

United Nations Development Programme

Honiara Sub-Office, Multi-Country Office in Fiji



*Solomon
Islands*

PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT 2

SOLOMON ISLANDS PARLIAMENTARY
STRENGTHENING PROJECT

REPORTING PERIOD:
OCTOBER 2008 – MARCH 2009

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PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT 2

SOLOMON ISLANDS NATIONAL PARLIAMENT STRENGTHENING PROJECT

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 PARLIAMENTARY STRENGTHENING PROJECT PHASE 2

The Solomon Islands Parliamentary Strengthening Project (Project) completed its initial '2004 – 2008' work program in March 2008 after a successful first phase. The main outcomes of the first phase were (a) Effective and efficient parliamentary services, management and administration, (b) Representative role of the Solomon Islands Parliamentarians strengthened, (c) Law making procedures of Solomon Islands Parliament strengthened, (d) Capacity of the Solomon Islands Parliament to exercise its oversight role strengthened; and (e) Increased representation of women and gender perspective in governance. The jointly funded UNDP/AusAID Project had considerable success in executing its mandate and achieving its outcomes during the first four years which led to a consensus among stakeholders that the Project should continue. The 'Final Project Review Report' produced in February 2008 provides an excellent summary of the first phase of the Project and the process of developing phase two (attachment 1). The 2008 – 2012 second phase Project commenced on March 2008.

This report is required under the monitoring and evaluation framework of the phase 2 Project document and reports on delivery of activities, risks and issues encountered by the Project, and lessons learned, and aims to communicate this information succinctly to relevant stakeholders. Due to the additional demands on the Project as a result of the extensive sittings of the House and its committees since the commencement of phase 2 this Report addresses the 12 months from March - September 2008 (Reporting Period) against five anticipated outputs for the Project, namely:

- (a) Strengthened Procedural Support Service
- (b) Strengthened Committee services
- (c) Strengthened Information services
- (d) Strengthened Corporate services
- (e) Strengthened Parliamentary Education and Community Engagement Services

1.2 CORPORATE PLAN 2008 – 2012

In addition to the above expected outputs, the Project also relies on the National Parliament Office (NPO) Corporate Plan 2008 - 2012 (Corporate Plan) which is a document that strategically aligns the Project outputs and activities with the Parliament's yearly work plan with the aim of achieving Parliament's long-term corporate and strategic goals (attachment 2) which are in turn aligned to certain strategic objectives of the Government.

The Corporate Plan is a crucial tool for the Project and its reporting requirements as it reflects on the success of work completed and plans for future work, and ensuring a progressive, coordinated and integrated approach by Parliament and the Project. This also accords with Government policy objectives.

2. DELIVERY AGAINST PROJECT OUTCOMES IN REPORTING PERIOD

This section of the Report describes the major activities that were completed in the Reporting Period in relation to the following five Project outcomes.

2.1 PROCEDURAL SUPPORT SERVICE

In the last quarter of 2008 and the first quarter of 2009 there was for the first time a single meeting of Parliament with an adjournment for the Christmas recess. The meeting commenced in November 2008 and concluded sine die in April 2009. All procedural matters during this period occurred during that (9th) meeting.

Special Adjournment Motion and Adjournment Topics

The fact that the meeting had a recess was due to the use of a special adjournment motion. This was proposed by the Secretariat to the Prime Minister so as to allow Government business to continue in the New Year. Traditionally, all meetings have been adjourned sine die. That procedure has a number of disadvantages that have previously been identified as weakening the power of the Parliament. Particularly, it places the Executive in control of the when Parliament may next meet. In December however there were many items of business not completed so the Prime Minister for the first time was inclined to take up the procedure proposed by the Clerk. In terms of Project objectives the fact that the Parliament continued to have business beyond December and the government decided to come back following a recess to allow proper consideration by parliament of government business rather than rushing it through before Christmas is a strong indicator of a stronger respect by the executive for the parliamentary process and the need for adequate scrutiny of legislation by parliamentary committees.

Debates

“I thank the Clerk too for rearranging some procedures, which are quite interesting, but that is Parliament developing. On that same note, I would like to thank the Parliamentary Strengthening Team with their Project Manager. They [Parliamentary Strengthening Team] are our young academics working in parliament. I congratulate them because they are our future leaders. One of these days, I believe, they will be members of parliament sitting in this chamber”.

Hon. Sir Allan Kemakeza,
Motion of adjournment, 2008

In the last meeting, another feature that was once popular in the pre-Independence legislatures was reintroduced: adjournment topics. This is a procedure that allows any Member to make a short statement about a matter of concern before a sitting day is adjourned. The Leader of Opposition used this to raise his concerns regarding the Iran-Solomon Islands ties.

The 9th meeting also saw a considerable growth in the number of questions asked of Ministers. In order to make time for these questions, the House Committee resolved on several occasions that questions be allowed on private member’s day; a situation that is not

normally permitted under the Standing Orders. The lack of questions asked and the adverse impact on scrutiny of the executive was a matter raised in the 2004 Legislative Needs Assessment as weakening the role of the Parliament in Solomon Islands. Question time has the potential to run for several hours as the number of supplementary questions is unlimited and no time limit applies to question time under the Standing Orders. During this session the Prime Minister and other Ministers frequently faced prolonged questioning by members of the opposition, cross-bench and on occasions from back bench members.

Bills and Procedures

Also in terms of Parliamentary oversight the Government introduced a supplementary appropriation bill which among other things included provisions to retrospectively appropriate monies used earlier under the contingency warrant provisions in the Constitution. This is the proper way to deal with authorizing contingency warrants but one which had previously been bypassed by successive governments. By correcting the appropriation process the government also opened up this expenditure to scrutiny by the Public Accounts Committee when it held its hearings into the Bill.

The government also introduced a number of constitutional amendment bills in the last meeting; again another rare type of bill. In respect of all these bills the Committee worked closely with the Attorney-General's Chamber on the proper procedures for dealing with such. This was very important because given the rarity of use of such bills related procedures were unclear. With the Secretariat's assistance procedures were agreed to and proper precedents set in respect of bills to amend the Constitution.

