

Evaluation of the UNDP Fiji Parliament Institutional Strengthening Project

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Final Report
June 2007

*The views expressed in this report are those of the authors
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Project Evaluation is to review what the Fiji Parliamentary Support Project (PSP) was designed to do, what it achieved, and what it still needs to do. These findings, in turn, form the basis for recommendations to shape future decisions about the Project.

Project planning began with a Legislative Needs Assessment conducted in 2002. After a period of participatory planning involving UNDP and Fiji stakeholders, participants agreed to a plan in 2005. Little, however, was initially accomplished because of failures to attract needed donor support and the shortcomings of a project management structure that depended on Secretariat leadership to run project affairs on top of their regular responsibilities. This logjam was broken by the March 2006 TriPartite Review which decided on a partial redesign with a new delivery system (via a “new graduates program,” the secondment of a Project Manager from the Fiji Parliamentary Secretariat and a narrowing of the short-term outputs of the Project to focus on an Induction Programme for MPs and organizational reform.

Once the Project Manager was on board, the Project was both busy and by most accounts successful. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the “new graduates” program, which saw UNDP recruit 7 graduates directly to work within the Parliamentary Secretariat. The Induction Program for MPs run in mid-2006 was also considered a major success. A number of follow-up training activities were also undertaken. Initial steps were taken in other areas, including staff reorganization and augmentation of committee support.

The December 2006 coup led to the dissolution of Parliament and put its future development on hold. Presently, it is understood that the Interim Government is still deciding on the deployment of parliamentary staff during the period that there is no Parliament to serve. The leadership of the Parliamentary Secretariat and Project Staff are keen to ensure senior staff are retained within the Secretariat and are focused on preserving the knowledge of the staff leadership, reforming the staffing structure, and preparing to support the next Parliament with an improved staff apparatus.

The Evaluation Team recommends that the UNDP take advantage of the window of opportunity offered by the suspension of parliament and use the next phase of the project to advance the Secretariat reorganization and capacity-building agenda defined initially by the LNA. This will involve the retention of the Project Manager and some graduate staff, a planning process involving key parliamentary and government stakeholders, and a project redesign focused on the capacity and organizational needs of the Secretariat to support Parliament’s lawmaking, representation and oversight functions when it resumes. While much is still uncertain, it is widely believed that Parliament will resume operation in 2009-10, and the quality of its deliberations and contributions to Fijian life will depend, in part, on the quality of support its members and committees receive from their staff.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority action:

Recommendation 24: UNDP should convene a meeting with key Government and Parliamentary stakeholders as a matter of priority to discuss the future of the Project.

Recommendation 25: UNDP should retain the option of acting quickly and effectively by retaining the Project Manager and an agreed number of graduates to assist him.

Recommendation 26: UNDP should strongly urge the Interim Government to retain at least a skeleton Secretariat staff, including the Acting Secretary General, the Senate Secretary, and Division Heads.

Redesign:

Recommendation 4: Reconsider the inclusion of a UNDP-funded graduate trainee program in projects where the Parliamentary Secretariat already has a sizeable staff who are themselves in need of capacity-building.

Recommendation 5: Consider developing an ongoing professional development programme for Members of Parliament that addresses specific development issues such as the implementation of the MDGs; and incorporate this programme into the future planning documentation.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that the future (re)designs recognize the unstable political environment within which MPs and the Parliamentary Secretariat operate, and integrate conflict-sensitive programming accordingly.

Recommendation 7: Ensure all project documents must properly identify all key risks and strategies must be developed and integrated into the project design.

Recommendation 8: Include indicators in the Project Design which are qualitative, quantitative and/or time bound (QQT) and capable of being monitored and include guidance in the Project Design regarding the method(s) for assessing indicators.

Recommendation 18: Consider the identification of a “signature activity” for subsequent parliamentary support programs. Choose an activity that is visible, is useful to a variety of parliamentary stakeholders, and which has the promise of sustainability if it develops supporters.

Recommendation 22: Subsequent programming should proceed on the basis that the basic needs of the Fijian Parliament identified in the LNA continue to require support.

Recommendation 23: Sustainability planning should be integrated into individual activities as well as overarching components, particularly at the point of redesign.

Recommendation 27: The Project should provide training and/or identify training opportunities (offered by other parliaments and parliamentary assistance organizations) to better equip the Secretariat’s management to delegate, mentor and train Parliamentary staff.

Recommendation 28: The UNDP Project provide support to senior Secretariat staff to review and revise the Secretariat organizational structure and position descriptions, in collaboration with the Public Service Commission. Funds should be made

available to bring in an expert human resource consultant with parliamentary experience if requested by the Secretariat.

Recommendation 29: The Project should work to clear up the back log of Secretariat work in the Procedural office—Journals and Speaker’s rulings and other areas according to priorities established by the Project Manager in consultation with other stakeholders.

Recommendation 30: The Project should support codification and systematization of procedures in both Houses of Parliament (through a review of the Standing Orders), for the management of committee business, for the management of information systems, and other operational matters.

Recommendation 31: Any redesign of programming to prepare for the new parliament should consider programming on conflict, gender, human rights and MDGs delivered through activities centered on decisions that Parliament will have to make.

Project Management:

Recommendation 1: The role and responsibilities of the Project Manger should be spelled out in the Project Document, and should include appropriate qualifications and clarification of their role in subsequent refinements of the Project Design.

Recommendation 9: Appoint a Project Manager as the first step in the implementation process, especially when the Project Design requires the management of multiple components.

Recommendation 3: The operational role of the Secretary General should be reduced in favor of a broader policy making and oversight role. The Project Manager and a counterpart at senior management level should be responsible for day-to-day operational issues.

Recommendation 12: All reporting templates should include a requirement to report on risk identification and management.

Recommendation 17: Review the necessity of current reporting and meeting requirements.

UNDP Management:

Recommendation 10: Communicate more clearly and regularly with MOF and the Project Manager regarding financial management issues, including anticipated disbursements and financial reporting requirements.

Recommendation 13: Ensure that management channels within the MCO are clear and all parties understand their roles, so that staff have clear lines of accountability when dealing with more complex strategic issues, such as handling a project following a coup.

Recommendation 14: Review the “management by exception” approach to project management with a view to ensuring that the UNDP MCO is alert for opportunities to engage in support of projects.

Recommendation 15: Clarify who within the UNDP MCO has overall responsibility for project monitoring and specifically, what the role is of DSU Officers and Thematic Advisors in relation to project staff and in relation to each other.

Recommendation 16: Provide proper briefings to Project Managers regarding their reporting requirements and provide reporting templates to Project Managers (for annual reports and quarterly reports).

Recommendation 19: Ensure that Project staff and the responsible parties at UNDP hold regular meetings or phone conferences to discuss project activities and problems so that the participants are aware of what is happening and why.

Recommendation 11: The officer with responsibility for strategic oversight of the Project and strategic decision-making within the UNDP MCO must be clearly identified.

Recommendation 21: Minimize delays by processing decisions in parallel rather than serially, insofar as possible.

Lessons learned:

Recommendation 2: At the point it became clear that donor funding was not immediately available to the Project, consideration should have been given to a redesign, so that the Project had realistic objectives vis a vis available resources. A redesign point could have been included to account for upscaling of the Project if/when donor resources became available.

Recommendation 20: Decisions about programmatic aspects must be made quickly after the needs assessment so that donor commitments can be secured and implementation progressed under the most favorable conditions.

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this country Evaluation is to examine what the Fiji Parliamentary Support Project (PSP) did, what it achieved, and the reasons for these things. These findings, in turn, will form the basis for recommendations to shape decision making about the configuration of efforts in the future. This Report should be read in conjunction with the separate Multi-Country Reflection on Parliamentary Support Projects which considers the good practices and lessons learned from the evaluation of all four of the UNDP's PSPs (in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Marshall Islands) and draws more general conclusions from the variation among the Projects. That Report can be used to inform subsequent decisions about legislative development in the region and elsewhere.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

2. The Fiji Legislative Needs Assessment (LNA) was conducted in 2002. In March 2002, representatives from the Fijian Parliament endorsed the LNA's findings and agreed to a program aimed at increasing their capacity to legislate and to represent constituents.¹ The details were worked out in a Project Document formulated between 2002 and 2003. This Project Document - for a 30 month, \$366,200 USD program - was ultimately signed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Chief Executive Officer of the Foreign Ministry, and the UNDP Resident Representative.² That Project Document described the Secretariat as the major target of the Project's efforts. The Secretariat was to be helped to develop their research and library services, their capacity to support committees, and to educate and deal with the public. Members of Parliament were to receive an induction/orientation as well as more specialized instruction in workshops on selected topics. Also included were plans to review the Standing Orders and develop a Parliamentary Manual for both Houses.
3. Three years lapsed between the endorsement of the LNA in early 2002 and commencement of project implementation in November 2005. The first Project Progress Report produced by the Project notes that key dates for the Project are³:
 - Legislative Needs Assessment - 2002
 - Consultation on project formulation - 2003
 - Project appraisal and approval - October 2004
 - Signing by Government - February 2005
 - Signing by UNDP - 8 September 2005 (Source: MCO)
 - Actual implementation of Activities - November-December 2005
 - Tripartite Review and project redesign - March 2006
 - Hiring of Project Manager - 16 May 2006
4. A Project Working Group (PWG) of staff, parliamentary leadership and Government was supposed to be created to oversee the process. The PWG did not meet regularly as a group, although the Project Manager dealt with some of its

¹ Strengthening Legislative and Representative Capacity of the Parliament Project Document, date illegible.

