the beneficiary parliaments;
- **Efficiency:** Evaluate the efficiency of project implementation, the quality of the results achieved and any time/political constraints during implementation period;
- **Effectiveness:** Conduct an assessment of how assumptions have affected project achievements and the subsequent management decisions vis-à-vis the cost effectiveness of implementation; to what extent the project outputs have been effectively achieved;
- **Impact:** Evaluate the impact of the project on its wider environment and its contribution to the wider sectoral objectives summarized in the projects' overall objectives;
- **Sustainability:** Assess the sustainability of results with specific focus on national capacity and ownership of the process.

Assessment structure and process

The assessment began on October 1 2018, and data collection was primarily carried out in October, with analysis and write-up in the first two weeks of November 2018. The assessment was carried out through desk review of project-related documents and background materials on the focus parliaments, in person interviews with the project staff team and other UNDP staff engaged in project activities, telephone and written interaction (questions and answers) with project beneficiaries from each of the parliaments of the region, and interviews and written interaction with representatives of MFAT in New Zealand High Commissions in the five countries. Two main questionnaire frameworks were developed; one to guide interviews with parliamentary representatives, the other to guide the discussions with the New Zealand representatives.

The documentary review involved reading and making notes on: PPEI core documents; annual and quarterly reports; project products including focused needs assessments carried out for parliaments, workshop and training reports, parliamentary knowledge products, parliamentary standing orders and national constitutions, as well as published research on parliaments, democracy, and theories of change in the countries of the Pacific Islands.

The assessment approach has been drawn from the criteria with which the external evaluator was asked to assess the progress and effectiveness of PPEI.

Governance institutions have different layers of 'effectiveness' and thus are not open to a simple performance metric. Essentially, institutions such as a parliament can be assessed at three different levels.

At the most basic or micro level, they are charged in the constitution and subsidiary legislation and rules of procedure with carrying out specific technical functions; for example, consideration and adoption of the national budget, or holding regular parliamentary sessions, etc.

These functions are necessary in order for the parliament to be constitutionally compliant, but for most citizens, the quality of the work conducted is of paramount importance. Thus, for example, simply rubber-stamping an unrealistic government budget proposal within the constitutional time-frame does little to benefit citizens.

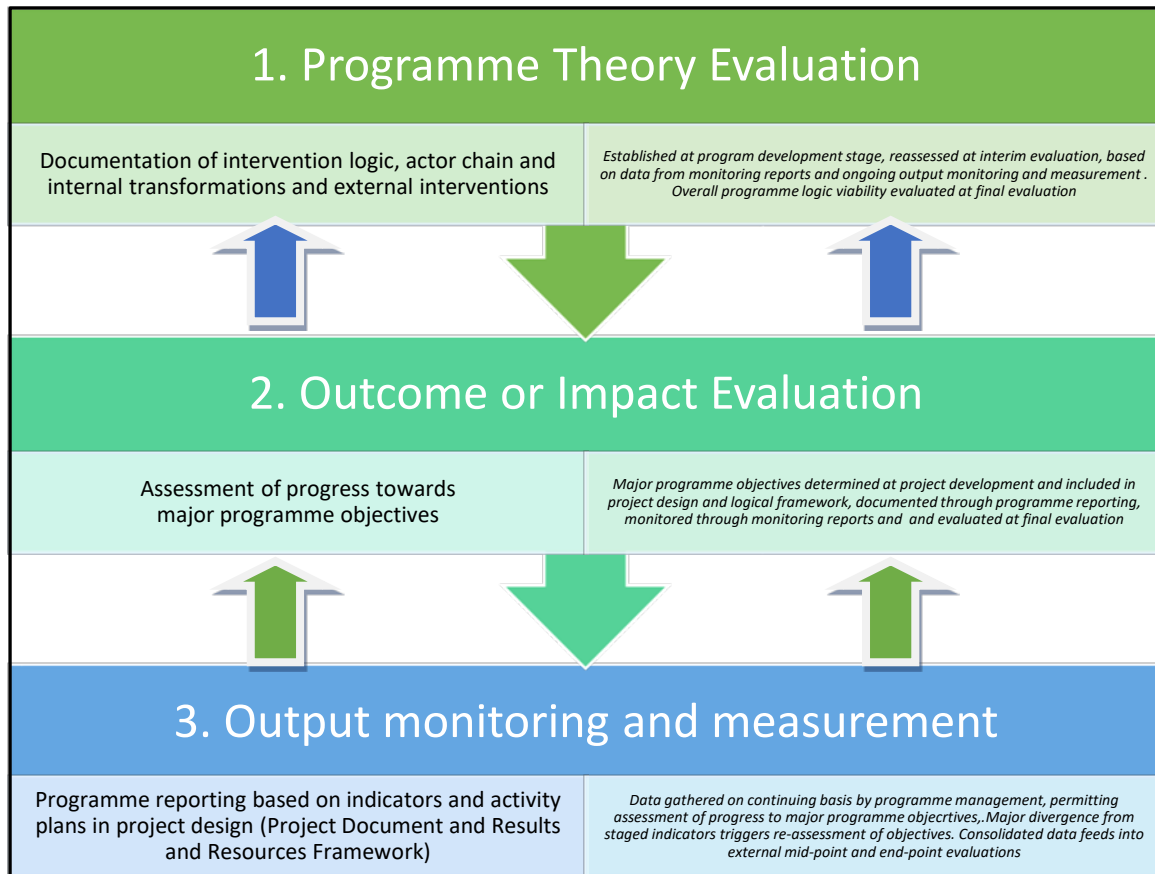
Therefore, at a second, or meso, level, it is important for parliaments to carry out their specific roles in a way that reflected the purpose of parliament and contributed to enhanced governance. Thus, for example, a parliament that carefully scrutinised the budget and convinced the government to make certain changes (or even simply raised issues or alternatives worthy of consideration) would be effectively carrying out this part of its mandate.

Nevertheless, even parliaments that demonstrably carry out at least some and perhaps all of their legitimate functions with some effectiveness may not be held in good stead by citizens.

Finally, there is the third, and top level of overall institutional legitimacy. This is perhaps the greatest challenge to parliaments everywhere; citizens often seem neither to particularly well understand, nor to appreciate, the work of parliaments. This is an existential risk, because if governance institutions are not believed to be carrying out the role citizens expect, they lose legitimacy and thus capacity to play an effective governance role.

External support to parliaments is similarly normally built on a layered approach; that is, the PPEI project is geared to:

Enable parliaments to carry out their formal mandates, in a way that has a real impact on governance, and thus helps to build citizen understanding and support for a strong, democratic parliament.



The assessment of PPEI follows this three-layer approach. The assessment begins by reviewing the programme logic or theory of change - whether the intervention design, in retrospect, can be justified¹ as being a logical and realistic approach to achieving the intended outcomes. The assessment then goes on to explore whether the activities carried out actually resulted in changes in parliamentary performance at the ‘meso’ level; in other words whether specific enhancements of institutional performance can be attributed to the project’s support. Finally, the assessment looks at the micro level; whether the activities planned were carried out, and to the extent they could not be, were reshaped in ways to better fit needs and possibilities.