Another practice relating to bills that was used for the first time was the introduction of bills in the first part of the meeting but passing them following a recess. Traditionally, because the Parliament always adjourned sine die, any bill or business not disposed of by the time Parliament adjourned dropped off the business papers and needed to be re-introduced in the next meeting. In the last meeting however, on the advice of the Secretariat, two bills on companies' law were read the first time in 2008 but left until 2009 for consideration and passage.

Building on the new practice described above, the Speaker, again on the advice of the Secretariat, ruled at the end of the meeting that even if the House is adjourned sine die (and not by special adjournment as was the case in the companies' bills), any business not disposed of (questions, bills, motions) will in future not drop off the business paper and thus may be dealt with in the next meeting. This ruling effectively superseded a long standing practice and has many practical benefits for both Members and Parliament. For instance, it preserves many relevant questions that were not asked or answered in the last meeting. Members do not have to go through the whole process of giving fresh notice in the next meeting.

Speakers Ruling

“I would like to discuss the matter of the outstanding business still before the House. In particular I am referring to questions that are on notice but which have not been disposed of. For the purpose of business of the House outstanding after a meeting is adjourned sine die, I wish to inform Members that I have directed the Clerk to ensure that all such business will remain on notice until the next meeting; and will only be removed from the House by way of withdrawal under the Standing Orders. Questions and motions that the House has not disposed of in this meeting may be asked or moved in the next meeting without need for fresh notice. While this ruling might be inconsistent with longstanding practice, I remind Members that procedures are not static and I believe that as Speaker I must ensure that procedures are interpreted correctly and are relevant to the current needs of Parliament. I believe a proper construction of the Constitution and Standing Orders support this ruling and I advise all Members to bear this ruling in mind for the purpose of future meetings.”

Rt. Hon. Sir Peter Kenilorea,
Speaker of Parliament
9 April 2009

The Bills and Legislation Committee (BLC) provided full scrutiny in terms of all bills introduced by the government. Although most bills were given just a few days before they were to be introduced in the House, the BLC was able to effectively scrutinize the bills by way of hearings and report. In some instances reports were ready for tabling less than 24 hours after hearings. The success of the BLC was a direct result of the support that was provided by the committee secretariat involving analysis of every bill, formulating questions for BLC members and drafting reports based on independent analysis and responses to member's questions. The increasing capacity of the BLC during a meeting may be seen in the fact that on at least two occasions (College of Higher Education (Amendment) Bill 2008 and Interpretation and General Provisions (Validation and Indemnity) Bill 2009), the government acted on the recommendations of the BLC and moved amendments to their own bills. Before the Project started supporting the BLC, that Committee had never made a recommendation other than recommending that a bill be supported. Now, the reports of the BLC are becoming more rigorous and influencing government decision making. They are supported by proper research and analysis and include public and stakeholder evidence where possible.

Debates

“I also would like to acknowledge, Mr Speaker, an important development that is seen in every sitting of parliament now is the work of the various committees of this house, which have been marked by the high degree of professionalism of the reports by committees that come to Parliament either on bills or whatever. The support staff of Parliament have done a very good job. The quality of reports is of very high standard, and I would like to take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, to acknowledge that and also to thank the good work that the parliamentary staff are doing to support the work of committees.”

Hon. Manasseh Soqavare
Leader of Opposition
17 December 2008

Temporary Speaker

The last meeting also saw the use of a temporary speaker. The situation where both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker are absent (or their posts vacant) is envisaged by the Constitution but it stipulates a procedure for electing a temporary speaker. This situation arose in the last meeting and based on a procedure developed by the Secretariat in early 2008, Parliament elected a temporary speaker under the direction of the Clerk and then the House continued with its business uninterrupted. The temporary speaker performed his duties to the great satisfaction of the House and principally due to the detailed Speaker's Program which is also produced by the Secretariat prior to each sitting. The program has now become an indispensable aid to the Prime Minister, Ministers and other senior officers of the House and also acts to ensure proper procedures are followed and entrenched in the House.

Private Members Motions – Special Select Committee Inquiry into the Quality of Medical Services Provided at the National Referral Hospital

While there were not many private members motions in the last meeting, a very important one proposed to establish a special select committee to inquire into the quality of services provided at the National Referral Hospital (NRH) which is the premier service provider of medical services in the country. The mover of the motion the Hon. Peter Boyers, MP for West new Georgia Vona Vona, sought procedural and drafting advice from the secretariat on the most effective way to address his concerns and bring the matter before the House. As a result the Secretariat drafted a terms of reference for an inquiry into the hospital based on the Member's concern to raise the standard of medical services to the public and also assess the capacity of the government to meet its commitment to relevant Millennium Development Goals . Following discussions by the Mover with the Prime Minister, the government supported the motion and it was passed without dissent. As a result an extremely important inquiry that will review government policy and service delivery will soon commence. It is also a first that Parliament has taken action to monitor the government's policies and actions to meet Millennium Development Goals.

Debates

“[It] made me wonder of what I could do as a Member of Parliament to try and assist improving services at the hospital during my time as a leader and making a difference to the health system of our country. I believe this motion is for the people. It is a motion of conscience, and it is a motion of compassion and is dedicated to the ordinary citizens out there that want better in life. If the least that we would have achieved with this select committee is in saving one's life then we have achieved a noble outcome. “

Hon. Peter Boyers
Speech in moving the motion
3 April 2009

Press release

Members of Parliament who debated the motion commended its introduction in the House and supported the urgent need to establish such a Committee. A number of Members shared their personal experiences on the state of the services provided at the NRH and agreed that the purpose of the proposed inquiry was not to criticize the hospital, but to understand how the services could be improved. Hon. Edward Huniehu in particular stated that “it is timely that Parliament discusses these issues and develop a comprehensive report on how we can improve the health service, if it is true that such services are not of the standard expected”.

The establishment of the Committee also fulfills Parliament’s oversight function and responsibility as the ‘grand inquest’ of the nation and reinforces Parliament’s powers to examine issues that affected the well being of the people. The Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Sir Peter Kenilorea in his speech at the closing of Parliament on Thursday 8 April 2009 said that the inquiry “is a major step for Parliament and reflects its proper role in reviewing and recommending improvements to important areas of government and public policy. I will be appointing Members to that Committee next week and I encourage all those chosen to take up the challenges that this inquiry will confront and work diligently on behalf of the people of this country particularly in this case for those who are ill and require effective medical service delivery.”