² The Strengthening Legislative and Representative Capacity of Parliament Project Document refers to a 2003-2007 program. This document is signed by the above referred to parties. However, MCO records indicate that the UNDP signed the project document on 8 September 2005.

³ Fiji Parliament Institutional Strengthening Project, Third Quarter Report 2006.

members on a continuous basis. A few activities were initiated during 2005, prior to a Project Manager being recruited, most notably, some computer purchases. However, major initiatives waited for the appointment of a Project Manager, which would take another four months. The first Progress Report for the Project characterized this period as producing a “very limited number of activities relating to target outputs to achieve strengthening the Parliament Secretariat...”⁴

5. After a slow start, once the Project Manager was on board, the Project was both busy and by most accounts successful. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the “new graduates” program, which saw UNDP recruit 7 graduates directly to work within the Parliamentary Secretariat. The Induction Program for MPs run in mid-2006 was also considered a major success. A number of follow-up training activities were also undertaken.
6. The Project’s activities were severely impacted by the coup of 5 December 2006. Since then, Parliament has been shut down as a representative institution and Parliamentary Secretariat staff are facing redeployment into the civil service. Since the coup, and in the absence of a UNDP determination on how to proceed, the Project has been engaged in catching up on backlogs in records and other activities. More significantly, the Secretary of the House of Representatives, with the assistance of the Project Manager and others, are engaged in efforts to keep a core of parliamentary staff available for the eventual restart of Parliament. The goal is to have enough core staff in place so that when the new Fijian Parliament is elected, there will be enough institutional support left in place to function. At the time of writing, 13 staff have already been redeployed, 6 are awaiting redeployment, and 19 are being retained. It is understood that in June 2007, the retention of the remaining professional staff will be considered.

DESIGN AND PLANNING

Design

7. There were three stages in the design process: (1) the Legislative Needs Assessment (LNA) which identified key challenges and recommended solutions; (2) the 2005 agreement on a Project Document, which was produced following a long period of consultation (including a workshop for members of both Houses to discuss the LNA); and (3) what could be described as a ‘redesign’ following the Tripartite Review meeting in March 2006 (though this was less a redesign than a kick-starting of the existing project design).
8. The recommendations of the 2002 LNA were premised on the “notion that reform should focus on strengthening existing dialogue amongst the stakeholders, to ensure maximum support for reform”. The LNA identified a number of weaknesses in the Parliament, which can be summarized as follows:
 - Weak human resource capacity in the Parliamentary Secretariat, highlighted by an over-reliance on a few key staff members capable of delivering services, resulting in poor service delivery to Members (e.g. in terms of the quality of the procedural advice, research and analysis, and support for Parliament’s oversight function);

⁴ Fiji Parliament Institutional Strengthening Project, Third Quarter Report 2006.

- A dominant Executive; and
 - Poor understanding on the part of Members as to their role and responsibilities, which is reflected more broadly in the public.
9. The principal design document is the Project Document agreed between the Parliament, Government of Fiji and the UNDP, signed in February 2005. The Project Document identifies the need to create a more stable political climate in Fiji. Strengthening Parliament is seen as a major step in achieving this. Drawing on the LNA findings, the Project Document outlines six specific problem areas:
- Capacity of the Parliamentary Secretariat
 - Committees and Public Hearings
 - Research and Information Unit
 - Public and Media Relations
 - Information Technology, and
 - Constituency Service and Relations.
10. The Project Document proposed a twofold approach to addressing these problems:
- (i) Strengthening the capacity of the Parliament Secretariat to support Members. The main activity proposed was a review of the organizational structure of the Parliament Secretariat.
 - (ii) Improving the representative role of Parliament through greater public input into legislative and oversight processes and increased public outreach. This activity appears to have been the subject of some debate regarding how best to tackle the problem. Accordingly, the Project Document leaves the delivery mechanisms for this particular activity subject to future consideration.
11. The Fiji Parliamentary Strengthening Project is part of a broader UNDP Fiji Good Governance Program which comprises 3 components: (1) support to Parliament; (2) support for civic education via the formal education sector; and (3) support for informal sector civic education activities. The parliamentary support component was designed to assist the Fiji Parliament to “perform its function more effectively, and to make it more accessible to the people”.⁵ It was anticipated that civic education activities under the broader Programme would develop public awareness and facilitate participation from the public into the legislative, representative and oversight roles of the parliament. It was envisaged that Project activities would be “complemented with specialist input and expertise for in-country initiatives where relevant” via the UNDP new Pacific Centre Governance Team. However, the Pacific Centre Regional Pacific Legislative Strengthening Expert was only brought on board in early 2007.
12. The Evaluation Team concludes that the design of the Fiji Project was and is feasible. It identifies the main areas of the Parliament requiring support, outlines an approach for addressing these and outlines a monitoring and oversight regime, and it does so within the context of improving governance standards generally in Fiji. However, the Team has three areas of concern with the design. Firstly, there are problems in the design of the delivery mechanism for the Project’s goals (see paragraphs 16-19 below for more in respect of the graduate trainee program as a delivery mechanism).

⁵ Strengthening Legislative and Representative Capacity of Parliament Project Document.

13. Secondly, the initial Project Design failed to adequately address the role of the Project Manager, clearly the most important role in the delivery mechanism.⁶ The position of Project Manager is given only passing mention in the Project Design. By way of illustration, the Project Document includes draft terms of reference for a consultant to undertake a review of the Secretariat structure and a Sector Committee Adviser, but the Project Document reviewed by the Evaluation Team does not include terms of reference for the Project Manager. Crucial issues such as the role of the Project Manager and the qualifications and experience required for the position do not appear to have been addressed at the outset.

Recommendation 1: The role and responsibilities of the Project Manger should be spelled out in the Project Document, and should include appropriate qualifications and clarification of their role in subsequent refinements of the Project Design.

14. Thirdly, it is of concern that weak assumptions were made about the resource environment in which the Project would operate. It is understood that while the Project was being developed, ongoing discussions were had with a donor contact, but that person was subsequently replaced by another either unfamiliar with the Project plan who was less supportive of it.⁷ It is understood that there were other attempts to mobilize resources made by the UNDP Programme Portfolio Manager, but these did not yield results. There appears to have been a misplaced optimism, as expressed in the Project Document, that donors would come on-board, and provide money so that a suitable Project Manager could be recruited, and that the plan would be revised and additional detail decisions made as necessary. The delivery mechanism in the Project Design was to be a ‘work-in-progress’, subject to the commitment of adequate resources and the recruitment of a suitable Project Manager. After these ingredients were secured there would be further deliberations about how to achieve other Project goals, such as supporting public outreach. On the one hand, there is a useful degree of flexibility allowed for in the design, intended to allow the Project to adapt to changing circumstances and the entry of new stakeholders such as donors. On the other hand, the design was possibly too flexible at this initial and crucial stage and may have contributed to the drift subsequently experienced by the Project.

Recommendation 2: At the point it became clear that donor funding was not immediately available to the Project, consideration should have been given to a redesign, so that the Project had realistic objectives vis a vis available resources. A redesign point could have been included to account for upscaling of the Project if/when donor resources became available.

15. The National Executive (NEX) modality means that the Project Design relies heavily on parliamentary stakeholders maintaining their initial commitment to the Project, especially the Presiding Officers, the Secretary-General and her senior staff, and the Fijian Government. Given the delays in mobilizing the Project, this was problematic, as it is difficult to maintain local ownership for a stalled Project over a number of years, especially when there were few outputs to show for the

⁶ The Project Document makes the Secretary General the “focal point” of the project and makes recruitment and procurement initially UNDP responsibilities (p.7). Later, after “further funding” is secured, a project manager is supposed to be hired and a greater role assumed by the project office.

⁷ Written feedback on Draft Fiji Evaluation Report from UNDP MCO.

additional time expended. The Project Document makes the Secretary-General the “focal point for the Project”. While this is understandable within the parameters of the NEX implementation modality, this approach reinforced an existing problem with the Secretariat identified in the LNA – the tendency to rely on a few key individuals to get things done as opposed to addressing the inherent weakness of the Secretariat through staff development, recruitment of new staff, and redeployment of existing staff. In practice, the Project Design put additional administrative burdens on a Secretary General and Secretariat that was already busy supporting two parliaments in a six year period. In this context, consideration could have been given to nominating a senior official other than the Secretary-General to be responsible for operational management of the Project, in coordination with the Project Manager, while still empowering the Secretary-General to engage strategically. Notably, failure to properly address, at the design stage, the importance of the Project Manager position being filled undoubtedly compounded the Project burden on the Secretary-General.