Measurement of programme impact is more difficult, the higher up the impact chain. This is for two reasons: first, the link between the programme activity and institutional change is less direct, with an increasing number of other variables the higher up the chain; and second, because the measurement of effectiveness is more subjective the further up the chain, so

¹ Uggla, Fredrik (2007), “Programme theory evaluation and democracy promotion: reviewing a sample of Sida-supported projects”, in Burnell, Peter, ed., *Evaluating Democracy Support: Methods and Experiences*, Stockholm, International IDEA, pp 71 - 92.

that different actors will assess parliamentary effectiveness differently. Governments, for example, typically value legislative efficiency as the most important feature of parliaments, whereas civil society organizations are most interested in parliament's oversight capacity and representative functions. Critics of democratic governance programming often argue that it is very difficult to measure whether it has any effect at all. This is not necessarily the case; it is rather that various facets can be measured, but the results need to be interpreted, and unlike in a pure science, may legitimately be interpreted differently by different people. This is appropriate, because democracy precisely reflects the perspective that while all citizens have a right to an opinion on how we should be governed, no-one's opinion is necessarily more right than that of any other person.

As noted, the assessment begins from the macro level of programme design and change logic, then the functional improvement (meso) level, and finally the activity (micro) level. More focus is placed on the design and the impact levels; the project reporting at the activity level is detailed and robust, and is already provided on a quarterly and annual basis to the donor. The assessment is necessarily carried out using an iterative approach, as it is necessary to understand when exploring one impact level to contextually understand the situation at different impact levels. For example, if we find that there was little movement at the meso impact level for one of the results, it is important to look at the activities carried out and the impacts observed in order to understand what happened.

SECTION SUMMARY

- *Assessment was commissioned to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the 2016 – 2019 PPEI project, including recommendations for further support to the PPEI and other Pacific parliaments;*
 - *The assessment was carried out between October 1 and November 15, 2018*
 - *Methodology of assessment included interviews of key actors in the beneficiary parliaments, NZ High Commissions, and UNDP, as well as extensive documentary review;*
 - *Focus of assessment was on the relevance and applicability of the project design, on the impact of the project in enhancing parliamentary functioning, and on the efficiency of project activity implementation;*
 - *The assessment has a forward-looking focus, seeking to identify lessons learned that can be helpful in the design and implementation of further support to strengthen the beneficiary parliaments.*
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2. PPEI design (programme theory)

The project is designed with a matrix approach; that is, the project aimed to support changes in five result areas, across five (originally four) national parliaments. The anticipated results are drawn from the UNDP Pacific Office project document 2014 – 2017, based on the UNDP Asia-Pacific regional programme document 2014 - 2017, and in turn are based on the 2014-2017 UNDP strategic plan, approved by its UN member states' Executive Board. The Pacific Office work plan had the overarching goal to "**achieve simultaneously the eradication of poverty and the significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion in the Pacific**". The PPEI project supports the following two outputs, and associated results, of the overall UNDP Pacific Office mandate:

Output 2.1.

Parliaments, constitution making bodies and electoral institutions enabled to perform core functions for improved accountability, participation and representation, including for peaceful transitions

Result 2.1. A

Members of Parliament are supported more effectively by the parliamentary secretariat through the provision of induction training for first time members, research and briefing materials

Result 2.1. B

Cross-cutting development issues mainstreamed in Pacific parliaments

Result 2.1. C

Development of a participatory and transparent National planning and budget process

Output 2.6.

Measures in place to increase women's participation in decision-making

Result 2.6. A

Capacity of potential women candidates increased through provision of training and capacity building activities

Result 2.6. B

Increased number of women candidates selected by political parties in selected Pacific countries.

The project activities are tied directly to the anticipated outputs and results in the project document, in the workplans and the annual budgeting, and in the regular reports. In other words, throughout the project implementation, the project leadership and team have kept the initial project objectives front and centre. For example, the workplans for 2016, 2017, and 2018 are organized by Result category, and broken down on a country-by-country basis. The planned results are, as noted, drawn from UNDP's global strategy, Asia Pacific regional programme document and Pacific Office project document, which has gone through a broad process of validation, including by the governments concerned.

Conversely, in a matrix programme that aims to impact institutions in different countries, it is important to take into account, in programme design and implementation, the diversity of each country, including but not restricted to factors such as the initial performance in each

area, the presence or absence of change agents especially in the parliamentary political and administration leadership, any structural or capacity impediments to change.

The project's design attentiveness to the differential circumstances in each country is clear. In the project summary proposal submitted to New Zealand MFAT, the circumstances of each country's parliament is described in some detail (as is the case for the addendum in which Vanuatu is added to the project beneficiaries). The document contains a historical overview of the development of the parliament, the current challenges being faced by the Parliament, and the support that has been provided over recent years by UNDP and other development partners.

The country descriptions in the original project documents do not consistently include specific assessments of the opportunities for, and barriers to, change in each of the parliaments. At the same time, in the discussions for each parliament, specific and detailed descriptions of support currently underway and support initiatives requested by the parliament are provided, as well as a clear indication of parliament's express wish to take part in the proposed programme.

The absence at inception of a detailed diagnostic of each parliament is mitigated by the project's practice of conducting an in-depth annual workshop with each of the parliaments (jointly and individually), which took place in both 2017 and in 2018. This enabled an intensive discussion with each parliament regarding the support they required in the project areas. As a result, with few exceptions, the annual workplan has been largely realised, as a joint endeavour of the parliament and its UNDP partners.

In conclusion, the project design is based upon the agreed results framework of the UNDP Pacific Office, in turn drawn from validated global and Asia-Pacific regional strategies. The potential design weakness in not including a structured diagnostic or political economy of change for the beneficiary parliaments is mitigated by the use of annual planning workshops to structure activities, based on the project document results. In a transition to a possible second phase of support, it would be useful to plan future project support on a short, medium, and long term basis with the individual parliaments, which will be most effective if these are drawn from parliaments' own strategic development vision, which several of the PPEI parliaments already have, or are developing with project support.

The two overall outputs are broader than activities carried out specifically by the project (as the outputs come from the overall Pacific Centre project document). Therefore, *the design appropriateness of the results specific to the project* will be reviewed in turn:

Result 2.1. A:

Members of Parliament are supported more effectively by the parliamentary secretariat through the provision of induction training for first time members, research and briefing materials

The objective of this action is straightforward. MPs are the decision-makers in parliament, and in order to do their job effectively they need first to understand their mandates and their roles. MPs come from varied walks of life and do not necessarily have experience or deep understanding of government mechanisms when they first arrive in parliament. Effective induction enables new MPs to quickly assume their responsibilities, and can avoid misunderstandings and conflicts regarding the role of MPs vis-à-vis other governance actors.

In larger, strongly institutionalized parliaments, detailed inductions are organized by parliamentary and party caucus staff. In the smaller parliaments of the Pacific region, there are few parliamentary staff and they may not be equipped to carry out effective inductions. Further, in some PPEI parliaments, the exact roles of parliaments and of MPs are not always clear, with practice sometimes diverging substantially from the formal rules of procedure. As a result, international support to induction, including bringing staff and MPs from other parliaments, provides a means to institutionalize good parliamentary practice from the outset of a new parliament.