National Parliament Office
Press Release
9 April 2009

Government White Paper

Another important example of providing parliamentary review and oversight and public participation in public policy making was the tabling of a Government white paper on political party integrity. The Secretariat provided advice on procedures for tabling and debating a white paper and the putting of the question “that Parliament agrees to the proposals contained in the paper.” The Houses agreement to that question had previously been assumed to mean that those proposals had legislative authority rather than that Parliament simply agreed to the proposals in principle. The Speaker, on advice, clarified the matter for members and then ruled to that effect. The ruling prevents the potential for abuse or misuse of the authority of the House following the consideration of a report from government or in fact a committee.

2.1 COMMITTEE SERVICES**Public Accounts Committee**

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) continued with its oversight role into public spending. The Committee held an inquiry into the 2008 Supplementary Budget by gathering evidence from Permanent Secretaries and officials from 10 government ministries. The Committee conducted its inquiry in terms of government’s major sectors such as Health, Security, Education and Commerce. The Committee noted number of Issues during its deliberations and made recommendations accordingly. Through the support of the Project, the PAC continues to carry out its key essential function of scrutinizing public funds and effectively carry out its mandate.

In late November the Committee considered three Special Audit Reports of the Auditor general;

- The Auditor General's Report on the "Status of Audits of Solomon Islands Government Entities as at 30th June 2008";
- The "Status of Audits of Solomon Islands Entities as at 30th June 2007"; and
- The report on "An Auditor-General's Insights into Corruption in Solomon Islands Government".

Senior officers from the ministries of Home Affairs, Forestry, Finance and Public Service appeared before the Committee. As the independent Parliamentary body that scrutinizes the executive in the area of public finances, the PAC, aims to assist in addressing inappropriate or corrupt practices, maladministration of public funds and ministerial or political interference with the administration of public finances. The Committee also deliberated on issues such as:

- Weakened national institutions and State Owned Enterprises,
- Lack of essential service delivery as well as inequitable delivery of those services,
- Widespread economic inefficiency and a weak and demoralized public service.
- The Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster Relief Fund; and
- The South Pacific Games 2007.

The PAC also met during the December sitting of Parliament to deliberate on the 2008 Supplementary Appropriation (No.2) Bill. All inquiries of the Committee were open to the general public, broadcast live on radio and replayed on television. In this hearing, the Committee noted for the first time that the government had brought before Parliament, Contingency Warrants¹ for approval. In its report the Committee acknowledged the government's compliance with Section 103 (2), but further recommended that the Minister for Finance and Treasury comply with the Constitution and only approve Contingency Warrants for expenditure where an urgent and unforeseen need has arisen.

Constitution, Section 103 (2)

"Where in respect of any financial year the Minister is satisfied that an urgent and unforeseen need has arisen to authorize for any purpose issues from the Consolidated fund for expenditure in excess of the sum appropriated for that purpose by an Appropriation Act, or for a purpose for which no sum has been appropriated, he may, subject to the provisions of any law or regulations for the time being in force in that regard, authorize, with the prior approval of the Cabinet, such issues by warrant and shall include such amount in a Supplementary Appropriation Bill for appropriation at the meeting of Parliament next following the date on which the warrant was issued:

Provided that if there shall be no further meeting in the same financial year, the Bill may be deferred to any meeting held before the end of the following financial year."

¹ Section 103 (2) of the Constitution states that the Minister for Finance may authorize, with the prior approval of Cabinet, expenditure in excess of the amount appropriated, where he is satisfied that "*an urgent and unforeseen need has arisen*".

In early 2009 the Committee agreed to continue its inquiries into the Auditor General's Special Audit reports as soon as the foreign relations Committee completes its review in early July. The Committee noted that dual committee membership and Auditor General's commitments contributed to the postponement. The Project secretariat is also looking forward to continuing its strong working relationship with the Office of the Auditor General and to work with Mr. Edward Ronia, the newly appointed Auditor General.

Public Accounts Committee		
Meetings	Issue discussed	Outcome
August 2008	Inquiry into 2008 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2008	Committee Report
November 2008	Inquiry into the Auditor General's Special Audit Reports	2 days of Public Hearings
December 2008	Hearing into 2009 Appropriation Bill 2008	Committee Report
December 2008	Inquiry into 2008 Supplementary Appropriation (No.2) Bill 2008	Committee Report

Parliamentary House Committee

During the reporting period the Parliamentary House Committee met on numerous occasions to discuss a range of matters related to Parliament and its Members. The deliberations of the Committee were focused on the following important matters:

- (a) Setting down the order of business for private members day as outlined in the Standing Orders²;
- (b) Monitoring the progress of the proposal by Republic of China (Taiwan) to fund a new Office Complex for Members of Parliament³;
- (c) Monitoring the progress of the Renovation and Maintenance of the National Parliament Building project.
- (d) Meeting with Commissioner of Lands on outstanding parliamentary land matters and
- (e) Deliberate on circulation of draft standing orders.

Parliamentary House Committee		
Meetings	Issues Discussed	Outcome
10 April 2008	Deliberate on Order of Business for 11 April 2008	Sine Die motion to continue on Friday 11.4.08
8 May 2009	Proposal for a Parliamentary Sitting Calendar	Approval granted for creation of Sitting Calendar
	Artistic proposal for uplift of parliament sign board and exterior walls	Approval granted and improvements made
	Briefing on proposed Open Day	Briefing by staff endorsed by Committee
18 May 2008	RAMSI 5th Anniversary Functions at Parliamentary Precincts	Approval granted. Anniversary held on 6 September 2008
	General Business	Discussion on the motion of no confidence tabled on 14.7.08
	Consideration of the PPAPD-FPOCC conference	Conference postponed on account of motion of no confidence
23 July 2008	Proposed Office Complex for Members of Parliament	Impasse between ROC, PMO and NPO be resolved through further discussions
	Proposal to film Parliament proceeding from chamber floor	Request approved
	Parliamentary Sitting Calendar	Matter set down for debate
	Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament	Considered background paper; resolved to discuss in next meeting

² See procedural section of Report.