Recommendation 3: The operational role of the Secretary General should be reduced in favor of a broader policy making and oversight role. The Project Manager and a counterpart at senior management level should be responsible for day-to-day operational issues.

Redesign of Project delivery mechanism: Graduate trainee program

16. Usefully, the Project Design highlighted the need for the Project to link in with the work of the other two other parliamentary support projects in the Pacific – in Solomon Islands and RMI – and with other UNDP projects. The involvement of the Solomon Islands Project and, in particular, its Project Manager, was important in getting the Fiji Project started, as the Solomon Islands Project Manager was asked in early 2006 to review the Project Design and make suggestions for moving work forward because the Project appeared to have stalled. The Solomon Islands Project provided a model upon which the Fiji Project drew. That experience informed a partial redesign approved at the March 2006 Tripartite Review. This is most evident in the use of graduate trainees as the primary delivery mechanism and the incorporation of a “signature activity”, the induction program for MPs in June 2006.
17. In effect, it was only at the Tripartite Review meeting in March 2006 that the Project Design was finalized. The focus remained strengthening the Secretariat, with an emphasis on assisting Members in performing their legislative and oversight roles, but with less emphasis on the other goal of improving Parliament’s relationship with the public. An enhanced delivery system was also agreed upon and incorporated into the design, namely, the inclusion of a graduate trainee program. According to the Solomon Islands Project Manager, who was brought in to review the Project, he was guided by the then Secretary-General in what needed to be done. There existed a coterie of well-trained staff but little depth across the Secretariat. For example, committee staff were only able to provide basic administrative support. In addition, it is difficult for staff to provide support across sections. It is understood that the recruitment of graduates was, therefore, designed to push forward the restructuring of the Secretariat to provide better Secretariat support, based on a new organisational structure the Solomon Islands Project Manager had prepared for the Secretary-General.

18. The introduction of the graduate trainee program was a new aspect to the Project Design, but it was also compatible with the original design with its significant flexibility in determining the delivery modes.⁸ Drawing on a successful model in the Solomon Islands, it provided a rapid means to get the Project off the ground and build a profile amongst its clients, MPs and within the Secretariat.
19. However, the Evaluation Team does have some concerns with the use of this particular approach. The Fiji Parliament Secretariat is comparatively well staffed by Pacific standards. Prior to May 2007, there were 67 positions in the Secretariat with a small number of vacancies (although only 19 now remain). Recognising the size of the staff at the Project's outset, it is the Evaluation Team's view that more emphasis should have been placed on developing the capacity of the existing staff at this first stage of the Project, rather than employing graduate trainees. This approach would have been more consistent with the original design concept. From the evidence gathered, in the current post-coup environment it appears that the 7 graduate trainees are engaged in most of the backlog work in the Journals section whilst some of the permanent staff are being under-utilised while awaiting reassignment.⁹ These tasks appear to have fallen to the Project and the graduate trainees, who despite their enthusiasm and commitment, are not especially experienced. The question arises as to whether this is an effective use of UNDP resources.

Recommendation 4: Reconsider the inclusion of a UNDP-funded graduate trainee program in projects where the Parliamentary Secretariat already has a sizeable staff who themselves could be targeted for capacity-building.

Integrating gender, human rights and MDGs

20. In the original work plan, under Output 3: Improved Member Education and Support Services, the Project Document identifies two sub-activities:
- (i) Gender in Development: This sub-activity was supposed to encourage gender-sensitive policy-making and budgeting through workshops and training/information for both men and women MPs. There was also an intention to support the formulation of a multi-party women's caucus. It was flagged that the Project should work with UNIFEM on such activities; and
 - (ii) Issues based initiatives, such as workshop/seminars on specific development and emerging issues. Areas covered could include globalization, rights based development, implementation of the MDGs, pro-poor policies and gender.
21. It is positive that the Project Document specifically attempted to integrate gender, human rights and MDGs activities for MPs. The Fiji Parliament considers a substantial amount of legislation, and policy initiatives such as training on

⁸ In the Multi-Country Reflection on Parliamentary Support Projects, the Evaluation Team discusses the lessons derived from three instances in which the new graduates program strategy was considered (in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Marshall Islands).

⁹ When asked by the Evaluation Team what she had done on the day of the interview, one of the senior permanent staff replied that she had read the newspaper. Although the acting Secretary-General, his senior staff and the Project Manager are concerned about the redeployment to other government agencies of much of the permanent staff, the evidence gathered suggests that those staff not yet redeployed have not yet been actively engaged in addressing any of the backlog work or in preparing for the return of Parliament.

contemporary policy issues would be very beneficial for MPs required to grapple with a range of developmental challenges. At the time of the Evaluation, the Project had already completed some initial workshops on issues such as Good Governance, Leadership and Freedom of Information, but it is not clear whether a more long-term training plan for MPs had been developed.

Recommendation 5: Consider developing an ongoing professional development programme for Members of Parliament that addresses specific development issues such as the implementation of the MDGs; and incorporate this programme into the future planning documentation.

Design for political instability

22. The Project Document specifically recognizes that the Fiji Good Governance Programme (of which the Project forms a component) “originates in response to the draw out period of political instability in the country over the last 15 years”. Despite this observation being included front and centre in the Project Document, the actual Project Document did not propose any specific conflict programming. The UNDP MCO advised that this approach reflected the requirements of the partner Government, but if this was the case, this fact should have been explicitly reflected in the Project Document. Building enduring peace and democracy requires timely and dedicated support to the development of parliaments and MPs’ capacity to act as peace-builders. As UNDP’s ‘Guidelines for the International Community on Parliaments, Crisis Prevention and Recovery’¹⁰ make clear, the international community needs to increase its support to, and liaison with, parliaments in conflict-affected countries.

23. Even though the Project Document itself did not include conflict programming, it is positive that prior to the coup in Fiji, the UNDP Fiji MCO had started to work with the UNDP Pacific Centre to follow up earlier work with Members of Parliament regarding the Peace, Stability and Development Analysis (PSDA) completed by the Pacific Centre in 2006. During the 2006 Induction Programme, it is understood that MPs were given questionnaires regarding future training needs, and MPs themselves used these to flag the importance of discussing issues around Fiji’s peace and stability. The Project had begun developing relevant training activities, but the coup intervened. In future, any updated project design could continue with this work and flag more entry-points for working with Fijian MPs in support of peace. For example, when committees are being chosen for priority support, consideration could be given to targeting law and order or security sector committees. As requested by MPs following the Induction Programme, MPs could also be given training on mediation, dialogue and communication skills, so that they can play a constructive role in handling divisive issues. Support for increased public outreach and information dissemination could also be useful, because conflict can sometimes be exacerbated if information is not available which the public can use to understand the parliamentary decision-making process.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that the future (re)designs recognize the unstable political environment within which MPs and the Parliamentary Secretariat operate, and integrate conflict-sensitive programming accordingly.

¹⁰ http://www.parlcpr.undp.org/docs/GPPS_Guidelines.pdf

Risk identification

24. It is understood that the Fiji PSP was developed before the UNDP Results-Based Management (RBM) approach was required of all UNDP projects. The document templates developed in support of the RBM specifically require that a risk log is attached to the project design. However, due to the timing of the project design, a risk log was not required at the time the Fiji PSP was formulated.
25. Nonetheless, as a basic principle of good project design, it is essential that Project risks are identified and appropriate strategies are proposed and integrated into the management and implementation framework from the outset. The risk analysis in the Project Document is very weak. The only risk identified in the Project design is the fact that Secretariat staff have a high turnover rate, which could undermine capacity-building efforts and sustainability of the Project.¹¹ The Project was designed only a few of years after the 2000 coup – Fiji experienced four coups in 15 years¹² – and during a period when parliamentary activity was seriously affected by the difficulties faced in implementing the Constitution’s requirement for the establishment of a multi-party Cabinet. In such a context, it is problematic that the Project design failed to identify serious political instability resulting in the suspension of Parliament as a potential risk. A related unanticipated risk that materialized was the replacement of the Secretary General. This could have seriously endangered ownership for the project and/or affected the management of the project. At a more detailed level, other risks which could have been identified included: difficulties with sourcing a qualified project manager; training fatigue by parliamentarians; and the failure, due to time and other constraints, of the Standing Orders Committee to review and amend the Standing Orders.

Recommendation 7: All project documents must properly identify all key risks and strategies must be developed and integrated into the project design.

Monitoring Framework

26. The Project Document attempts to describe indicators for the Project to be measured against, which is in accordance with good practice. However, no baseline is provided against which progress can be compared. Also, many of the indicators are too broadly drafted, such that it is not clear how they will actually be either qualitatively or quantitatively assessed. In this context, it is notable that the Project Document does not include details of the method for assessment of progress. It is likely that such a requirement would have helped the designer think through whether the indicators were capable of being monitored. It also would have helped provide guidance to the Project Manager about what data needed to be collected and how. In this context, the Evaluation Team notes that the Project was not actually collecting data which would have enabled an evaluation of whether the Project had achieved its targets.