“It is important to capitalize on the staff and to build long-term capacity. Staff remain regardless of election results. We have appreciated learning from other parliaments in the Pacific that are better developed than our own.” [Parliamentary Clerk]

The second part of result 2.1.A involves support to strengthening the professional staff support provided to parliamentarians in the course of their work. Parliamentarians cannot be experts in all aspects of governance, and thus depend on professional, impartial, advice from parliamentary staff. In small parliaments where MPs may find themselves involved on committees covering a wide range of policy areas, the need for support is even greater. Without such support, parliaments risk becoming ‘rubber stamp’ institutions thus failing to provide robust oversight, or equally problematic, poor decisions may be made based on inaccurate understanding of issues.

The most sustainable means to enhance technical support to parliamentarians is through strengthening parliamentary services. Facilitating access to experts can also be helpful, and it is a good practice for parliaments to make use of locally available skills, such as from academic institutions. When faced with particularly complex and sensitive issues, as occurred in one country, Tonga, a support project such as PPEI can make contact with a regional and global network of parliamentary experts to provide a qualified and independent rules interpretation.

The support to induction and strengthening of the secretariat’s technical capacities was carried out in practice through a flexible approach in which the needs of parliament were discussed with the parliamentary political and administrative leadership, both at the annual planning workshop and in ad hoc discussions, and a series of support activities was programmed for the year ahead. In some cases, this was supplemented through ad hoc requests for support to address emergent issues.

In interviews with parliamentary key informants, all appreciated the support to strengthening the parliamentary secretariats, and particularly appreciated the opportunities for staff exchanges with Pacific parliaments. The activities for each parliament were closely tailored according to need within the framework of the overall result objective. This entailed substantial variations in the support provided.

For example, the Cook Islands parliament chose to develop a handbook which is used both for induction of new MPs and staff, and as a guide of government civil servants on the parliament, its roles and processes. In PNG, training was delivered on committee functioning (responding to a weakness of the PNG parliament) and Hansard training was delivered. In Tonga, staff were supported in completing the McGill University Canada programme on

Parliamentary Management. Several parliaments were supported through organizing staff attachments to New Zealand, Fiji, and Australian parliaments. In Tonga, as noted, specialized support focused on rules interpretation for the Clerk, enabling successful resolution of a complex constitutional issue.

A particular focal point of parliamentary support, including in this region, is geared to enhancing the work of committees. To a significant extent, it is in committees that parliaments are best able to act effectively, particularly in oversight and legislative scrutiny. Committee performance is very mixed in the PPEI states, partly linked to the small size of some parliaments rendering multiple committees unfeasible, but also linked to some parliaments' failure to implement the formal structures mandated in the constitution and rules of procedure. Support to committee strengthening was often carried out through activities with both MPs and committee staff, either separately or together; this joint focus was clearly justified given the need to engage both political and administrative elements of parliament in order to make committees operationally effective.

"We really appreciate the South-South aspect of the project. It is always good to learn in collaboration with other parliaments that are in a similar situation to our own [Parliamentary Clerk]

The annual planning process enabled the parliaments and the PPEI project team to plan the strengthening activities and also to ensure alignment with both the parliament's priorities and the overall PPEI support framework. Particularly in 2017 and 2018, several parliaments including Vanuatu, Tonga, and Cook Islands focused on overall strategic plan development (using divergent terminology for the planning processes). This is a very positive development that permits a coordinated development approach by parliaments. In terms of process design, a shift towards support based on medium-term institutional development plans of parliaments would be an important development for a second phase of support. It would enable clearer tracking of the extent to which parliamentary support is instrumental in moving parliaments towards greater effectiveness.

"There is real scope to better integrate the Parliamentary work with the work of other donors who have a strong interest in the functioning of committees e.g. the work on scrutiny of budgets could have been tied in to the work of the IMF's PFTAC, and other donor initiatives focused on high-level PFM. There is also scope to increase engagement with media and civil society, as I'm not sure that this was occurring in the current programme. Connecting media/civil society to the Parliamentary committee process could significantly improve the relevance of the work they done, as it would be more publicly accountable. [NZ High Commission]

Result 2.1.B:

Cross cutting development issues mainstreamed in Pacific Parliaments

The objective of good governance, and of democratic governance strengthening programmes, is ultimately to improve the lives of citizens, through enhancing human development. This is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations as the world's development goals to 2030, and which frame the development assistance policies of many countries, including New Zealand.

The project's implementation of this objective has evolved during the course of the project. The SDGs were adopted in 2015 as the successor to the Millennium Development Goals which had proven an effective means of focusing development actions on key and measurable outcomes directly tied to improving lives globally. The SDGs are broader than the MDGs and thus require a more comprehensive explanation and roll-out. In line with this, the project began its activities focusing particularly on explaining the SDGs to the PPEI parliaments, and also exposing the ways in which parliaments can make use of SDGs in their work (for example in framing oversight objectives, and in considering the necessary national legislative agenda for sustainable development).

In the second year of PPEI, the focus has shifted to the ultimate objective of the action; the mainstreaming of SDGs into the work of the parliament. Despite the success of the preceding MDGs, many parliaments were not closely engaged in the MDG process and did not necessarily take the MDGs directly into account in their work, particularly of oversight of government actions. The PPEI project has engaged proactively in shifting beyond information sharing, towards mainstreaming of SDGs into parliamentary work, specifically of parliamentary committees. The furthest advanced in this approach is the Parliament of the Solomon Islands, where the project has supported three committees (Police, National Security & Correctional Services Committee; Environment & Conservation Committee; and, the Health & Medical Committee) in integrating a sustainable development approach in their work. In Vanuatu, the focus has been on integrating the National Development Plan, itself drawn from an SDG approach, into the budget deliberations, thus linking financial oversight to development programming. In some parliaments, many committees are not functional (PNG), or the parliament is too small to have multiple permanent parliamentary committees (Cook Islands). In these countries support has been provided to activate committees (PNG), or to address development issues with the parliament as a whole, with the possibility of ad hoc committees or working groups being struck to address specific development issues.

For a future stage of PPEI, this approach of supporting committee oversight work through a development lens drawn from SDGs, and from National Development Strategies where they exist, should be expanded. This will entail identifying those committees and development topics that are viewed as priorities within the country, while ensuring that overarching development issues such as the eradication of poverty (SDG 1) are not overlooked.

Result 2.1.C:

Development of a participatory and transparent national planning and budget process.

Weaknesses in Pacific parliaments' capacities for effective financial oversight have been widely noted in the past, and these present an issue not only for citizens of the Pacific states, but also for development partners in shifting towards budget support in line with the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. In two countries, the Solomon Islands and the Cook Islands, the project was instrumental in enabling the activation of the previously dormant or limited functioning Public Accounts Committee; and, in all five parliaments, there has been a significant enhancement of the functioning of both the PAC and of the budget scrutiny process.