³ Final negotiations between the Solomon Islands Government, National Parliament Office and the Republic of China (Taiwan) on the Agreements have been completed and the parties expect to sign the Agreement soon.

6 August 2008	Business for House on Friday 8 August 2008	Secretariat gave briefing on motion of no confidence of 30.7.09
13 August 2008	Business for House on Friday 13 August 2008	Discussion on Bill to be on Private Members Day
28 November 2008	Business for House on Friday 28 November 2008	Discussion on Bill to be on Private Members Day
5 December 2008	Business for House on Friday 13 December 2008	Discussion on Bill to be on Private Members Day
19 December 2008	Business for House on Friday 19 December 2008	Discussion on Bill to be on Private Members Day
	Proposal for Solomon Islands Translation Advisory Group Bible display	Proposal not suitable. Postponed to a date in 2009
	Proposed Office Complex and parliamentary precincts	Briefings on Complex and Fence made by Secretariat
14 January 2009	Proposed Office Complex and parliamentary precincts - design	Briefings on complex fence made by Secretariat
2 March 2009	Proposed Office Complex and parliamentary precincts - minor alternation of design	Approval granted.
	Reconsideration of request by Solomon Islands Translation Advisory Group to Display copies of the Bible	Approval granted.
	Consideration for display by Willie's Electric Limited	Approval granted
20 March 2009	Business for the House for Friday 20 March 2009	Considered Hon. Oti's statement; resolved as not an issue
	Meeting with Commissioner of Lands on outstanding parliamentary land matters	Resolved COL to report back fortnightly.
	Deliberate on circulation of draft standing orders	Approval granted
8 April 2009	Follow up on Commissioner of Lands on outstanding parliamentary land matters	Resolved to discuss in next meeting
16 April 2009	Consideration of Special Select Committee on Privileges, Immunities and Powers of Parliament	Approval granted

Bills and Legislation Committee

Bills and Legislation Committee (BLC) also carried out its function of analyzing, reviewing and preparing reports on all bills brought before the House. In the reporting period, the BLC also considered a number of important bills, with the support of the Secretariat the Committee conducted hearings into these bills and subsequent reports were tabled in the House to assist members in their second reading debate. Further, the Committee made several important recommendations in its reports which led to Government amending certain bills. Most notably were the Interpretation and General Provisions (Validation and Indemnity) Bill 2009 and The College of Higher Education (Amendment) Bill 2008. The Committee will continue in the next reporting to ensure that all Parliamentarians are kept abreast of all proposed legislation and also to review and oversee government policies whether it is in the form of bill or subsidiary legislation.

Debates

“Not very often, Mr. Speaker, does Parliament get a bill this thick and therefore it is appropriate the Parliament acknowledges the sleepless nights devoted to this task by those directly involved in getting this Bill to Parliament. I must also acknowledge the amount of work put into getting this Bill ready for Parliament by the Parliament Secretariat responsible for the Bills Committee...I know Parliament is capable of supporting [increased number of Committees] with the level of professionalism of the support staff here who already support five committees. The very, very effective reports that come through here are something that should be praised.”

Hon. Manasseh Soqavare
Leader of Opposition
17 December 2008

Bills and Legislation Committee		
Meetings	Bills reviewed	Outcome
April 2008	Mines and Minerals (Amendment) Bill 2008	Report on the Mines and Minerals (Amendment) Bill 2008
August 2008	Correctional Services (Amendment) Bill 2008	Report on the Correctional Services (Amendment) Bill 2008
August 2008	Secured Transactions Bill 2008	Report on the Secured Transactions Bill 2008
August 2008	Truth and Reconciliation Commission Bill 2008	Report on the Correction Services Bill 2007
November 2008	Civil Aviation Bill 2008	Report on the Civil Aviation Bill 2008
November 2008	Constitution (Amendment) (No.1) Bill 2008	Report on the Constitution (Amendment) (No.1) Bill 2008
December 2008	College of Higher Education (Amendment) Bill 2008	Report on the College of Higher Education (Amendment) Bill 2008
March 2009	National Transport Bill 2009	Report on the National Transport Bill 2009
March 2009	Companies Bill 2009	Report on the Companies Bill 2009
March 2009	Companies (Insolvency & Receivership) Bill 2009	Report on the Companies (Insolvency & Receivership) Bill 2009
March 2009	Civil Aviation (Amendment) Bill	Report on the Civil Aviation (Amendment) Bill
March 2009	Interpretation and General Provisions (Validation & Indemnity) 2009	Report on the Interpretation and General Provisions (Validation & Indemnity) 2009
March 2009	Fisheries (Amendment) Bill 2009	Report on the Fisheries (Amendment) Bill 2009
March 2009	Valuers Bill 2009	Report on the Valuers Bill 2009
March 2009	Maritime Safety Administration Bill 2009	Report on the Maritime Safety Administration Bill 2009
April 2009	Constitution Amendment Bill 2009	Report on the Constitution Amendment Bill 2009

Constitutional Review Committee

In late 2008 the Constitutional Review Committee continued to focus on hearing more broadly from stakeholders about their views on Constitutional Reform and was particularly keen to take up an opportunity to hear from Provincial premiers when they were in Honiara prior to and after the Premier's conference. The Chair of the Committee has emphasized the different roles and mandate of the CRC and the Reform Unit which is part of the Prime Minister's Office. The hearings with the provincial Premiers were also broadcast live throughout the country and rebroadcast in full at night on One News.

During this reporting quarter the Committee was constrained in doing its work, this was mainly due to the fact that most of the Committee members were committed to the Foreign Relations Committee. This also meant that the Secretariat commitments were constraint. The Committee aims to continue with its deliberations with the Constitution Reform Unit in Mid July.

Foreign Relations Committee

Despite its previous record of inactivity the Foreign Relations Committee (FRC) in this reporting period the Committee has become by far the busiest Committee, setting new standards in terms of level and extent of its activities following the reference from the House of an inquiry into the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands Notice 2003.