Recommendation 8: Include indicators in the Project Design which are qualitative, quantitative and/or time bound (QQT) and capable of being monitored and include guidance in the Project Design regarding the method(s) for assessing indicators.

¹¹ See “Risk Management” section on p.8 of the Fiji Project Document.

¹² The 6 December 2006 coup was the fourth coup in Fiji. It was preceded by the coups of 14 May 1987, 25 September 1987, and 14 May 2000.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project Management

27. The Project Manager energized the implementation process. The role that he played indicates the value of installing and supporting somebody with the incentives, information sources, and access to push project activities and matching resources to the tasks at hand. Of all the stakeholders, the Project Manager was the only one focused on implementing the program as his first priority. Other participants responded to other political, organizational, bureaucratic, coalitional or structural needs and time schedules. The implementation of Project activities - inductions, recruitment, training and so on - can only occur if plans are approved by the principals, money found and disbursed, and parliamentary target populations cooperate. It is the Project Manager who has the incentive to think about the whole chain of necessary elements, while most other stakeholders are focused only on parts of relevance to them.
28. As discussed in paragraphs 12-15, there appears to have been a mismatch between responsibilities for overall project management and control of essential resources by other parties. Partly this mismatch stems from the general model which envisions the Project Manager as an agent who will be guided by a mutually agreed upon and vetted project design and associated work plans, subject to oversight and occasional prodding at the Parliamentary and UNDP levels by responsible parties, and supported by a network of financial and development expertise who can be counted upon to make these resources available as needed. Like all models, it contains some truth but can also misstate the degree of commitment, level of scrutiny, expertise, and alacrity of those further up the chain. Each of the necessary support partners responds to its own administrative calendars which often differ from those of other stakeholders, their own set of projects which compete for time and attention, and other legal, bureaucratic, and political imperatives. The general problem was compounded in this case by an initial Project design which gave operational responsibility to the Secretary General, who was too busy to do this in addition to her regular duties.

Recommendation 9: Appoint a Project Manager as the first step in the implementation process, especially when the Project Design requires the management of multiple components.

Human resources

29. The Project Team comprises a Project Manager, Mr Alifereti Bulivou, and seven graduates appointed as part of the Graduate Trainee Program agreed to at the March 2006 Tripartite Review meeting. It is understood that an earlier recruitment process for a Project Manager was undertaken in 2005, but that delays in finalizing the recruitment process resulted in the candidate finding other employment. The current Project Manager was seconded from the Parliamentary Secretariat in May 2006. Prior to his secondment, he was the Senior Protocol and Inter-Parliamentary Affairs Officer. From the evidence gathered by the Evaluation Team, it appears that the Project Manager is a well-trained and highly competent manager. Clearly, once he came on board, the Project took off. In the half year from his appointment in May 2006 to the coup in December 2006, the Project delivered in a range of areas, most notably through the recruitment of the graduate

trainees and the successful Induction Program for Members in June 2006. The risk in his appointment was that he had been in the Parliament Secretariat for a lengthy period and therefore would be unable to bring a fresh perspective and other experiences to the management of the Project. This risk appears to have been mitigated by his performance in the role.

30. The seven graduates were recruited from amongst the pool of applicants for the UNDP's Young Professional Program. The parliamentary recruitment of "new graduates" benefited from having a pre-existing list of applicants and recommendations yielded by an earlier UNDP "new graduates" recruitment program for its own needs. Unlike the process in the Solomon Islands where advertising and selection of their "new graduates" took considerable time and effort, the process in Fiji was accomplished quite quickly. While this result was not planned, it shows the advantages of having two processes occur in parallel to produce an important program element.
31. From the group interview with the seven graduates, interviews with individual graduates as well as with the Project Manager and other Parliamentary staff, it appears that a talented and enthusiastic group of graduates was selected. Both the Project Manager and the graduates have established a good rapport with each other. The graduates clearly hold the Project Manager in high regard. The graduates reported some initial resistance to their presence by the established Secretariat staff but this appears to have diminished as the graduates settled into their roles. The graduates were deployed in various sections in the Secretariat and the intention was to rotate them between sections to expose them to all areas of the Secretariat's work (though the coup prevented this from happening). This approach was to have a "demonstration effect" as to the value of trained and motivated staff.
32. The March 2006 Tripartite Review meeting and subsequent reporting make it clear that the intention was for the graduates to be absorbed into the Parliamentary Secretariat's permanent staff establishment at the conclusion of the Project. This constituted a major risk to the sustainability of the Project, especially considering the difficulties the Secretariat had regularly encountered when trying to get staff positions filled. Additionally, a risk with using graduates as the primary delivery mechanism is poaching by other agencies. However, in the current circumstances, and with the Evaluation Team's key recommendation that the Project be scaled down, this is no longer an immediate consideration.
33. From the evidence gathered, the graduate trainees benefited from their respective deployments to the different areas of the Secretariat – the Procedural Section, Research and Media Unit and the Committee Office. The leadership of the Secretariat embraced the graduate trainees and were supportive of providing opportunities for the trainees to be exposed to a range of activities so they could be deployed across the Secretariat. The trainees, for their part, appear to have been actively involved in the work of each section, often taking a lead role due to the absence of permanent staff. In return, the Parliament Secretariat appears to have benefited from the enthusiasm and dedication of the graduate trainees. The graduate trainees provided a quick and cost neutral (for the Secretariat) means of addressing some of the staff shortages in core areas and to assist the Secretariat in

enhancing its service delivery to Members. Overall, the management of the graduate trainee program, as the principal human resource component of the Project, by the Project Manager appears to have been quite effective.

Financial management

34. As noted earlier, the UNDP was unable to mobilize the budget initially identified in the project design. UNDP finally agreed to provide TRAC funding of \$366,200 to be expended over 30 months.

2005	55,443.06	
2006	143,444.61	
2007	42,318.99	
TOTAL	241,206.66	Remainder: 124,993.34

35. The major outlays for the project, in addition to staff costs, were approximately US\$44,000 on ICT and approximately \$80,000 on induction training for MPs.

36. The 2006 Third Quarter Project Report – which in fact was the first Project Report for the entire Project – states that at the time the Project was due to commence in the last quarter of 2005, there were problems in sending Project funds through the Ministry of Finance (MOF) to the Project. This was required because the Project execution modality is National Execution. Apparently, by the time the Project was approved and signed, the 2005 Fiji Budget had already been passed in Parliament such that it was too late to incorporate the UNDP’s funds to the Project. The Third Quarter Project Report states that discussions between the Aid Management Unit of MOF, Office of the Parliamentary Secretary-General and UNDP culminated in a meeting in which it was agreed that Project funds could be channeled through a Trust Fund at the Reserve Bank of Fiji. However, the Third Quarter Project Report states that the proposed Trust fund mechanism was not approved by the CEO of the Ministry of Finance resulting in further delays in implementation.

37. The MOF advised that the 2006 Fiji Budget included a line item anticipating the receipt of US\$254,000 for the Project. However, as of April 2007, only US\$15,519 (FJ\$25,000) was received by the Project through the MOF. The Evaluation Team was not able to ascertain from the UNDP MCO why the Project received such a small amount of direct funding during 2006. The Project Manager advised that project planning was made considerably more difficult because he was uncertain when he would receive funds and for what amount.

38. The Evaluation Team reviewed the accounting statement for the money paid directly to the Project, but receipts were not sighted and a detailed financial audit was not undertaken. On its face, the paperwork appeared satisfactory. There is a balance of FJ\$1334 left with the Project. It is not clear what advice the UNDP MCO has given the Project regarding the disposition of the remaining amount. Apart from the single payment of FJ\$25,000 made directly to the Project, the remainder of the Project funds were paid out by the UNDP MCO.

Recommendation 10: Communicate more clearly and regularly with MOF and the Project Manager regarding financial management issues, including anticipated disbursements and financial reporting requirements.