"Budget briefs – the recent workshop held this year was effective – this led to a more informed and quality debate on national budget through the adoption of scheduled submissions giving ample time for MPs to read through a 2 pager being prepared for the budget." [NZ High Commission]

Clearly, therefore, the project design was validated, and the project approach has been successful in leveraging change. In the interviews, the following factors were mentioned:

1. Parliaments particularly appreciated the support provided on the ground during the budget scrutiny and audit (PAC) processes. While trainings and study missions can be useful, having confirmed international expertise on site during the processes provides a hands-on approach to capacity enhancement;
2. The 'floating budget office', and other initiatives in which Pacific parliamentary staff were twinned with homologues in other Pacific parliaments proved both popular and effective. The 'floating budget office' approach enables Pacific parliamentary staff to enhance their skills by working together collegially (including as appropriate staff from more established parliaments such as New Zealand) in conducting budget analysis. The parliaments interviewed that had participated in this budget analysis method were very pleased with the approach and asked for it to be extended. It provides the possibility for non-hierarchical learning;
3. Enhanced PFM is a national priority in each country; thus, the project coincides with the imperative of each national budget system, doubtless also underlined by dialogue with development partners.

"The economy is growing quickly, and there are deficits in the PFM system. There is a lack of capacity at both the government and the parliament. It will be important to continue strengthening parliament's ability to review the budget and the Auditor General's report [New Zealand High Commission]

Result 2.6.A:

Capacity of potential women candidates to campaign and engage in policy debates increased through provision of training and capacity building activities

The Pacific Island countries have one of the lowest proportion of women political leaders, and specifically of women MPs, in the world. Therefore, a priority, also in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 5, is to ensure that women are enabled to run as candidates and to be elected in both national and local elections. Further, the objective of enhancing women's role in decision-making has been emphasized by Pacific Islands leaders in their 2012 Gender Equality Declaration. Under the Declaration, Leaders made commitments in six key areas – including both gender responsive government policies and programmes, and improving women's participation in decision making.

The project design aims to address this deficit both through encouraging women to see themselves as potential candidates, and through equipping interested potential women candidates with the tools needed to be effective candidates, and, ultimately, effective parliamentarians. The core activity in this result objective has been the organization of 'practice parliaments' which have been carried out in three of the five PPEI countries with a total of over 200 potential candidates participating. The practice parliament modality has been conducted in the region since 2011, initially developed as an approach through a collaboration between the Pacific islands Forum Secretariat and UNDP, and delivered in at least nine parliaments of the region between 2011 and 2018. Feedback from the participants is very positive for the session assessment reports reviewed, with a great majority of participants indicating that they now felt both more prepared as potential candidates and MPs, and also more likely to run for office.

“the work on women’s political participation - the practice parliaments are a particularly good initiative, to see the participants engaged and enthusiastic, learning about what it is to be an MP... I see increasing women’s representation not just as a matter of gender equality but as a key to strengthening governance overall” [New Zealand High Commission]

As a complementary approach, the project also supported the participation of the two female Tongan MPs at the New Zealand parliament where they benefited from informational briefings and exchanges with their New Zealand counterparts.

A final activity that has been classified under this Result is the support to a new network of women clerks and deputy clerks. This network has proven successful in enabling senior women parliamentary staff to exchange on the challenges they face, which include both stereotyping of women's roles, and also broader questions of the relationships between staff and parliamentarians, and the interface of social hierarchy with gender. This activity strictly fits within result 2.1A (strengthening of the parliamentary secretariat), but there is a logic to reporting it within result 2.6.A as part of the overall effort to enhance women's participation and leadership in Objective 2. This is a valuable and important initiative.

The design of this project element follows an approach used in parliamentary development in many countries, through exposing potential women candidates to knowledge and information about parliament, and enabling them to feel at ease in the political and parliamentary environment. There is a clear logical link between this activity and increased women's representation. There has been a modest increase in the number of women elected to parliaments in the countries where the practice parliaments have run, although it would not be possible to draw a definitive link between the practice parliaments as standalone events and this increase; more likely, the general attention being paid to the need to enhance women's political representation in the region, including activities such as the practice parliaments, contribute to enhancing the environment for more gender equity in political leadership.

The objective of enhancing women's political participation is an important priority, especially given the very low representation in this region at present. The Practice Parliaments are appreciated by their participants, and a strong implementation methodology has been developed that allows the Parliaments to be organized efficiently.

Given the virtual exclusion of women from elected office in many countries in the region, early-stage steps are needed, in the first instance to 'normalize' the presence of women in politics. The Practice Parliaments, which are usually well-covered in national media, show women sitting in the parliament and acting in the role of MPs, thus breaking down a traditional stereotype. For the women participants, this is also an important exercise in demystifying the MP role, and prepares them not only for potential MP role, but also for participation in local government and other positions of leadership. They also gain tools that will make them more effective, such as in obtaining government information and effectively analysing it.

Key informants interviewed during the assessment appreciated the practice parliaments, although a number of comments suggested that these would be most effective as part of a broader programme to enhance women's political participation in the Pacific in general and the PPEI states in particular. New Zealand is reframing its development policy in order to focus more intensively on this issue, and Australia's *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* initiative also has a key component on fostering women's political participation and leadership.

"With no women in parliament, representation is of course an important issue. Finding an entry point is difficult. Sometimes the points that women want to discuss might be different from those that a seminar has been organized to address, for example questions about harassment might come up." [UNDP manager]

For a next phase of PPEI, it is recommended that a specific strategy for enhancing women's opportunities for election should be drawn up in consultation with each national country parliament, government officials responsible for gender equality, civil society organizations including women's organizations, and political parties. Such a strategy, which should be supported through PPEI, would ensure national ownership, and facilitate the integration of the Practice Parliaments as part of an end-to-end strategy to realise gender equality in Pacific parliaments and in political leadership more generally. It would also be important to carry out

an assessment of the overall practice parliaments initiative to assess its successes and challenges, and to explore whether synergies with other programmes of women’s leadership empowerment can be enhanced.

One important piece of data that should be tracked in Phase II (and for Practice Parliaments more generally) is the proportion of women who participate in the Practice Parliaments who go on to run as candidates and to hold elected office (MP or subnational), and to identify common characteristics of the participants who do go on to political careers.

Result 2.6. B

Increased number of women candidates selected by political parties in selected Pacific countries.

One of the challenges to increasing the number of women MPs has been opposition in several countries to the institution of legislated gender quotas for elections to parliament. In the region, but outside PPEI, Samoa has successfully instituted a minimum 10% quota for women MPs, and several other countries have quotas for elected office at subnational level. At the same time, the issue of quotas (often described as temporary special measures – TSM) has become sufficiently controversial that it can be difficult to raise the subject of gender equality in parliaments without generating a critique that external actors are attempting to ‘force’ gender quotas. While it’s clear from examples of other countries including Samoa, that instituting gender quotas can be an effective way of both increasing women’s political representation and enhancing gender sensitive policy-making, it is important to be able to pursue the gender equality goals even in countries where the quota approach is not currently supported.

“The work that was done (e.g. Parliamentary workshops) had value.

Unfortunately, the longer-term problem is a structural one about the expectations of leaders, both the money that they are expected to be able to distribute to their supporters [...] and gender norms around leadership. These are very difficult issues to substantively address through an activity of PPEI’s scale..” [NZ High Commission]

The approach of working with political parties to increase their capacity and receptivity to recruit, develop, and run women candidates for election has been used successfully in numerous countries in the world. In many of the most developed countries, this approach, rather than a formal quota, has been adopted with success. In New Zealand, for example, in which in 1893 became the first independent nation to permit women to vote, but where there are no formal quotas, the 2017 election resulted in the highest ever number and proportion of women MPs in the country’s history, 46, or 38% of the 120-seat parliament. While this has occurred without a formal legal requirement such as a quota system, parties have taken various measures internally both to foster women’s candidacy through encouraging women to run, and in the case of some major parties, to assure gender equity through requiring party lists to place as many women as men in electoral positions where they are likely to be elected. These informal approaches focusing at the party level do not guarantee parity but have been shown to be effective in moving towards parity.