The motion to refer the 'Notice' to the FRC was moved by the Prime Minister and passed by Parliament by way of a resolution on 24 July 2008. The Notice which the committee is

inquiring into was published by the Governor-General on 23 July 2003 as required by the Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003. That Act became effective on making of the Notice. With the Act in place, the Solomon Islands Government entered into an international Agreement with various neighboring countries on 24 July 2003 allowing what became known as RAMSI to enter and operate in Solomon Islands. This Agreement is specifically referred to in the Notice.

The Committee in deciding how it would undertake the inquiry was very conscious of its responsibility to review RAMSI by involving key stakeholders especially the people of Solomon Islands and bring the National Parliament to the people for the first time.

The Project staff played a pivotal role in organizing a large number of high profile hearings. Throughout the proceedings secretariat staff briefed the Chair and members on hearing details and procedural issues, coordinated witness attendance, summarized submissions, undertook research and drafted questions, managed the broadcasting by the media and briefed and responded to questions from the media, stakeholders and the public.

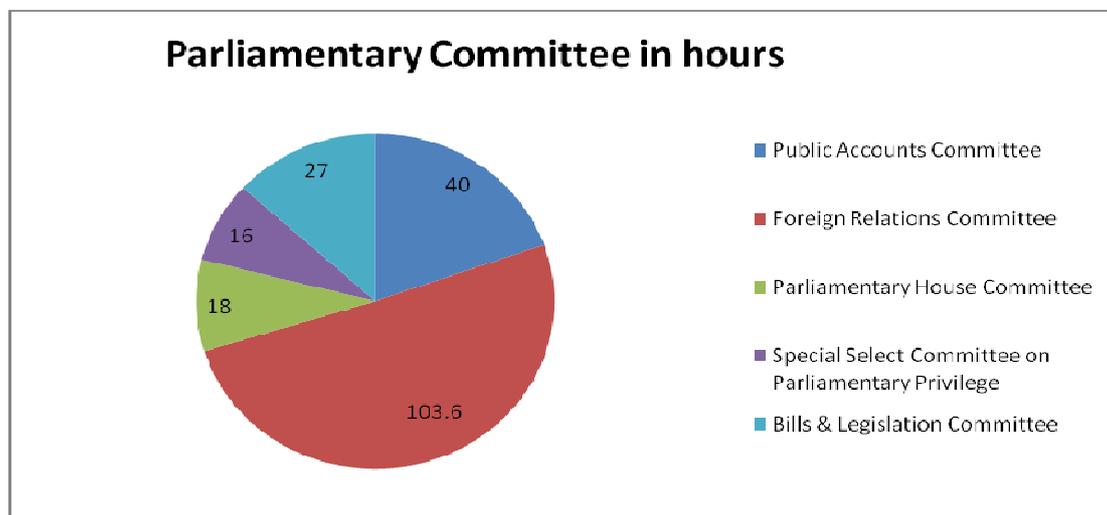


Figure 1

The above table reflects the total hours committees spent in meetings, hearings and deliberations during the reporting period. Clearly, the Foreign Relations Committee had the most number of hours given the review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands. However, this table only reflects the hours spent in meetings proper and not travel and preparation periods. In the case of the Foreign Relations Committee, the Committee often spent an average of 2 days at a location, before and after hearing while staff from the secretariat were at the location on average 2 to 3 days ahead of the Committee ensuring all the necessary arrangements were in place.

The Foreign relations Committee commenced its review of the International Facilitation Notice on 10 September 2008. In its review the Committee has held hearings in Honiara as well as in all 9 Provinces. In fact by the conclusion of its hearing the Committee will have heard from witnesses from every ward of all 50 constituencies across the country, which represents, in effect, a mini referendum on RAMSI. The Committee Secretariat has been instrumental in ensuring that the committee is effectively carrying out its mandate. The

review required significant and complex logistical and administrative planning and management including bringing witnesses from distant communities all over Solomon Islands to hearing venues, accommodating them, feeding them and then returning them safely to their villages. Given the restriction on time and the need to plan several hearings at once, the Project staff organized themselves into different planning and implementation teams. Working under considerable pressure and short critical deadlines and confronting frequent complex obstacles the secretariat nevertheless successfully achieved the Committee's goal to hold hearings in every province of the country. This often saw staff traveling ahead to the hearing venues to organize on-ground logistics before the Committee and Secretariat arrived for the hearing proper, developing strong management, communication and coordination skills in the staff as well as building important links between the NPO and important stakeholders all over the country.



Figure 2

The first map shows the area where the Hearings by the Foreign Relations Committee were held across all 9 provinces plus Honiara. The second map illustrates the locations from which witnesses were brought in to attend the Western Province hearings in Munda and Gizo. The logistical requirements included coordinating transportation of witnesses from as far as Shortland Is., Rendova and Vagunu Island. The exercise was repeated in all the other provinces where most witnesses traveled on Out Board Motor canoe.

The Committee continued the review in early 2009 when it heard from stakeholders and community representatives in Malaita, Western, Choiseul, Isabel, Rennell and Bellona, Makira, Temotu and Guadalcanal provinces. Witnesses raised many important issues and concerns including the following:

- The majority of people in Solomon Islands, namely those in the rural areas, have a very low level of awareness and understanding of RAMSI and its mandate;
- There is a declining presence of RAMSI in rural areas;
- There is a very strong desire for proper and urgent reconciliation, particularly in terms of the government and people of Malaita and the government and people of Guadalcanal province;
- Requests for RAMSI to assist in sorting out the root causes of the conflict;
- Requests for RAMSI to expand its mandate to include much greater infrastructure development and service delivery;
- There was also demand for chiefs to be afforded legal powers to undertake community policing in the villages;
- Little or no confidence in the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, and their capacity to be impartial and objective in respecting the rule of law and protecting all Solomon Islander, particularly in terms of rearmament of local officers;
- Trust in RAMSI and not the local police force for safety, security and protection and belief that the rule of law is best protected by RAMSI;
- Desire for consultation of provinces before making any major changes to RAMSI or its work; and
- Strong desire for RAMSI to remain but with suggestions for improvements in terms of its operations and an expanded mandate.