Risk management strategies

39. As noted above, the Project Document insufficiently considered the risks associated with the Project and as such, was not well-positioned to ensure that proper risk management strategies were in place. This may explain, for example, why no strategies appear to have been in place to deal with the risk – which eventuated – that it would be difficult to source a Project Manager with appropriate skills.
40. At a practical level, regular monitoring and oversight is needed to ensure that risks are identified and then actively managed. Quarterly reporting can provide some of the information needed to manage risk. Notably however, the quarterly reports format used by the Project did not include a section on risk identification and management. In any case, regular communication with the Project and targeted questions to follow up identified risks would also have been useful to ensure ongoing feedback about the Project's progress and the timely identification of problems. However, the Project Manager advised that he was only very intermittently contacted by the MCO and the majority of their communications were by email. It does not appear that there was a clear institutional requirement that the MCO officer responsible for the Project contact the Project Manager at regular intervals.
41. As discussed in detail in paragraph 46 below, discussions with UNDP MCO staff revealed a lack of clarity regarding who is responsible for reviewing key strategic project progress reports. This exacerbated the failure of the MCO to manage risk because it does not appear that there was one officer within the MCO with primary responsibility for the strategic direction of the Project.
42. The MCO's failure to proactively manage its own risk is best highlighted by the apparent lack of strategic management of the Project following the December 2006 coup. The Project Manager advised that a meeting was only called by the MCO at the end of January 2007 to discuss the future of the Project. The meeting was held with the Governance Analyst responsible for parliamentary support activities at the MCO and another Governance Analyst. Neither the DSU officer responsible for the Project nor a senior manager was able to attend. It was agreed at the meeting that the Project Manager would develop a revised annual plan suggesting a way forward taking into account the post-coup suspension of Parliament. The draft revised annual plan was submitted to the MCO on 7 February 2007. At the time of the evaluation in mid-April 2007, no feedback had been received by the Project Manager on the draft revised annual plan. This was especially problematic because the Project Manager's contract was due to expire on 14 May 2007 and the graduate staff in mid-July 2007. The Evaluation Team notes that the Project appears to have continued for almost 6 months without any change to its design in response to the coup, except the necessary operational adjustments made to the project by the Project Manager.

Recommendation 11: The officer with responsibility for strategic oversight of the Project and strategic decision-making within the UNDP MCO must be clearly identified.

Recommendation 12: All reporting templates should include a requirement to report on risk identification and management.

Recommendation 13: Ensure that management channels within the MCO are clear and all parties understand their roles, so that staff have clear lines of accountability when dealing with more complex strategic issues, such as handling a project following a coup.

Monitoring and Oversight

43. The UNDP MCO DSU officer responsible for the Project advised the Evaluation Team that the MCO monitoring and oversight of projects is undertaken on a “management by exception” basis. In practice, this apparently means that a DSU officer adopts a relatively reactive oversight role. Reports are received and presumably read and finances managed, but Project Managers are largely left to manage the technical implementation of their projects on their own, unless they identify specific problems which require action from the MCO.
44. The Evaluation Team has serious reservations about the “management by exception” approach implemented by the MCO, particularly in relation to politically sensitive projects such as providing support to parliaments. Close monitoring of the strategic and political implications and opportunities thrown up by parliamentary support projects is essential, as demonstrated most obviously by the issues surrounding the Project’s status after the December 2006 coup. In this context it is particularly notable that the UNDP MCO has specifically stated in its draft 2008-2011 Multi-Country Project Document that it believes it has an advocacy role to play in relation to its projects and areas of interest. A management by exception approach does not complement this objective. To pursue effective advocacy, the MCO needs to be active and alert for opportunities to engage in support of projects.

Recommendation 14: Review the “management by exception” approach to project management with a view to ensuring that the UNDP MCO is alert for opportunities to engage in support of projects.

Meetings and Reports

45. The Project Document identifies that monitoring will be undertaken by the MCO primarily through:
- the receipt and review of quarterly project reports,
 - monthly Project Working Group (PWG) meetings;
 - the receipt and review of an annual report;
 - an annual Tripartite Review Meeting (TPR) with the UNDP, representatives from Parliament and the Government
46. The Project Manager advised that he was not given a briefing about his monitoring and reporting requirements. No template was provided for the production of quarterly project reports, so the Project Manager used the Solomon Islands reports as a template. Discussions with the UNDP MCO revealed that it was not clear who was responsible within the MCO for reviewing and acting on reports. For example, the DSU Officer and Governance Analyst responsible for the Project both advised they were not clear who was responsible for reviewing the project annual plan and assessing its appropriateness prior to the UNDP’s provision of comments and/or approval of the plan at the annual Tripartite Review. This may explain why the 2007 Annual Plan submitted on 7 February

2007 had not yet been responded to by the MCO at the time the Evaluation Team reviewed the Project in mid-April 2007. The absence of a Governance Team Leader for approximately 6 months from late 2007 appeared to contribute to these problems.

47. The reporting requirements outlined in the Project Document are quite prescriptive and potentially onerous. The Project Manager, in theory, is required to produce 4 different sets of reports and participate in 15 meetings. The reporting framework requires an Annual Report (including an updated annual workplan), four Quarterly Reports, four Quarterly Financial Reports and two 6-monthly reports. In addition, there is a Tripartite Review meeting, presumably held annually although this is not spelled out in the design documentation, two Programme Management Committee meetings per year, and 12 Project Working Group meetings per year (held monthly).
48. The evidence provided to the Evaluation Team suggests that the Project Manager and other principals were unaware of some key meeting requirements. The Speaker of Parliament who was the National Project Director, the Secretary-General to Parliament and the Project Manager were not briefed on the role of the PWG and the Project Manager's TORs only require that he participate in the PWG. Accordingly, the PWG – a key oversight body – was never actually established. The DSU officer currently responsible for the Project (who was not the DSU officer at the time the Project was set up) was also not aware of the need for a PWG nor that the PWG did not exist. Project implementation strategies appear to have been agreed to via more informal channels. For example, when Project implementation finally got underway, the new graduates were deployed along lines already mapped out by the Secretary General and Project Manager without the benefit of the formal meeting process.
49. Only one Tripartite Review meeting was held for the Project, in March 2006, before the Project Manager was actually recruited. It is not clear what documents were submitted to the TPR meeting for consideration, although minutes were produced which did capture the decisions made at the meeting. The December 2006 coup occurred before the next TPR meeting could be held.

Recommendation 15: Clarify who within the UNDP MCO has overall responsibility for project monitoring and specifically, what the role is of DSU Officers and Thematic Advisors in relation to project staff and in relation to each other.

Recommendation 16: Provide proper briefings to Project Managers regarding their reporting requirements and provide reporting templates to Project Managers (for annual reports and quarterly reports).

Recommendation 17: Review the necessity of current reporting and meeting requirements.

Support and Ownership

50. The participatory project design process is intended to produce “buy-in” on the part of national participants in Parliament and in the Government. Without doubt many of the concerns of these stakeholders are incorporated into the Project Design. However, the depth and durability of these commitments is often not as thoroughgoing as the theory of participation suggests. Individual participants may

focus on specific items in a list of activities, or hope for a chance to reprogram efforts once underway to meet other pressing needs, or selectively perceive activities that are yet to be defined more concretely. While “buy-in” is a necessary first step in a Project, developing a sense of ownership should also be considered a major product to be built and/or consolidated during implementation.

51. The Project made headway in developing a sense of ownership by its use of the “new graduates”, who visibly supported activities. The value of these new staff was commented on by both MPs and government officials interviewed. The “new graduates” program served as both a signature product and as a delivery system for project activities.¹³ Graduates were deployed quite quickly to support committee, library, Hansard, and other Secretariat Services, served members through committees and supported MP workshops. These and other activities helped to build support for the Project because they were visible to MPs and demonstrated the value of the Project for their work. In the few interviews the Evaluation Team had with MPs, all but one found their interactions with the new graduates to have been useful and influenced their positive view of the Project.

Recommendation 18: Consider the identification of a “signature activity” for subsequent parliamentary support programs. Choose an activity that is visible, is useful to a variety of parliamentary stakeholders, and which has the promise of sustainability if it develops supporters.

Communication

52. Once the Project was underway, internal communication between the Project and the Parliamentary staff leadership seems to have been good. The close relationship between the Project and Secretary General made formal meetings less necessary. This is not surprising since the Project Manager was chosen from the Secretariat staff and was the pick of the former Secretary General. The Evaluation Team was constrained from interviewing MPs because Parliament had been suspended but was able to interview the former Speaker and a handful of former MPs as private citizens. While most praised the Project’s contributions to staff effectiveness, and the Induction Program in which nearly all participated, none considered themselves to be in regular contact with the Project per se.
53. Communication linkages were, for the most part, not particularly strong between UNDP MCO and the Project. For much of the time there was no Project Manager and while the Secretary General served as a surrogate, she was involved in her primary responsibility of running the Secretariat. After a Project Manager came on board, and communication links with UNDP became more important to daily Project needs, some problems emerged. For example, specific problems (paying salaries to the Project Manager and new graduates, buying supplies, paying for travel) often took - from the Project Manager’s perspective - inordinate amounts of time and effort to resolve.
54. Communications problems were exacerbated by the uncertainties following the December 2006 coup. The Project Manager said that he submitted reports and

¹³ Other parliamentary programs have had other signature activities: USAID’s support for a congressional budget office in Bolivia, support for expansion of committee support in Malawi, internship programs in Guatemala.

draft work plans and received little or no feedback from the MCO. While the Project is located just across town from the MCO, only one face to face meeting with the UNDP and Project staff was held after the coup. The management of the Project Manager by the UNDP appears to have been principally characterized by limited communication in relation to both the operations of the project as well as its future. As the contracts of both the Project Manager and the graduates were set to expire in mid-2007, this lack of communication and clear direction from the MCO was the cause of much anxiety amongst the Project team.