PPEI project design builds on this approach. In this region and in the PPEI countries, the presence and role of political parties is highly divergent, ranging from institutionalised party systems to countries with a large number of independent MPs and a multiplicity of small and loosely organised parties. Implementation of the party-based approach to gender equality therefore clearly has to be carried out on a country-by-country basis.

A strong working relationship has been developed in PNG with the Registrar of Political Parties, and successful training on measures to enhance women's candidacies held with representatives of 10 PNG political parties, including participation of a number of international parliamentarians and political figures from New Zealand, Netherlands, and Fiji. A series of one introductory and two follow-up seminars on enhancing women's representation was also held with political parties in Solomon Islands in 2017. In both countries, the presence of a registrar for political parties provided a key entry point.

The political party approach is well-tested internationally, and initial work has been successful, particularly where the state body responsible for registration of political parties has partnered with PPEI. Where political parties do not formally speaking exist (Tonga), and where they are very weak (or even in some cases primarily the vehicle of one person), the approach cannot work. With the likelihood of the legal clarification of political parties' status in Tonga, the approach could be tested there in a second phase. Cook Islands has a relatively well-institutionalized political party system, and also one of the higher proportions of women's representation (and leadership) in parliament, and thus would be another potential candidate country for expanded work in this area in a second phase.

SECTION SUMMARY

- *The project design and theory of change is articulated clearly in the initial project documentation;*
 - *The project is organized according to two main objectives; enabling parliaments to more effectively carry out their mandated roles; and enhancing women's representation and political leadership;*
 - *There are three specific results for objective one and two for objective two; these guide the activity design; activities and results are logically connected to their relevant objective;*
 - *Several PPEI parliaments have launched their own institutional development planning with project support; a future phase of PPEI should continue to support a strategic planning approach by parliaments and align PPEI supports to the relevant institutional development indicators;*
 - *The annual workplan planning process engaging the PPEI parliaments individually and collectively permitted an effective and inclusive planning that assured national ownership and facilitated successful activity implementation.*
-

3. Impact (meso) objectives

The impact or meso aspect of programme assessment examines the ways in which the beneficiary parliaments, through support of the project, have enhanced their functioning in the areas of support. This aspect of assessment provides the most direct measure of project impact, although projects may have deeper and more long-term effects through changing institutional approaches and political perspectives, which cannot easily be isolated from other environmental factors. The attainment of the objectives was reviewed by examining the main fields of intervention in each country and seeking changes in institutional processes.

Cook Islands

In Cook Islands, the project has directly supported a significant improvement in the public financial management capacities of the institution, both at the budget scrutiny and at the budget auditing phases. For the first time since independence, the budget was fully scrutinized by parliament (the proposed allocations to each ministry scrutinized by parliament before each vote) – according to a rational methodology for time allocation developed in conjunction with the parliament. And, also with the support of PPEI, for the first time, the Public Accounts Committee was established, and scrutinized the Auditor General reports. The PAC wrote and tabled their own committee report on the AG Reports.

These are substantial improvements in functioning, and are of particular significance in the context of national budgeting, as well as the potential for direct budget support by development partners, which requires robust national budget systems. Both budget scrutiny (indicator 18) and legislative budget expenditure oversight (indicator 31) are key elements of the *PEFA Framework for assessing public financial management*² which is an international standard for determining the robustness of national public financial management. From the information available to the assessment, this would likely result in an upwards revision in Cook Islands attainment on both I-18 and I-31 from a score of D (below international standard) to B.

*“I have seen obvious improvement in the debate on the Budget in this year’s debate due to the pre-sitting workshops we have had with the Officials in explaining the budget process which did not happen before. That’s a huge success and where there was always discontent amongst the Opposition, the Speaker with the training was able to use the SOs that allowed ample time for debate by allocating time to the budget items and things ran smoothly with praise by the opposition of the chance to debate better!!
[Parliamentary Speaker]*

Another area in which specific improvement was noted is in the effectiveness of women’s political leadership. Cook Islands has benefited from support to women’s political leadership through practice parliaments and the establishment of the network of women clerks. At 4 out of 24 members, plus the woman Speaker, Cook Islands already scores at the top end of the region in women’s political representation. At the budget debate session held in 2018,

² <https://pefa.org/content/pefa-framework>.

women members were particularly effective in raising concerns relevant to them, including those related to young women.

Papua New Guinea

As noted in the project reporting, and discussed with the project funder over the course of the PPEI project, parliamentary reform continues to be an incremental process in PNG. In terms of governance generally, the country faces a number of challenges including political instability, as well as high levels of reported corruption. The diversity and geography of the country renders effective citizen engagement difficult. PNG is one of the two countries within PPEI, along with Vanuatu, where there are currently no women MPs, which again reflects structural issues beyond parliament itself.

In this context the project focused on two main outcome objectives; strengthening of committees with a focus on improving the budgeting process in particular, and building political party capacity to support women candidates. At the outset of the project, although the parliament had 35 committees, few were functional, and as noted, there are no women MPs.

“There are many needs for improving the committee system. In fact many of the committees are not operational at all. The project has provided good training for committee staff. There are not enough of us to support all the committees, but we can focus on the committees that are functional, particularly the PAC. Standing orders need to be reviewed and the committee system rationalised. The project support will be very helpful for that.” [Parliamentary staff]

The project worked closely and over an extended period to enhance understanding of the role of parliamentary committees and particularly the importance of parliamentary engagement in the budget cycle. Two workshops with parliamentary staff that focused on committees, including Public Accounts Committees were conducted in 2016, followed by a planning session with senior secretariat staff in early 2017, and another, 2-day, training session in July 2017 with parliamentary staff, including representatives from Fiji, New Zealand, Queensland, and Trinidad and Tobago, as well as participation of Committee Clerks from Solomon Islands. In early 2018 another 2-day session was held, this time with Committee chairs and deputies, again engaging international representatives from the New Zealand, Trinidad and Tobago, and Fiji parliaments. This was followed up by an attachment in August 2018 to the New Zealand House of representative of two committee chairs and two committee staff – from the Plans and Estimates, and Public Accounts Committees. The two committees developed workplans. This led to planning for a ‘floating budget office’; the collaborative work of parliamentary staff from the region in support of a comprehensive budget briefing for the PNG parliament to analyse the 2019 budget, which was carried out on November 8 - 9 2018.

The extended work of the project on committees and particularly enhancement of the budget scrutiny and oversight processes has therefore resulted in a structured approach to finance-related committees’ work, and led to enhanced budget scrutiny for the 2019 budget. This establishes a solid base for further support work to enable the two committees to implement

their workplan and further enhance parliament's role in assuring effective public financial management.

The project carried out a 'practice parliament' for potential women candidates in the run-up to the 2017 election. Although no women were elected, the number of women candidates increased from 135 in the previous elections of 2012 to 165, and proportionately from 3.9% to 4.9%.