Below is a table of the Committees activities during this reporting period.

Date	Province	Hearings	Witnesses
10 September–30 October 2008	Honiara	9	50
31 October 2008, 4 April, 15 April, 25 May 2009	Guadalcanal	4	200
12 –14 November 2008, 3 June 2009	Malaita	3	177
12–18 February 2009	Western	4	124
20 February 2009	Choiseul	1	24
21 April 2009	Rennell/Bellona	1	46
5-6 May 2009	Temotu	2	74
8–9 May 2009	Makira	2	71
21 March 2009	Isabel	1	37
Total	-	27	803

Special Select Committee on Parliamentary Privileges, Immunities and Powers

The Special Committee on Privileges held seven meetings prior to presentation of its report to the House Committee. The first meeting took place on 9 April 2008 to brief the Members of the Committee on information regarding parliamentary privileges. The inquiry was then advertised through media outlets however due to the technical nature of the inquiry, only five submissions were received. The next five meetings (Hearings) took place consecutively between 18 June 2008 to 26 August 2008 to gather evidence from selected stakeholders and other interested parties. The Report was then compiled and the first draft was ready by 2 September 2008. Due to the demands of the budget meeting which continued from 11 November to late March 2009, the Committee did not meet to consider the Draft until 6 April 2009 and subsequently on 8 April 2009 to adopt the Report at which time the committee dissolved as it had completed its work as required under its TOR.

The Report recommends the adoption of the semi-legislative approach which proposes that Parliament enact legislation for powers and privileges in certain cases where clarity is necessary and beneficial to the Parliament such as in the case of defining the parliamentary precincts or the summoning of witnesses but not legislating in other areas that would open the privilege to interpretation by the Courts. This approach also proposes amendment to the Standing Orders or incorporating recommendations into the new standing orders as the best method of defining and entrenching certain privileges, immunities and powers of Solomon Islands Parliament. The advantage this semi-legislative approach is that the courts can only interpret those issues which the Parliament has enacted in legislation or are constitutional matters. This leaves the rest of the privileges and powers to the Standing Orders and the practices and procedures of the House in the hands of the Parliament. Such an approach assists in maintaining Parliament's supremacy.

Statistical Summary		Date	Meeting
Submissions	5	9 April 2008	1st Meeting
Meetings	5	18 June 2008	2nd Meeting / 1st Hearing
Hearings	3	22 August 2008	3rd Meeting / 2nd Hearing
Witnesses	6	26 August 2008	4th Meeting / 3rd Hearing
Briefings	13	2 September 2008	Review of Draft Report
Forums	-	6 April 2009	Review of Final Draft Report
Site visits	-	8 April 2009	Adoption of Report
Reports	1	8 April 2009	Committee dissolved

Special Select Committee into the Quality of Medical Services provided at the National Referral Hospital

The National Parliament established the Special Select Committee into the Quality of Medical Services in the National Referral Hospital on 3 April 2009 on a motion moved by the Hon. Peter Boyers, MP for West New Georgia Vunakanona. The eight-member Committee appointed by the Speaker of Parliament Rt. Hon. Sir Peter Kenilorea, included Hon. Peter Boyers, Hon. Laurie Chan, Hon. Isaac Inoke, Hon. Clay Forau, Hon. Walter Folotalu, Hon. Manasseh Maelanga, Hon. Siriako Usa and Hon. Patteson Oti, met for its first introductory meeting on Friday 1 May 2009. However on 5 May 2009 the Prime Minister appointed two of the members, Hon. Laurie Chan and Hon. Manasseh Maelanga to the executive which will

require their replacement on the Committee due to their new responsibilities, and to avoid any conflict of interest with their Cabinet responsibilities.

The review of the quality of medical services at the National Referral Hospital is an important part of Parliament's scrutiny role which assists in improving public policy and government service delivery through bringing to light any administrative and operational difficulties experienced by medical and nursing practitioners in the hospital, as well as other systemic problems. Reports from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services indicate that the administration is already preparing itself for the review. This review of the National Referral Hospital is the first sanctioned by Parliament, and one which Dr. Lester Ross will inherit as the new Permanent Secretary for the Ministry.

The Committee is expected to formally advertise for written submissions from individuals and organizations in early May until the second week of July 2009 with public hearings planned to follow the next meeting of Parliament scheduled for June/July 2009. The Committee expects to receive submissions from various stakeholders including government administrators, medical and nursing practitioners, aid donors and development partners as well as church organizations, medical and legal experts and most importantly the public for whom the services are provided.

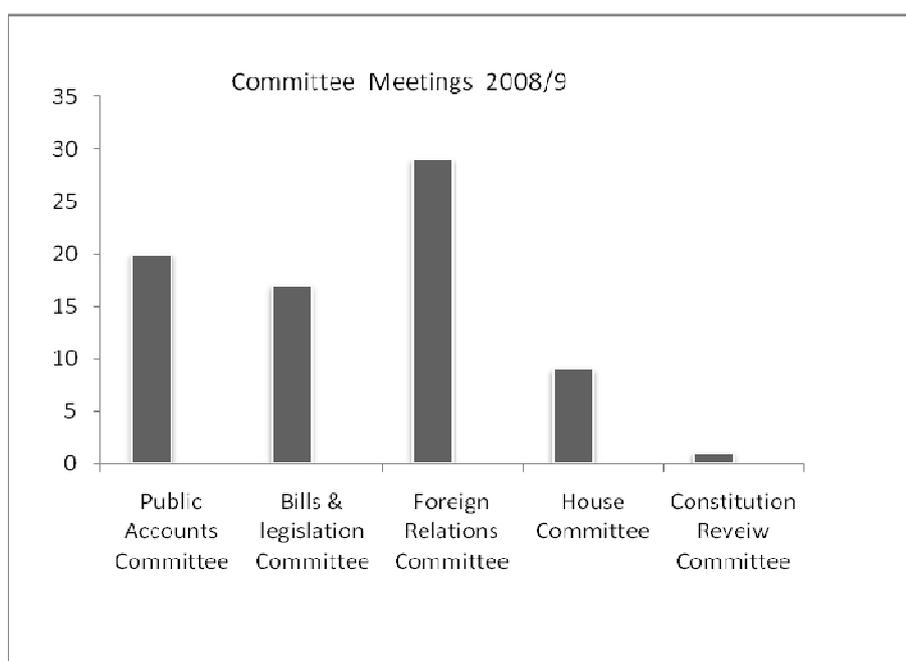


Figure 3

The table above provides an overview of Committee business from October 2008 – March 2009. The table only includes formal meetings/hearings and not deliberative meetings and briefings.

