

# Jurisdictional Report

## National Parliament of Solomon Islands

---



### **Brief Background of the Parliamentary Civic Education Department (PCED)**

The Preamble of the National Constitution of Solomon Islands explains that the power to rule the country belongs to the citizens of Solomon Islands. It is through this legal statement that people of the country give powers to the three arms of the state. The three arms of the state refers to the National Legislature (Parliament), Executive (Government) and Judiciary (Court System in the country) (Constitution of the Solomon Islands, 2009, 13).

Since gaining political Independence from Great Britain on the 7th of July 1978, Solomon Islands adopted some features of Parliamentary democracy, this includes our Parliament is the only institution that house our elected representatives for four years. Whenever, Parliament meeting is organized there are three political groupings sitting opposite to each other. The government sit opposite to the opposition bench and both the opposition and independent group sit opposite to the government and the Speaker of Parliament. According to the short political history of our Parliament, men are elected into Parliament by constituents representing 50 constituencies of Solomon Islands and since Independence two women were elected to Parliament. The first woman elected into Parliament is Ms Hilda Kari who was MP of East Central Guadalcanal from 1989 – 2001. The second is the current MP of North Malaita Constituency Hon Vika Lusibaea who was elected into Parliament on a BI Election held in August 2013.

Under phase two of the UNDP Parliamentary Strengthening Project (2008 – 2012), the UNDP and Parliament established the Parliamentary Civic Education Department (PCED) in September, 2008 and recruited the first two graduates to set up the department with goal of taking “Parliament to the Public” and its main focus on *“Parliamentary education and community engagement services will facilitate citizen engagement with and develop their knowledge of the Parliament and representative democracy, reduce resistance to women’s candidacy and to assist citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities in free and fair manner according to the Constitution ( National Parliamentary Strengthening Project phase 2, 2008 – 2011, p30)*. Since 1978, SI Parliament has never established department that educate citizens of the country on the functions of Parliament and role of its members. The PCED main outcomes are based on four components; they are community engagement services, curriculum support services, school outreach programmes and gender programmes.



## **Outcome 1: Community Engagement Services**

### **Public Tours to Parliament**

In 2013, the PCED continued to organise public tours for the general public. Most of our visitors to Parliament were tourists from USA, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. This includes official visits to Parliament by government officials from region and overseas.

### **Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) Workshop**

PCED is responsible of organizing workshops for public servants. Since March 2013, PCED team jointly hosted workshops with the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) of the Ministry of Public Service. The workshop aimed to educate our public servants to understand and appreciate the parliamentary system that SI upholds and maintain. Also, public servants to learn about functions of Parliament and role of their MPs. The workshop gave opportunity for the public servants to visit the Parliament Chamber and see the supporting services provided in Parliament for MPs. The tours to Parliament also included watching a 15 minutes DVD on Parliament which we called "Parliament Blo Umi". A total of 101 public servants (57 men and 44 women) participated in the IPAM workshops.

### **Radio & TV programmes on Parliament**

Earlier this year PCED supported the media department of Parliament in organising radio and TV programmes on Parliament. The radio and TV programmes were aired every 15 minutes on Sunday evenings. Again Solomon Islands consists of almost 800 islands separated by vast ocean and rugged mountains hence the use of radio and TV programmes is one of the cheapest but at the same time affordable outreach programme Parliament used to educate Solomon Islanders on the work Parliament and roles of members of parliament. For this year PCED and Media Unit presented 7 Radio Programmes and 2 TV programmes.

### **CPA UK Delegation Tour to SI**

PCED had rendered support to various primary stakeholders that supported the work of Parliament this year. One of such support was the successful stakeholders workshop organised by PCED with the British High Commission Office for the four (4) Members of Parliament of UK Parliament that visited Solomon Islands on 15 – 18 February 2013. The CPA-UK Delegation believed that the best way to achieve its mission of advancing parliamentary democracy is by enhancing knowledge and understanding through hands on experience. Having parliamentarians meet face-to-face is integral it allows parliamentarians to see first-hand the successes and challenges of their international colleagues' legislatures and the issues affecting their constituents. The CPA-UK also prioritises the strengthening of the institution of Parliament, working with developed and developing parliaments to address the challenges they face.