Through the entry point of the Registrar of Political Parties, the project built a foundation for work with political parties on enhanced internal policies and practices to foster more women candidates, particularly in seats where the party has a chance of elected a candidate. This entry point should be further developed in a second phase; it would be helpful to develop in conjunction with the Registrar a multi-year workplan for support to this work.

Solomon Islands

The work with the Solomon Islands has focused on integrating sustainable development benchmarks into the oversight work of the parliament, enhancing parliamentary oversight of the budget cycle, and working with practice parliaments and political parties to enhance opportunities for women's political leadership.

The work with Solomon Islands has enabled an institutional development approach, the linking of parliamentary oversight work with development outcomes, and the strengthening of parliamentary oversight of government work at both the budget scrutiny and audit phases of the annual cycle. These are all clear outcomes of the project work, also facilitated by the strong commitment of the parliamentary leadership to a development approach.

PPEI supported parliament in oversight missions of three committees to the isolated eastern Temotu region of the country, focused on rising sea level, on border security, and on quality of health care. This integration of SDGs into committee work enables parliamentary oversight based on development objectives and citizen input, thus connecting state budgeting and programming to human development outcomes. Following this initiative, UNDP supported the Solomon Islands parliament's development of a full committee review that took into account the focus on development outcomes, and considered organizational and resources implications. This promising approach resulted in the development and adoption of a Strategic Development Plan for the Solomon Islands Parliament 2017 – 2021, an important programme outcome that shifts the institution towards an organizational development framework. The Strategic Development Plan will require continuing follow-up in a future phase of support to the project. Integration of governance outcome oversight into committee workplans will ensure consistency and sustainability of committee work; however, this will depend on parliamentary committee resources (and resource prioritisation) as well as initial support from PPEI, again dependent on available financing.

"We appreciate the project's emphasis on building up the capacity of the local parliamentary staff, to help them to play their role as neutral and professional staff. We appreciate the international experts that have come to support the parliament, as well as the opportunity to exchange with parliaments in the region, and learn from them."
[Parliamentary clerk]

The project carried out extensive work to support strengthening of parliamentary engagement in the national budget process. This included sponsorship of participation in regional public financial management forums, in staff attachments to institutionally developed parliaments, and in organization of a ‘floating budget office’ to enable enhanced budget scrutiny.

In relation to budget analysis carried out of the 2018 budget with PPEI support, the Prime Minister noted that:

“Allow us to read the report, if that is okay with you, we would like to do that, to read the report and it is the thickest report ever in the history of this Parliament, the Committee has done a very good work because we have given them good time and that is why they came up with this very big report.”

PPEI carried out several activities in support of enhanced women’s representation in the Solomon Islands, again primarily focused on Women’s Practice Parliaments, and work with political parties through the Registrar of Political Parties. A national election is anticipated for early 2019, which will provide an indication of the short-term results of the specific activities that have been carried out, including a practice parliament and the workshops with political parties. It would be important at that point, following the elections, to develop a balance sheet of activities carried out, and impacts, and to work with the incoming parliament as well as the Registrar of parties on a renewed strategy for enhancing women’s political leadership.

Tonga

Tonga is in transition towards a constitutional monarchy, in which the role of parliament must necessarily change in order to assume its expanded functions, while the exact interpretation of the reforms that have been launched over the past decade remains contested by different parts of Tongan society. In this circumstance, the support of the project has been particularly important in assisting the leadership of the secretariat to navigate sensitive political issues related to revision of the standing orders and rules of procedure, including the process for conducting votes of no confidence in the government. The support provided to the parliament by PPEI, including through provision of international constitutional expertise, enable these and other rules interpretation issues to be addressed smoothly, a clear project impact on institutional functioning in objective 2.1.A.

“The project provided us high quality expertise that helped us to deal with a controversial issue of interpretation of the rules that allowed a successful resolution.” [Parliamentary clerk]

The support to a revised rules framework enabled the parliament to restore normal parliamentary processes that had fallen into disuse, such as the re-restoration of an Oral Question period, another step towards parliament exercising an effective oversight role.

The Tongan parliament has also developed a corporate plan, and the project has been able to support processes to implement the plan including the application of KPIs to the different administrative departments.

Further, the project has supported integration of development outcomes in parliamentary work, including capacity building on climate change and climate change financing, on agriculture and fisheries (including on-the-ground hearings engaging citizens), transparency and anti-corruption (SDG16), and on effective development and management of community development funds. In a future stage it will be important to continue integration of these development oversight approaches into the medium term corporate planning so that there is a consistent and programmed follow-up.

Project support to enhanced women's participation involved efforts to establish a practice parliament that eventually could not be realised for scheduling reasons, and an attachment of two women MPs to the New Zealand parliament. The informal nature of political parties in Tonga (all candidates effectively must run as independents although they may actually be part of a political group) and the consequent large number of independent MPs means that it is difficult to work with parties on increasing women's political representation. It will be useful in the development of a further phase of the project to engage key political and gender equality actors in Tonga to develop a renewed plan for enhanced women's participation, and to expand the project's work to facilitate youth parliaments.

"We would be keen to see a regular/annual youth parliament. There is one currently going on which has a great programme and is looking at really interesting issues." [New Zealand High Commission]

While not included in the project initial planning for obvious reasons, the PPEI project responded to support re-establishment of a functional assembly following the destruction of the parliament building during Cyclone Gita in February 2018. The convening power of the project and of the United Nations as a whole was effective in bringing together different development partners to ensure that facilities and necessary equipment were mobilised in order to allow the next parliamentary session to proceed in a temporary facility.

Vanuatu

The project did not begin work in Vanuatu until the first quarter of 2018, and therefore it is very early to measure direct project impact. The keystone initial activity was the joint needs assessment carried out jointly by UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Subsequent activities have focused on support to enhanced organization and functioning of committees and staff support to the committees, and enhancing the functioning of the Hansard unit. A

"We have been really happy with the collaboration. We are a young parliament. There are so many things to learn that we do not have experience with here; being able to see how other more developed parliaments organize their Hansard work is particularly valuable and is a basis for planning a more efficient system" [Parliamentary staff member]

workplan for support to PAC for 2018 has been developed jointly with the parliament, and its first steps are already implemented. In the first 8 months of the year, the PAC quadrupled the number of its meetings compared to the previous year, and held three meetings with the Auditor General (one aiming at establishing collaboration mechanisms, and the two others to start working on the AG reports).

Given that the Needs Assessment provides a comprehensive analysis of the parliament's challenges and needs, this document can form the basis for collaborative planning of a future phase of PPEI support to the institution. One area that will be a priority is focusing on enhancing gender equality. The Parliament of Vanuatu has no women members. Only five women have ever been elected to parliament. A multi-stakeholder strategy engaging national and international actors is needed in order to enable Vanuatu to rectify this situation in accordance with the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality commitment of 2012. A next phase of PPEI can play an important role in such a broader multi-faceted approach.