2.2 INFORMATION SERVICES

In-house-Email Server

The Project facilitated the introduction of an in-house email server based on MS Exchange 2003. This service was initially outsourced to Solomon Telekom, which sometimes creates communication difficulties and was costly to the Project. With the service now hosted in-house, Parliamentary staff are able to:

- Create unlimited email addresses on demand
- Use shared calendars and appointments
- Use shared mailboxes and mailing lists
- Fully utilize other features of MS Exchange 2003

Upgrade of Sound system

A new state of the art Audio and Acoustic system was installed in the Parliament during the reporting period. This resulted in an improved quality audio in the chambers, and in the media transmission of debates in the chambers.

Press release

The people of Solomon Islands, and their elected representatives, from today will be better able to hear parliamentary debate – leading to improved government accountability. At the launch of the new RAMSI-SIG funded Parliament Sound System, the Speaker of Parliament, the Right Hon Sir Dr Peter Kenilorea expressed his profound gratitude for the SBD\$1.25 million committed by RAMSI towards the installation of the new system. The project was developed by the UNDP-managed Parliamentary Strengthening Project in partnership with the Solomon Islands Government who funded the remaining SBD\$700,000, the National Parliament and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

“This project is a strong indicator of the support that the parliament has received and the benefits to the people of Solomon Islands that flow from it. Today represents another step forward in parliament’s capacity to undertake its crucial role as the supreme legislative, oversight and representative body of Solomon Islands as well as its capacity to engage with the communities in every province and every village in the country,” Sir Peter said.

Press Release
www.parliament.gov.sb
 11 March 2009

Speech

“I am confident that this new sound system, which RAMSI has been happy to support, will bring benefits not just to the representatives elected to this House but to all Solomon Islanders interested in hearing their leaders debate the issues that will shape the nation’s future... Today’s launch of the sound system is a testament to the hard work of many and to the partnership that RAMSI’s Machinery of Government program and the National Parliament Office have built since 2004.”

Graeme Wilson
 RAMSI Special Coordinator
 Address to Parliament at Launch of New Chamber Sound System
 11 March 2009

Digital recording for Hansard

The upgrade in the sound systems paved way for the much anticipated upgrade of the magnetic tape-based hansard recording system to a digital recording system called FTR ('For The Record') – a system used widely in courts and parliaments in Australia (including the Federal Parliament in Canberra). This system enables recording to be done off the existing audio equipment in the media audio rack on to a recording server which then archives on to a storage server. This increases accessibility, security and storage. Hansard staff are now able to play the recordings in real time off the archive server, which means that Hansard staff are able to transcribe faster and work with a much clearer audio feed which has many benefits including important health benefits in terms of occupational health and safety. Overall turnover rate, which is indicated by the amount of work remaining, has dropped substantially. This is a great achievement since Hansard is now providing services for Committees as well as the sittings of the House. Portable recorders also allow the digital recordings to be made during committee hearings outside of Parliament.

The parliament network system has enabled all parliament departments to share and have access to relevant documents. The network not only links all staff but it also links the parliament chamber sound system to Hansard and media outlets. A risk however is the potential for network congestion due to heavy simultaneous use of the system by staff. This can be minimized by constant monitoring by IT department. The set up of an IT backup system is a current measure which the Project has undertaken to ensure that this risk is controlled. The Project notes that this may involve training and the acquisition of new equipment.

Upgrade of the ISYS search system

The ISYS search system has been in use in our parliament since 2006. This system enables extremely efficient archiving of documents, and later very accurate retrieval through keyword searches of scanned newspaper clippings, Hansard records, and other documents relating to parliament. This year saw the purchase of a dedicated server solely for the system which enables an upgrade of the old web search system to a desktop based system, allowing users to search indexed locations off a toolbar on their desktop. The system is more user-friendly and searches are more accurate with detailed results, easier uploading of scanned documents and periodic indexing.

The ISYS search system has assisted the secretariat in preparing timely accurate briefs and reports for the parliamentary committees. In particular, secretariat is better able to access and track evidence taken from the Foreign Relations Committee hearings. The Project is aware that not all staff are fully trained on the system however a training program is being organized by the ICT Manager which combined with its practical use by all officers as they search and analyse the vast amount of evidence taken by the FRC will see the software become an integral part of the daily work of staff.