Recommendation 19: Ensure that Project staff and the responsible parties at UNDP hold regular meetings or phone conferences to discuss project activities and problems so that the participants are aware of what is happening and why.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Mobilization: Start-up delays

55. As noted previously, the implementation process was characterized by substantial delays in assembling the critical elements for project implementation. Current UNDP interest in Fijian parliamentary strengthening dates from the return to parliamentary elections in 2001 following the last coup, and continued through a project formulation process which produced a plan for approval in October 2004. The Evaluation Team assumes that Project implementation could not fully get underway until a plan of action was agreed upon and signed by the principals (signed by the government in February of 2005 and by UNDP in September 2005), a source of project funding was established (revised budget approved in mid-2006), someone to run the operations was in place (Project manager in place by May 2006), and a system established for disbursing operating funds (various stopgap measures devised during 2005 and 2006).
56. The logjam of uncertainty and inactivity was broken by the Tripartite Review held in March 2006 (see discussion above at paragraph 17). This meeting assembled the principals in the parliamentary and UNDP leadership and produced decisions about funding, the choice and hiring of a project manager, and a clear set of priority tasks to be achieved, namely, induction and workshops for MPs and the infusion of new staff to energize committee and other support systems.
57. Whatever the causes of the delays, there were several significant effects.
- External funding prospects diminished. UNDP recognized all along that a full blown project depended on external donor support and planned a “proactive resource mobilization effort” on the part of UNDP and the Speaker of the House of Representatives as well as efforts to seek technical assistance from international agencies.¹⁴ Donor interest (which later proved to be a highly perishable good) was highest in 2001 in the aftermath of the previous coup and the return to parliamentary elections. Interest diminished with time so that by 2006, UNDP had to re-conceptualize the project at less than half of its initial estimate and decided to carry the expenses itself. Donor interest is often a short-lived thing and commitments should be secured when it is at its peak. The reinstatement of the new Parliament following the 2000 coup provided

¹⁴ Strengthening Representative and Legislative Capacity in Parliament Project Document, p. 7.

donors with a “window of opportunity” to act; the UNDP project would have been their instrument for achieving their democracy strengthening goals. As time passed, other “windows” opened elsewhere and donor interest moved on.

The 2006 coup further diminished short-term chances for harnessing parliamentary support resources. For example, the Project Manager, in consultation with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) had secured assistance for a staff development course for graduates (from both the Solomon Islands and the Fiji projects) and the sum of \$F70,000 to assist the Project with some of its activities, including the attendance of resource people for the proposed Peace and Stability training for MP’s. All these were cancelled due to the coup and Fiji’s subsequent suspension from the Commonwealth and the CPA. The Evaluation Team expects, however, that there will be a surge in donor interest in parliamentary support as Fiji gets closer to the restoration of electoral democracy. That foreseeable event constitutes an important and predictable opportunity for assisting tapping parliamentary development support (see Future Programming below for more)

- Assistance was delayed during the critical period following the re-establishment of parliamentary democracy. Proceeding on the basis that the sense of urgency about parliamentary strengthening that grounded UNDP and Pacific Islands Forum interest was well founded, it is a lost opportunity that little project initiated strengthening was done between then and 2006.¹⁵ As the discussion of risk above indicates, another coup was always a possibility. If that risk had been better appreciated and managed, perhaps a greater premium would have been attached to working as quickly as possible to produce results while the Fiji Parliament was still functioning.
- The time necessary to establish new systems and to institutionalize them was shortened. Project operations had only gotten fully underway in mid-2006 and were disrupted by the coup later that year. One example of a chance at sustainability lost was the plan to incorporate the “new graduates” into the regular parliamentary staff. The parliamentary leadership was convinced in the relatively short period before the coup that they would be useful additions to their staff. However, preliminary work to make the graduates regular employees came to a halt with the coup and suspension of Parliament.

Recommendation 20: Decisions about programmatic aspects must be made quickly after the needs assessment so that donor commitments can be secured and implementation progressed under the most favorable conditions.

58. Many of the implementation delays were caused by the sequential processing of decisions. The process could perhaps be speeded up if some necessary steps are undertaken in parallel. For example, it appears that there was a seven month gap between the signing of the project plan by the Fijian government’s representatives and the signing by UNDP. The signing process took about a year from the date of the formulation and approval of the plan. It appears that one process ends and the next begins and so the chain lengthens as does the time it consumes.

59. Similarly, the problems with funds disbursement could have been anticipated and planned for. The National Execution mode was decided early on, and the Fiji

¹⁵ In late 2005, one staff member had been sent abroad for training and some computers purchased.

Government financial management rules appear relatively straightforward. Instead, it appears that this hurdle was only considered once the Project was underway.

Recommendation 21: Minimize delays by processing decisions in parallel rather than serially, insofar as possible.

Project Activities and Achievement

60. The Project, in the limited time it had, was quite successful in implementing two of the three activities that were prioritized for attention at the March 2006 TPR, namely the new graduates program and the Induction Program for MPs. As noted previously, the graduate program had a useful demonstration effect as they showed other staff and senior management that a small number of motivated, well trained (and cross-trained) staff people are capable of doing a great deal even in a relatively established parliamentary bureaucracy.
61. The Induction Program for MPs was also very successful in improving the knowledge of members about their obligations and opportunities. Notably, during the Induction Program, the Project gave MPs a questionnaire to find out more about their training needs, and accordingly, ran a number of follow up workshops for MPs on issues such as critical thinking, time management, financial control and leadership. As noted previously, following on from training with MPs on the Peace Stability and Development Analysis undertaken by the UNDP Pacific Centre, the Project was also planning to undertake additional demand driven workshops for MPs.
62. Only modest progress was made by the time the coup intervened on the third priority activity, namely, organizational reform of the Parliamentary Secretariat. While the Project had done much of the preliminary work on this task, delays in submissions from parliamentary staff sections slowed down completion. The TOR for the organizational reform consultant had been drawn up, but while the Parliament Corporate Plan and section business plans had moved forward, the development of Individual Workplans stalled, which delayed the recruitment of the consultant. Whatever the cause, in any case it makes sense for the Project to have focused on more visible, high impact activities during its first six months. Organizational reform is usually a longer term process which requires trust-building and negotiation and agreement over time.
63. The Project's impact on achieving the broader goals identified in the initial design - budgeted at higher amounts and projected to take longer - was more problematic. The initial goal of the Project was to make the Parliament more functional as a lawmaking and representative institution by assisting the Secretariat to provide better and more appropriate services (research, committee support, public education). While the goals are laudable, the resources devoted to achieving them were small. In this context, the Project's contributions to increased legislative effectiveness should be considered modest but positive. For example, there were improvements in the quality of research made available to parliamentary committees. In terms of promoting the Parliament's representative function and engagement with constituents, the Project also supported school tours through parliament.

Fidelity of Implementation to Original Design

64. The original design allowed for considerable modification during the life of the Project. As noted elsewhere, this flexibility proved to be both a liability and a benefit. The Evaluation Team speculated that the loose design may have contributed to the sense of drift which delayed startup, along with more potent external factors. At the same time, flexibility in design - mostly the lack of specificity about means - contributed to the fast start once a Project Manager was appointed and a delivery system (the new graduates program) was authoritatively defined at the March 2006 TPR meeting. Once staff were on board, the Project was able to quickly move forward in implementing the Induction Program in June 2006 which was a high impact, visible product which could proceed without further project redesign.
65. In any case, the original design was actually adhered to with respect to a number of specific activities engaged in by the Project during 2006. Many activities in Project outcome areas outlined in the original design documentation were underway at the time of the coup. These included:
- Reviewing the Secretariat's organizational and administrative capacities (the then Secretary-General had commenced a review of the staffing structure);
 - Strengthening committees and administrative support (the deployment of the graduate trainees to the Research, Committee and Procedural offices assisted in meeting staffing shortfalls in these key areas due to the absence of the permanent position holders);
 - Improving member education and support services (Induction training and follow up workshops for MPs); and
 - Improving constituency service and relations (development of public education initiatives).
66. The closing of Parliament in December 2006 effectively curtailed any efforts to address the other Project outcomes. In sum, both the requirements of the initial design (with its minimal specification of means) and the specific items identified in the 2006 TPR redesign were adhered to during the implementation process.