### **Strengthening Provincial Assemblies**

To strengthening the Provincial Assemblies (PAs), Parliament continue to work closely with responsible institutions in assisting and supporting the Provincial Governments more especially the Provincial Assemblies, PCED organized workshops, conferences and attachment programmes for these provincial leaders. Since 2008 Parliament worked with the Solomon Government through the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening in strengthening the work of Provincial Assemblies with the support of development partners like UNDP sub office in Honiara and CDI in Canberra. In February 2013 Parliament and the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening organised a 4 day workshop for the all the Speakers and Clerks of the Provincial Assemblies at the National Parliament MPs Complex on the reviewing of the Standing Orders of the Provincial Assemblies. The main aim of the workshop was to revise the existing Standing Orders (SO) of the 9 Provincial Assemblies. Also, to ensure that the SOs of the PAs are applied inline to the current SO of the National Parliament of SI. The main facilitator of the workshop was former MP and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of NSW

Parliament Hon Kevin Rozzoli. The CDI met all the expenses relating to materials for the workshop and participation of Hon Kevin Rozzoli. The outcome of the workshop was successful because next year the revised SO will be available for final consultation with relevant stakeholders before government makes the final decision of when to start using the SO in the Provincial Assemblies.

## **Outcome 2: Curriculum Support Services**

### **Resource Books for Schools**

PCED and Media Unit of the National Parliament worked together in producing brochures, factsheets and pamphlets which PCED used these materials in school outreach programmes to Parliament and for the constituency visits to the Provinces.

For teachers and school children of our primary and secondary schools, PCED supported the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development Educational Materials and its Curriculum Development Department in developing resource materials. Since last year Parliament worked on two resource books for teachers and students of primary and secondary Schools. For primary schools Parliament is currently developing a resource book titled "Parliament & Leadership". PCED hopes to launch the resource book end of next year. For our high schools PCED will launch the resource book "How our Parliament make Laws" in June next year. The PCED have just received an edited copy of the resource book from NSW Parliament Education Department. Our students in year 9 (Form Three) study about parliament and politics in Solomon Islands hence this is one way parliament reach out in helping younger generation of Solomon Islands in increasing their knowledge of parliament and to learn to appreciate the parliament democracy Solomon Islands adopted from UK. On the same note this is one way parliament help students in their preparation for the external national examinations at the end of every year.

## **Outcome 3: School Outreach Programmes**

### **National Youth Parliament (NYP)**

Many national governments and parliaments in the region agreed that the youth parliament program is one of the best modern youth model that will encourage young people to learn and participate in the nation building process of their countries. From this message both SIG and NPSI hosted the second national youth parliament program on 20 -23 August 2013 at National Parliament of Solomon Islands in Honiara. On that understanding the SIG and NPSI believe that organising such a program for youth parliamentarians paves way for our future leaders to build confidence and capacity in leadership skills. In natural sense, if an individual can learn the realms of leadership and positive community participation at an early age, they are more likely to do so when they grow up.

The National Youth Parliament program was not only to educate young people on parliamentary democracy and governance but an avenue where by youths came together to learn and discuss national and regional issues affecting the countries in the region plus use the program to freely identify ways to contribute positively in addressing the pressing issues affecting the countries and region of the Pacific. Furthermore, it allowed them to experience the responsibilities experienced by our leaders and hopefully motivated them to develop a career path that focus on helping to address the problems faced in the region. Finally such undertaking certainly helped our youth leaders and grooms them to be responsible leaders in their schools, community and countries in the futures.

This year NYP was attended by 52 youths representing 20 high schools and 3 tertiary Institutions in and around Honiara. The NYP was on Climate Change with the main focus was on a National Climate Change Fund Bill 2013. The organising committee used the NYP

to select 20 youths (14 girls & 6 boys) to represent Solomon Islands in the first ever Regional Youth Parliament hosted by National Parliament of SI on 25 -28 September 2013.