SECTION SUMMARY

- *The project's objectives of institutional strengthening and enhancing women's political leadership have a medium-to long term horizon for overall impact;*
- *However, the project was able to leverage a number of important short-medium term improvements in parliamentary functioning attributable to the project's support. These include:*
- *Substantial enhancement in Cook islands' overall national public financial management framework through the activation of the parliament's Public Accounts Committee, and through detailed scrutiny of the budget proposal;*
- *Establishment of an effective multi-country 'floating budget office' that brings together Pacific region and international parliamentary staff to enable intensive analysis of budget documents, enabling MPs to carry out effective scrutiny. This is a model for sustainable strengthening of budgetary work in small parliaments;*
- *Support to the revision of Tonga parliamentary rules that permitted efficient and timely resolution of a potentially dangerous constitutional conflict;*
- *In four of the five parliaments, enhancement of the institutional strategic planning process to enable nationally driven institutional development; key to sustainable parliamentary strengthening;*
- *The Women's Practice Parliaments and work with political parties is appreciated by beneficiaries; PPEI parliaments continue to have low levels of women's representation, and in a second phase a multi-faceted approach including engagement with other development partners and local actors working to increase women's political representation will be a priority.*

4. Organization of project activities

An assessment of a programme should include tracking of activities carried out, compared against plans. The assessment also asked the interview respondents to describe their engagement with the different activities carried out in their countries, and their impressions of the strengths and weaknesses of the activities.

The parliamentary beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the activities programmed, with no specific criticisms or concerns mentioned by any of the respondents. The New Zealand High Commission representatives also expressed satisfaction with the events that they had attended. Three parliamentary beneficiaries underlined their appreciation that the activities had been planned jointly at the annual project planning workshop, and that thus the work plan was as expected. These sessions, which have involved collective and then bilateral parliament-project discussions, resulted in the development of detailed activity plans for 2016, 2017, and 2018. These activity plans were then translated into the annual project workplan matrix, which was also used for reporting purposes.

“The Experts do know their work and it is about the need of the partner, and the support or assistance provided is appropriate to the need and sustainability. I like the idea that we decide what our needs are and there is consultation with mutual agreement before the actions are taken and there is room or flexibility to adjust where necessary. It is my experience that we have not been forced or pushed in to any activities but rather talked, planned and agreed before executing the activities.” [Speaker]

Reporting to the donor is provided on a three-monthly and annual basis. The three-monthly reports are mainly narrative in form. Their format changed during the project – in quarter one 2017 - from reporting by outputs to reporting by country. This made the reports easier to follow. In addition, an updated monitoring and assessment framework was developed in 2018 with the aim of enhancing impact measurement. Comprehensive records are kept of project activities and products, which were made available for review, and the records were consistent with the reporting.

Annual reporting was carried out based on the targets established for each year following the planning workshop. They show that the activity targets were largely met both for the first and second year of the project.

2016 Activity Targets	Number of activity targets 2016	Activity targets 2016 fully attained	Activity targets 2016 partially attained	Activity targets 2016 not met
2.1.A (Institutional strengthening)	5	3	2	0
2.1.B (Development focus)	1	1	0	0

2.1.C (Enhanced PFM role	3	3	0	0
2.6.A (capacity building women candidates)	2	2	0	0
2.6.B (political parties and gender equality)	1	1	0	0

2017 Activity Targets	Number of activity targets 2017	Activity targets 2017 fully attained	Activity targets 2017 partially attained	Activity targets 2017 not met
2.1.A (Institutional strengthening)	5	5	0	0
2.1.B (Development focus)	2	1	1	0
2.1.C (Enhanced PFM role	3	3	0	0
2.6.A (capacity building women candidates)	2	2	0	0
2.6.B (political parties and gender equality)	1	0	1	0

Totals 2016 and 2017 **25** **21 (84%)** **4 (16%)** **0**

Beneficiaries spoke universally positively in regard to their interactions with both professional and administrative staff. Although two beneficiaries said that administrative processes were sometimes quite a burden, they said that the UNDP staff supported them in doing the necessary paperwork.

There was consistently positive feedback on event and activity organization within the project, on the quality of experts that were provided through the project, as well as the

“The project team is very supportive and we have an excellent collaboration. Sometimes the rules on contracting are quite rigid and we have not always been able to hire national experts.” [Parliamentary clerk]

opportunities provided for international learning. The activities reviewed in the assessment had all achieved attendance as expected, were accompanied by a written activity report, as well as a participant evaluation.

“One thing I would like to see is some follow-up after events, to get some feedback about how the event went, the next steps planned. We find the events themselves are well-organized and well-run, but often we don’t have a good picture of how the event fits into the broader strategy to work with the parliament.” [NZ High Commission]

The annual reporting is still organized based mainly on the results aspect of the programme matrix. Given that the project operates in five very divergent national environments where the specific actions to meet the objectives can vary substantially, and where certain objectives may not be realistic in some periods, it would be useful to also report annually on country objectives and results. Although this information is available by accessing the comprehensive reporting of “Reports Against Targets”, this does not necessarily give an overview of progress and challenges in each country.

SECTION SUMMARY

- *The activities were efficiently organized with positive feedback from all beneficiaries on the close collaboration between project staff and the beneficiary parliaments;*
- *The delivery rate in terms of activities completed versus activities planned was very high, with 100% fully or partially completed, and 84% fully completed;*
- *Both beneficiaries and NZ High Commissions commented on the high quality of activity content and facilitators;*
- *For a second phase, reporting should include a country-by-country section which will provide a clearer picture of progress towards each country’s project annual workplans;*
- *Generally, NZ High Commissions felt the project had engaged them and kept them well informed of activities, however follow-up with the High Commission to provide a briefing after the activity, on its results and planned future steps should be integrated into each activity.*

5. Conclusions and recommendations

A solid base for parliamentary development in the five parliaments has been established by the PPEI project. Its results provide a strong justification for continuing support which will build on the institutional development framework and relationships of confidence that have been established. Governance strengthening is a long-term process that involves the gradual building of effective and accountable institutions. One factor to be further emphasized in a second phase is the need for the role of parliaments to be better understood by citizens, as well as for parliaments to increase opportunities for citizen engagement in decision-making. This is important in countering informal decision-making which inevitably reduces governance transparency, solidifies existing power imbalances, and can hamper needed reforms.

In planning for future work, the following key recommendations are proposed:

- Support development and enhancement of medium to long term institutional development plans by each of the five parliaments, fostering national ownership, enabling the planning of development activities within a structured framework and avoiding ad hoc initiatives;
- Build upon the innovative and sustainable strategy of shared learning piloted in the floating budget office, in which key staff from the five parliaments, from developed country parliaments (and where appropriate, other non-focus country Pacific Islands parliaments) work together to develop and implement enhanced parliamentary functions, especially related to committee oversight work, budget scrutiny, and budget accounting;
- Deepen the process of translating global and national development objectives (such as the SDGs) into the practical work of parliament, particularly through integration of development goals into the oversight work of parliamentary committees. The project has demonstrated the viability of this approach, and a next phase should support development and implementation of medium-term committee plans that use SDG and national development goals as a framework for evaluating legislation, policy, and government programmes;
- Review and enhance the strategy for enhancing women's political representation and leadership. The project has efficiently carried out the planned activities and has enabled women leaders to strengthen their skills, and increased attention of parties to the need for gender equality in political life and tools to achieve it. Gender inequality in political leadership in the region remains a major outstanding development and governance issue. A next project stage should look at means to expand the project partners engaged specifically on this issue, to include civil society, relevant government ministries, and other key social actors. This will enable activities to be planned that follow up on and maximize impact of the practice parliaments.