Needs Met

67. As noted earlier, it took over three years, from inception to implementation, to get the Project up and running. As a result, the Project was effectively in operation from May (with the commencement of the Project Manager) to December 2006 (when Parliament was closed down by the Fijian military authorities). The Project design was initially quite ambitious in the light of the limited resources available. The decision to modify the delivery aspects of the Project at the Tripartite Review meeting provided the impetus to get the Project going. In the May-December 2006 period the Project began to meet the needs originally identified in LNA. In the two principal areas, progress was as follows:
- Secretariat Strengthening: There were two aspects to this – the graduate trainee program and the organizational review:
 - With the appointment of the graduate trainees and their deployment to key areas of the Secretariat, there were improvements in short term delivery in the form of better trained, more motivated cadre staff. The on-going problem of a weak human resource capacity, however, remained. It is the

view of the Evaluation Team that greater emphasis should have been placed on developing the capacity of the existing Secretariat staff at the beginning of the Project, as opposed to bringing in new staff in the form of the graduate trainees. The Evaluation Team recognizes that during this period various staff were, in fact, sent to training programmes under other arrangements with parliamentary bodies and parliaments. Nevertheless, there were important opportunity costs that should be considered along with the benefits of the new graduate programme. Scarce Project resources were diverted to the recruitment and employment of the seven graduates rather than to addressing the needs of the existing staff. In this respect, a key need was only partially met.

- The proposed Organizational Review was originally identified as a key output in the design documentation. As noted in paragraph 62 above, while initial steps were taken toward meeting this goal, Project progress stalled because of work still to be done by the Secretariat. It is understood however, that the work needed to be done by the Secretariat in terms of completing Individual Workplans for staff, was almost complete at the time of the coup.
 - Assistance to MPs: The Project addressed this area initially through the successful Induction Program held in June 2006. This was followed by a number of workshops and training programs for MPs. In addition, Project staff provided assistance to MPs through their work in supporting committees and through the Procedural Office and the Research and Media Unit. In the period of the Project's operation, strong efforts were made in this area.
68. The Project made inroads into many areas, but due to the short time of its existence and the modest scope of its funding, most major deficits remain to be fully addressed. Specifically, MPs continue to have a relatively poor understanding of their roles as representatives, law makers and the overseers of executive government. Building the capacity of MPs to discharge their duties professionally and effectively require much more than a few events. The list of tasks in the initial plan outstripped the resources eventually mobilized. Keeping the same goals while reducing the budget and time available certainly did not enhance chances for their fulfillment.
69. The limited human resource capacity within the Parliamentary Secretariat also remains. The Secretariat has been, for the most part, well led but has suffered from weaknesses in the ranks. The Fiji Parliament has a large staff, but many lack capacity and they do not see themselves nor are they treated by the bureaucracy as a professional cadre of personnel with the unique skills necessary to support effective representative government. The Secretariat has only a few key personnel who are effective in a parliamentary context, and the system is over-reliant on them to do the bulk of Parliament's work. According to the LNA and other outside experts, many staff could perform more effectively. What is needed is a better trained, more motivated and professional staff. With the exception of what proved to be the temporary infusion of new graduates, who could have expanded the base of such people, the system remains over-reliant on an industrious minority. The Executive has contributed to this problem, by not actively engaging with the efforts to reform the Parliament. This appears true of both the pre- and

post-coup periods. In the pre-coup period, the Public Service Commission does not appear to have supported efforts to make parliamentary staff a more specialized and professional body, and delayed action even on filling vacant positions in the Secretariat. This is still a problem, and it has recently manifested itself in the weak planning for the re-opening of parliament anticipated in 2009/10.

Recommendation 22: Subsequent programming should proceed on the basis that the basic needs of the Fijian Parliament identified in the LNA continue to require support.

Sustainability

70. At the time the coup intervened, it appears that the principal strategy for sustainability was in the form of the new graduates carrying on after the Project ceased. It is understood from the Project Manager that the Public Service Commission was aware of the arrangement that the graduates were expected to be absorbed into the Parliament's staff establishment at the end of the Project. Apparently, this proposal was contained in the Secretary-General's submission to PSC regarding the secondment of the Project Manager and the creation of 7 project posts to be filled by graduates (though the Evaluation Team did not sight this document). The Secretary General was aware that the Parliamentary Secretariat needed to involve the PSC and the Ministry of Finance from the start of the Project so that they are aware of the project and its intentions, but it is not clear whether they were involved in TPRs or Project Oversight Meetings.
71. Sustainability in the long term was dependent on: (1) the willingness of trained personnel to stay; and (2) the willingness and capacity of the public service to create new positions and to fill them (ie. with the new graduates). However, even if this scenario was successful, it would have mitigated but not eliminated the initial problem of an over-reliance on a few key individuals. As noted above, the Evaluation Team queries the sustainability of the graduate program as a delivery mechanism. While it is uncertain whether or not the Government would have committed itself to incorporating the new graduates into the civil service at the outset however, by demonstrating the effectiveness of the graduates, it was anticipated that the likelihood of Government support would increase.
72. Planning for sustainability could also have been strengthened by undertaking longer-term capacity building activities with existing Parliamentary Secretariat staff. As noted earlier, the Secretariat employs a large professional staff by South Pacific standards (plus maintenance and menial staff), who could have been supported with more staff training programs. The Project could have assisted with such training by supporting management to develop replacement strategies to fill gaps while staff were attending courses and staff development training. This sort of approach recognizes that staff training is a regular, ongoing function that needs to be sustainably managed. Using graduates to fill gaps while other staff were being trained is a stop-gap measure. Existing staff were already employed by the Government such that the risk of losing them at the end of the Project was minimal.
73. In support of the development of a more professionalized Secretariat staff, the Project should work very closely with the Public Service Commission, to get them

on board with the idea of developing the Parliamentary Secretariat as a specialized cadre of public servants. Although this is a longer-term strategy with less likelihood of quick impact delivery, nonetheless it could have a more sustainable impact. The work the Project was doing in trying to move forward with Corporate Planning supporting by Division Plans and Individual Project Descriptions was a step in the right direction.

Recommendation 23: Sustainability planning should be integrated into individual activities as well as overarching components, particularly at the point of redesign.

FUTURE PROGRAMMING

74. Although the immediate future of the Fijian Parliament is uncertain, some factors are known. First, the Interim Government has publicly stated that parliamentary democracy will be restored within the next few years, although the date varies between early 2009 to mid-2010. Second, when Parliament is restored, its effectiveness will depend in large measure on the quality of the support staff that it has and the richness of the information environment in which it will operate. Third, donor interest and support for the legislative branch will peak at the restoration of parliamentary government. The Evaluation Team's recommendations for future programming are directed toward taking advantage of the strategic opportunity posed by the confluence of the needs of Parliament, the interest of donors, and the presence of the UNDP's respected and well-positioned Parliamentary Strengthening Project.

75. Given UNDP's past commitments toward increasing legislative functionality by tackling the "big issues", the Evaluation Team's recommendations are geared toward this effort to do big things in an often difficult environment. This requires planning and support that is innovative, appropriate and timely. While the general needs of the Fijian Parliament identified in the LNA remain, the process of gaining time for, commitment to and ownership of a plan to support the restart of Parliament should become the UNDP's proximate goal.

Post-coup redesign and high level agreement

76. The first step for moving the Fiji Project forward is to review the commitment of all stakeholders to the current Project and if possible, establish a basis for continuing to work on parliamentary strengthening. In practical terms, this will require the UNDP MCO to meet with key Fijian stakeholders, including representatives of the Interim Government, the current Parliamentary Secretariat leadership (i.e. the Acting Secretary General), the Public Service Commission and other relevant ministries to discuss and review the Project and agree on a provisional way forward. Although this may be politically challenging, at this stage in the Project's life cycle, a proper review of where the Project is and what it can still do needs to be done and a new agreement made between the UNDP, the Fiji Parliament and the Fiji Government. The existing Project Document cannot continue to provide the framework for the Project's ongoing activities.

77. Recognizing that the dates for the recommencement of Parliament are relatively tentative and the political situation in Fiji is constantly changing, consideration should be given to agreeing on a phased Project Plan. This would involve designing a short-term Project Plan to take the Project to December 2007, at

which time, it may be clearer what needs to be done and what can be done. This would also allow time for a proper design process to be undertaken to design a long-term Project Plan.

Recommendation 24: UNDP should convene a meeting with key Government and Parliamentary stakeholders as a matter of priority to discuss the future of the Project.