### **Regional Youth Parliament**

PCED will do a separate presentation on this activity on Thursday 5 December 2012.

### **Outcome 4: Gender Programme**

#### **Young Women Parliamentary (YWPG)**

Parliament as the highest decision making body of the land has seen and recognised the need to involve women in leadership as this will make way for other important gender issues to be addressed. In June 2011 Parliamentary Civic Education Unit, with the support of the Speaker, Prime Minister and Chairman of the Parliamentary House Committee formed the Young Women's Parliamentary Group (YWPG).

The **mission** of the Group is to create space for young women to experience and participate in leadership; and its **vision**; is to help empower emerging young women leaders to reach their full potential. Secondly, to network with current leaders to enhance and develop young women in leadership.

This year, the YWPG executive and members participated in a good number of national political, social and economic activities affecting Solomon Islands. Three of the national activities that YWPG involved in were; Family Protection Bill 2013, Special Select Committee on the Short Bus Routes and Bills and Legislation Committee hearing on the Political Party Integrity Bill 2013.

#### **Family Protection Bill 2013**

Since 2012 the YWPG conducted wider community consultation to get views, concerns and local knowledge of people of Solomon Islands on a proposed **Family Protection Bill 2013**. This consultation is built into the constituency visits program organised by PCED to selected constituencies of SI. For example, on 30 March – 7 May 2012 PCED conducted its constituency visit in Shortland Islands Constituency in Western Province. It is one of the most remote constituency in the western region of SI. And at all the villages we visited the members of the YWPG (who were part of the constituency visiting team) conducted direct consultation with villagers on the propose "Family Protection Bill". It was interesting to hear that majority of the old and young men supported the government proposed Bill however, one of their major concerns was they want the bill to recognise the chiefs and church leaders in the disciplinary process of the Bill. The NCRA Government planned to table the propose bill in the last parliament meeting in December. YWPG hope that this **Family Protection Bill 2013** be considered in the December meeting which should help to address the increase of domestic violence affecting mostly women and children in the country.

#### **Special Select Committee Hearing on Short Bus Routes in Honiara**

In March 2013 the YWPG established its work program and one of the activities was to bring to parliament the issue of short bus routes in Honiara. Since 2011 the bus service in Honiara have been running short routes and this has affected families who depend on the bus service for daily transportation. Sixty per cent of Honiara residents use the bus service.

The Group wrote a petition and collected 4,143 signatures!

The petition was presented on behalf of the residents of West, Central, and East Honiara constituencies' and draws attention of the House to:

- The unregulated public transport system in Honiara city which

- Resulted in short bus routes that has an adverse effect on Honiara commuters
- Resulting in economic hardship and strain on family budgets
- Inconvenient commuting to work and school
- Unsafe commuting to schools for students
- Increase in late arrival to workplaces and schools

The petitioners requested that the house must ensure that:

- The Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, Road Transport Board, Honiara City Council and other relevant authorities ensure that the public transport industry in Honiara is properly regulated.
- The regulator must ensure:
  - That specific bus routes are identified
  - That operators obtain proper licence to operate a particular bus route and
  - That bus fares are charged according to distances.

On April 11<sup>th</sup> 2013, the Member of Parliament for East Honiara Hon Douglas Ete presented the petition to Parliament, the House unanimously voted for the petition to be referred to a special select committee. The Bus Routes Committee had completed its hearing at 3 Honiara Constituencies early June and now awaits Parliament sitting to debate the report. This is a great achievement for the Group and the people of Honiara.

### **Bills and Legislation Committee public hearing on the Political Party Integrity Bill 2013.**

The executive of the YWPG was invited to represent women in Solomon Islands in a committee hearing conducted by the Bills and Legislation Committee of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands on the Political Party Integrity Bill 2013. Again the presence and participation of the executive of the YWPG in the Parliamentary Committee Hearing recognised the existence of the YWPG and its participation in political developments in SI. The Bills and Legislation Committee held its committee hearings on 2-4 September 2013.

**Prepared by Patteson Lusi & Marisa Pepa  
Parliamentary Civic Education Department  
National Parliament of Solomon Islands  
November 2013**