“One area where we would like support is in civic education, a public outreach programme. We don’t have the funds to develop and carry out an educational programme on the role of parliament. We particularly need civic education to inspire youth to become more involved.” [Parliamentary Clerk]

- Enhance the understanding of citizens and civil society on the roles of parliament, and develop opportunities for structured citizen engagement in parliamentary processes through tools including parliamentary hearings, outreach to constituencies, and improved two-way parliamentary communications using both traditional and new technologies;
- Foster closer engagement of the New Zealand House of Representatives as a project partner, including as a member of the project board, and participation in annual project planning workshops with the beneficiary parliaments, allowing enhanced planning of NZ technical support;
- An enhanced system for developing and tracking country-level objectives and impacts, with clear integration into each parliament’s institutional development strategy, with support to that strategy development and implementation as needed and requested. The annual PPEI planning process includes bilateral discussions with individual parliaments and agreement on an annual workplan, however in reporting the activities are grouped across countries under the 5 results areas. This will enhance the project’s institutional development focus;
- Enable non-focus parliaments within the region to benefit from PPEI-II support on an as-needed basis. This could take two forms; staff from non-focus countries could participate when multi-country activities are conducted such as the ‘floating budget office’, thus benefitting from PPEI core capacity-building; and, one-time support could be provided for specific strengthening activities engaged by non-focus country parliaments that are also not covered by other UNDP strengthening projects, which could include Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Palau.

Appendix One Assessment Interviews

PPEI Parliament Representatives

Country	Name	Position
Cook Islands	Hon. Niki Rattle	Speaker
Papua New Guinea	Mr. Werner Cohill	Manager, Secretariat, Parliament Committee National
Solomon Islands	Mr. David Kusilifu	Deputy Clerk
Tonga	Ms. Gloria Poleo	Clerk
Vanuatu	M. Gaetan Ruru	Hansard team leader and inter-parliamentary cooperation officer

New Zealand Contacts (Wellington & Pacific Missions)

Country	Name	Position
New Zealand	Ms. Elise Trewick	Development Officer, Governance Sustainable Economic Development Division, Wellington
Cook Islands	Ms. Samantha Beckett	Deputy High Commissioner New Zealand High Commission, Rarotonga
Papua New Guinea	Ms. Rachel McCarthy	Second Secretary New Zealand High Commission, Port Moresby
	William Chisholm	Former First Secretary New Zealand High Commission, Port Moresby

Solomon Islands	Mr. Tim Breese	New Zealand Deputy High Commissioner, Honiara, Solomon Islands
Tonga	Ms. Elena Procuta	Deputy Head of Mission and First Secretary – Development, New Zealand High Commission, Tonga
Vanuatu	Mr. Jeongmin Park	Deputy High Commissioner New Zealand High Commission, Vanuatu

UNDP

Location	Name	Position
Pacific Office, Suva, Fiji	Dyfan Jones	Effective Governance Team Leader / Parliamentary Development Specialist
Pacific Office, Suva, Fiji	Jean-Raphael Giuliani	Parliamentary Development Specialist
Pacific Office, Suva, Fiji	Nanise Saune	Deputy Effective Governance Team Leader & Programme Manager (Parliamentary Development & Women in Politics)
Pacific Office, Suva, Fiji	Isikeli Valemei	Governance Associate
Pacific Office, Suva, Fiji	Luisa Senibulu	Governance Analyst
Melbourne, Australia	Charmaine Rodrigues	Independent project consultant, gender and parliaments
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea	Julie Bukikun	Assistant Resident Representative, Papua New Guinea

Appendix Two: Introduction & key questions - Parliamentary Representatives

Evaluation, Pacific Parliamentary Effectiveness Initiative (PPEI)
Jonathan Murphy, international parliamentary development consultant

Background

The Pacific Parliamentary Effectiveness Initiative (PPEI), is a three-year project, running from 2016 – 2019, originally designed to provide support to the Parliament of Cook Islands, Tonga, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Solomon Islands in undertaking their legislative, oversight and representation functions. In September 2017, Vanuatu was added to the project. PPEI is financed by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) Aid Programme, and delivered by UNDP.

PPEI has implemented a range of country level and regional initiatives to increase the capacity of national parliaments. Through strengthening parliaments' effectiveness to carry out their mandated rules, PPEI aims to enable parliaments to engage with key development issues and to increase the political participation of women.

The main results that the project aims to achieve include:

- Parliamentary secretariats are better able to provide MPs with adequate support, including the delivery of induction training for new members, research and preparation of briefing on key development issues
- Cross-cutting development issues are mainstreamed in Pacific parliaments
- Parliaments in the four countries will have consistently stronger budget debates and effective public accounts committee processes in operation
- Capacity of potential women candidates to campaign and engage in policy debates increased through provision of training and capacity building activities
- Increased number of women candidates selected by political parties in selected Pacific countries

Evaluation

PPEI is in its final year of implementation, and UNDP, and New Zealand MFAT, would like to assess the progress of the project, in order to identify strengths of the Initiative, as well as challenges it has faced. This is a forward-looking evaluation that is intended to gather lessons learned from project implementation to date, as a basis for planning future support to parliaments in the region.

The evaluation is being carried out by a desk review of project materials, reports, etc., and a series of interviews primarily carried out by telephone/Skype with a) the project's main beneficiaries in the five parliaments, b) the representatives of MFAT engaged with the programme both from Wellington and in-country, c) the staff and consultants of UNDP, and d) other key informants. The interview is planned to take a maximum of 30-40 minutes. Both UNDP and I, as evaluator, would like to thank you for taking your valuable time to help us understand how we can better serve you, and all parliaments in the region.

Key questions

The key questions that the evaluation wishes to learn from the beneficiary parliaments include the following. However, the evaluator is interested in any comments and suggestions that you may have regarding the current and future programming to support parliamentary strengthening in your country and in the region.

1. Please describe your engagement with the PPEI. What project activities have you participated in, or are aware of?
2. Which of the project objectives of PPEI listed above have you been involved with? As far as you are concerned, how successful has PPEI been in achieving those objectives?
3. Overall, what would you say are the strengths of the PPEI?
4. What are PPEI's challenges? What could it have done better?
5. How well have the PPEI activities been planned and carried out, and how effective has been the communication with PPEI's staff team? Are there ways that planning, and project communications, could be improved?
6. The objective of PPEI is, of course, to strengthen parliament. To what extent would you say that your parliament has become stronger as a result of the PPEI?
7. What are the best way(s) to measure and demonstrate that parliament has become more effective over the period of the PPEI?
8. Have you received any support from PPEI in measuring the impact of the activities they have carried out, and in measuring the increased effectiveness of your parliament?
9. How aware do you think are key actors outside parliament regarding PPEI and its support to parliamentary strengthening? Government? Media? Civil society? Citizens? The international community?
10. When you think about possible future support to your parliament, building on the work of PPEI, what would be your main wishes and recommendations?
11. Looking forward, one of the areas being considered for support is in helping parliament to enhance outreach and engagement with citizens, and to help parliament to carry out civic education, so that citizens understand better the role and importance of parliaments. Do you think support in these areas would be useful for your parliament? Do you have any specific ideas about the kind of parliamentary outreach and civic education that would be beneficial?

This is just a framework for discussion, and I encourage you to raise other questions, concerns, or requests during our conversation. I look forward to talking with you.

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