Review Project staffing

78. As an immediate priority the UNDP needs to consider what to do in terms of retaining the current staff of the Project, namely the Project Manager and graduate trainees. If the UNDP decides to move forward with some Project activities, it will likely require at least some staff to support the Project Manager and provide the energy and focus to plan and implement new activities. Given the lead time necessary for UNDP hiring and start up, the Evaluation Team believes that it makes sense to retain the strengths and experience of a core of the present Project Team. The Project Manager is highly respected and trusted inside and outside of Parliament, and could be expected to be an effective interlocutor. The exact number of graduate trainees to be retained should be determined in consultation with the Project Manager and the Acting Secretary-General. In doing so, consideration should be given to the number of experienced permanent staff who remain with the Parliamentary Secretariat so as to ensure an effective balance between the size of the Project team and the Secretariat staff. Consideration should also be given to offering those graduates who are not retained placements with other UNDP projects or assistance in obtaining other employment.
79. The Evaluation Team believes that it is imperative that some key Parliamentary staff are retained within Parliament with whom the Project Team can work. It is heartening to note that it appears that the Interim Government is presently committed to retaining 19 people. At the very least, the Interim Government needs to commit to the retention of the Acting Secretary General, the Senate Secretary, and Division Heads. It is these people who will be able to guide the strategic development of the Secretariat. Notably, a number of staff advised the Evaluation Team that they have been through a coup before and strongly believe that it is important that a skeleton staff is retained so that when Parliament restarts, they are not starting from scratch. It is understood that after the 1987 coups, Parliament was only left with basic maintenance staff, and as a result, when Parliament was eventually scheduled to recommence it was very difficult to find staff with the skills to work with in the Parliamentary Secretariat.
80. There are other staffing problems that will have to be anticipated for the commencement of parliamentary democracy. Most of the top and senior staff will be retired from the service within the next two years, if the Interim Government's plan for a 55 year retirement age holds. There is also no guarantee that redeployed staff will return to Parliament. Some have already been given acting appointments at higher levels in other Ministries. For those who are promoted, there will be no place for them in Parliament's staff establishment because their previous post in parliament would be at lower levels. Considering that the Interim Government has already flagged a tentative date for the commencement of Parliament, there is no need to again plan as poorly as in previous post-coup periods.

81. The LNA identified the over-reliance on a few key personnel as a problem with the Secretariat. If key senior personnel are retained, the Evaluation Team believes that management training should be provided to the Secretariat's top level administrators. This would help mitigate the problem of a few people doing the bulk of the Secretariat's work by providing senior managers with the tools to delegate and manage, instead of doing the work themselves which has been the pattern in the past. It is understood that the Project Manager has been in touch with the Clerk of the Australian House of Representatives to identify training opportunities for staff, but it is not possible to move forward until the ongoing status of the Project is confirmed. Apparently, this information has been relayed to the MCO office, and a decision should be made as soon as possible by the MCO so that such opportunities are not lost. While Parliament is in abeyance, the absence of MPs to service could provide a window of opportunity to train parliamentary staff.

Recommendation 25: UNDP should retain the option of acting quickly and effectively by retaining the Project Manager and an agreed number of graduates to assist him.

Recommendation 26: UNDP should strongly urge the Interim Government to retain at least a skeleton Secretariat staff, including the Acting Secretary General, the Senate Secretary, and Division Heads.

Recommendation 27: The Project should provide training and/or identify training opportunities (offered by other parliaments and parliamentary assistance organizations) to better equip the Secretariat's management to delegate, mentor and train Parliamentary staff.

Prepare for new Parliament

Make organizational reform a priority

82. While many aspects of the returning Parliament are yet to be defined, nonetheless the basic services provided by a Parliamentary Secretariat can still be expected to remain those that were defined during the initial Project period. Whatever happens, the new Parliament will require a properly staffed and resourced Secretariat. As noted previously, organizational reform was a key output of the original Project Document and the Evaluation Team believes it can remain so. The Evaluation Team met with officials from the Public Service Commission and, in his capacity as a former MP, the current Interim Public Service Minister, and they were supportive of an organizational restructure of the Secretariat.

83. This is a crucial activity because a number of interviewees advised that the existing structure of the Secretariat dates back to the 1970s. Apparently, staff were simply added to the staffing establishment over the years, but there has not yet been a comprehensive review of the Secretariat staff structure with a view to assess whether the current structure is suitable for a modern Fijian Parliament. Parliamentary management has been cognizant of these problems for some time but lacked the time and resources to deal with them due to the heavy workload imposed by two parliaments during the past six years. It would be a missed opportunity if, when the Parliament finally restarts, the same structure is simply left in place and new staff slotted in to old structures and positions. Instead, a new

structure should be designed and agreed and position descriptions developed accordingly. Any new structure should recognize the special challenges posed by a bicameral legislature. When the Parliament restarts, staff should then be recruited according to the new positions descriptions. For its part, the Secretariat believes that, if senior personnel are retained, it will have the capability to carry out an organizational restructure. It is their stated desire to obtain all necessary approvals including those from the Public Service Commission and to have all recruitment processes in place prior to the next General Elections. The Project could play a key role in assisting in this process.

Recommendation 28: The UNDP Project provide support to senior Secretariat staff to review and revise the Secretariat organizational structure and position descriptions, in collaboration with the Public Service Commission. Funds should be made available to bring in an expert human resource consultant with parliamentary experience if requested by the Secretariat.

Develop systems and procedures

84. The Project Team is currently attempting to clear through a backlog of Parliamentary work which has been outstanding due to previous coups, most notably, the finalization of Journals from the 1990s and the compilation of the Speaker's ruling booklet. This work can continue to be done as time is available between more pressing tasks. Clearing this backlog will contribute to future effectiveness by freeing up parliamentary staff for more pressing duties as the schedule picks up.

85. The original Project Document flagged that it would be useful to develop improved systems, procedures and guidance manuals for both Secretariat staff and MPs. While the Secretariat has the time, senior Secretariat staff and Division Heads should be supported by the Project to regularize, systematize, and put in order parliamentary practices so that they are ready to go when the new Parliament returns. Consideration could be given to appointing a consultant to review the Standing Orders for both Houses of Parliament, to promote efficiency and public participation. The draft revised Standing Orders could then be introduced to Parliament for endorsement at the beginning of the first session of the new Parliament. The development of Committee manuals, guides to procedural rules and computerized information and research tools could be prioritized.

Recommendation 29: The Project should work to clear up the back log of Secretariat work in the Procedural office (e.g. Journals and Speaker's rulings) and other areas according to priorities established by the Project Manager in consultation with other stakeholders.

Recommendation 30: The Project should support codification and systematization of procedures in both Houses of Parliament (through a review of the Standing Orders), for the management of committee business, for the management of information systems, and other operational matters.

Programming for Members

86. As noted above, as well as in the Multi-Country Reflection on Parliamentary Support Projects produced by the Evaluation Team, it is important that parliamentary support projects integrate programming with MPs not only on

technical procedural issues, but also on cross-cutting development issues. The Evaluation Team has identified that this has been under-emphasized to date. For example, the recent coup has thrown into strong relief as the need for conflict reduction programming for MPs. Broader development issues also remain on the agenda of unfulfilled goals, including gender, human rights, and MDGs achievement. Anticipating the eventual restoration of parliamentary democracy in Fiji, a redesigned Project should, therefore, incorporate activities aimed at mainstreaming the MDGs and related issues into the political arena through the mechanism of Parliament.

Recommendation 31: Any redesign of programming to prepare for the new parliament should consider programming on conflict, gender, human rights and MDGs delivered through activities centered on decisions that Parliament will have to make.

Annex 1: List of Interviewees

Most interviews were conducted between 17-20 April 2007 in Suva, Fiji. There were additional follow-up conversations as well as email correspondence with some stakeholders.

Project Staff

Mr. Alifereti Bulivou, Project Manager

Graduate Trainees:

- Ms Shabina Khan
- Ms Fenella Fonmoa
- Ms Agnes Nisha
- Ms Portia Domonatani
- Ms Millen Chan
- Mr Iresh Lal
- Ms Anaseini Boila

Former Members of Parliament

Mr. Pita Nacuva, Former Speaker of the House of Representatives

Mr. Pio Tabaiwalu, SDL member

Mrs. Bernadette Rounds Ganilau, former leader of the Opposition and current Interim Minister for Labour, Tourism and Environment

Mr Poseci W. Bune, Interim Minister for the Public Service and Public Sector Reform

Parliamentary Staff

Ms. Mary Chapman, former Secretary-General to Parliament

Mr. Edward Blakelock, Acting Secretary-General to Parliament

Ms. Viniana McGoon, Secretary to Senate

Mr. Ernest Walker, Principal Research Officer

Ms. Kalo Takape, Principal Assistant Secretary - Committee Office

Mr. Rupeni Nawaqakuta, Parliamentary Counsel

Government officials

Mr Parmesh Chand, Prime Minister's Office

Mr Malakai Tadulala, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister's Office

Mr. Tom Lee, Public Service Commission

UNDP Personnel

Mr. Richard Dictus, Resident Representative, Multi-Country Office

Ms. Clare Thoms, MCO

Ms. Ruth Verevukivuki, MCO

Ms. Helga-Bara Bragadottir, MCO

Ms Carol Flore-Smrecznik, Regional MDG Specialist, Pacific Centre

Mr Larry Attree, Consultant, Peace-Conflict, Pacific Centre

Mr Sam Gbaydee, Consultant, Peace-Conflict, Pacific Centre

Others interviewees

Ms Elizabeth Cox, Regional Programme Director, Pacific Regional Office, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

Ms Sadhana Sen, UNIFEM

Mr Lawrie Cremins Political Issues Adviser, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Ms Shennia Spillane, Legal Adviser, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Mr Nacanieli Rika, University of the South Pacific

Ms Hamidan Bibi, University of the South Pacific

Ms Louise Vakamocea, University of the South Pacific

Dr. Rufina Later, SPC-PPAPD