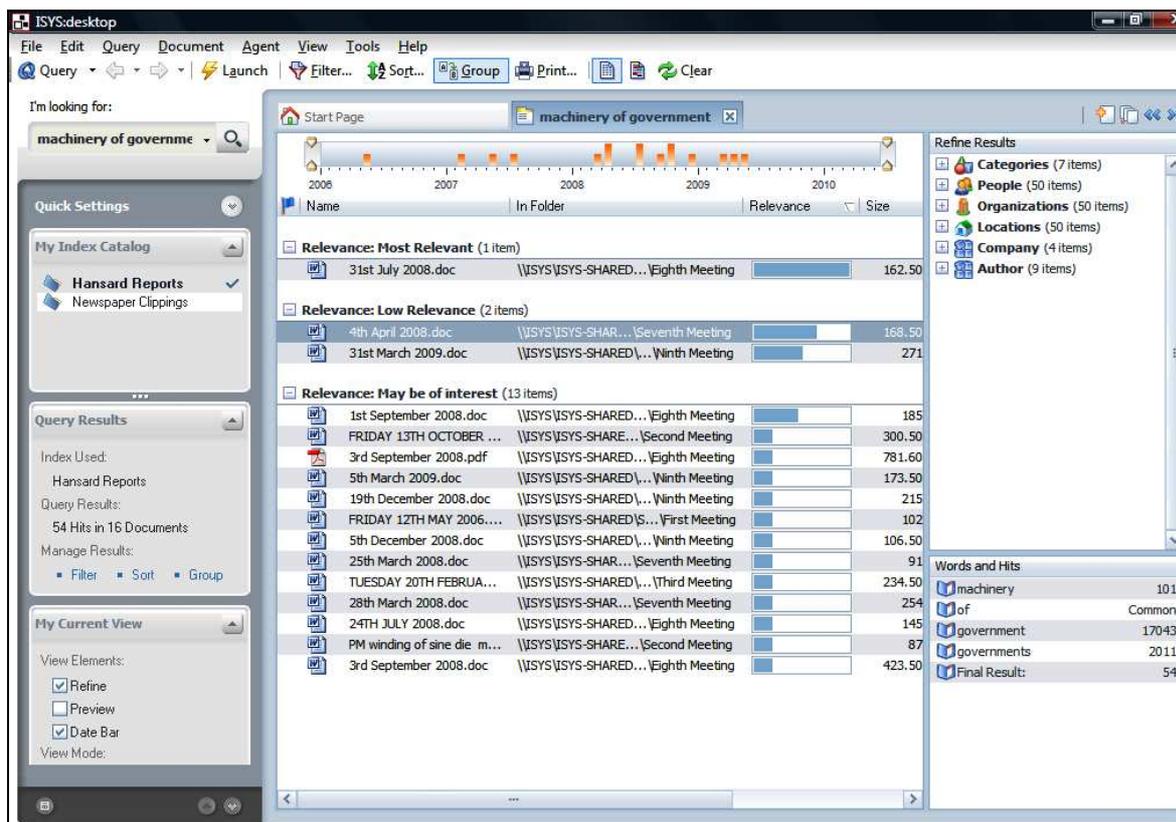


Figure 4

The above is an example of the ISYS search window displaying articles according to relevance.

Recruitment of new ICT Support Officer

In response to a vacancy notice for an ICT assistant, two new ICT officers were identified to join the ICT team at the National Parliament. One will take up a senior position on the NPO establishment and the other less experienced graduate will join the Graduate Trainee Scheme established under the Project.

The growth of different departments within parliament has also resulted in a growth in demand for services such as ICT. The recruitment will help address this demand for services and is, more importantly, part of the sustainability plan for ICT in the parliament.

The need for a full-time ICT staff is very important for such an institution as parliament, particularly in light of the new technological developments in the office. One of the risks therefore is the turnover of suitably qualified and experience staff to take up the position. The current ICT Manager, who was with the Project for 3 years and is currently on a 3 month contract with the NPO through support from the CPA Trust Fund and who oversaw the development of ICT services which have been the subject of regional and international praise, has decided to take on new challenges after 31 July 2009 when parliament concludes its meeting and the new staff have been trained up.

Website

The Parliament Website continues to be updated and maintained by the Project staff under the guidance of the ICT Manager. The feedback and response system has been upgraded and the website continues to receive a broad range of queries from legal and procedural matters on parliament to those more relevant to other government departments. The standard response time is within the week. In the reporting the period, the website has developed further with new sections having been created to make it more user-friendly in terms of locating certain information about the Parliament and its related activities. For instance a “What’s New” section takes to users directly to specific information on Committee inquiries or other events relating the meeting of Parliament. Another new section added to the website is the ‘employment’ section for vacant positions within the Project or Parliament.

The main risk experienced in running the website is the continuous receipt of Spam requests from the website feedback. This however can be countered through by an IP Cop which is an anti-spam software that prevents automated spam requests. The other major risk is related to keeping the website current at all times and ensuring relevant parliamentary records are uploaded as quickly as possible. This has proven extremely difficult because of the limited resources of the NPO and the heavy workload faced by staff in the reporting period. The new ICT graduate will be allocated responsibility of maintaining the website and working with a dedicated secretariat officer and the Librarian to improve the accuracy and timeliness of records being uploaded.

Library

The Project continues to support the Parliamentary Library to achieve its goals and provide efficient services to members to enable them to discharge their duties. The 2009 work plan, the library prioritizes the followings function areas:

- Installation of Library Management System (KOHA)
- Weeding and update of the collection (Reference, Government Publication, Budget Papers and Serial Collection)
- Scanning of Acts of Parliament (2009/2008 Acts and backlogs removal from 1993 -1978)
- Indexing and scanning of newspaper clippings
- Uploading and transferring of articles and reports on to ISYS
- Records Management System

Library Display

The Parliamentary library calls attention to its users through display activities. The purpose is to fulfill its mission to promote and update library materials from several subject areas related to themes of current interest and also to highlight current issues, events or other subjects of interest to its users.

Library Collection Development

The continued weeding of the library collections is providing focus to the small collection. The library is focusing on developing an easily accessible and searchable collection on Library Management System (KOHA). The KOHA is that it manages the entire collection in

collaboration with online library catalogue which includes the NSW parliament library, FFA, CBSI, National Library of Solomon Islands, SICHE Library, MFMR library and other Regional Parliamentary Libraries.

The ongoing development of the digital collection is also progressing well with continued indexing and documenting of clippings from all major newspapers, press releases, relevant international news reports which will be uploaded and transferred to the ISYS. The audio clips and television and video footage of Parliamentary and committee meetings has been an ongoing since 2006 is part of the collection which was produced by OneNews on CDs and DVDs. This collection is now becoming very substantial and is an important historical record for Solomon Islands. The ICT Manager is currently assessing the best method and system for archiving and searching these records as well as ensuring their safety and security.

The new photocopier with scanning facilities enables ongoing scanning of Acts of Parliament, posted on to the parliament website: www.parliament.gov.sb. There are backlogs removal from 1993 back to year 1978 are ongoing tasks which assign on six months duration.

Records Management

The Parliamentary Library has an extension “Locked Room” to archive documents that are original records of the House under the control and care of the Clerk. The original and three copies of materials such as, bills, acts, gazettes, budget papers, and tabled papers and documents of the House and its Committees) are held in archive boxes in the locked room. While 3 copies are placed into the library collection as well as a scanned copy being placed with the digital collection and if made public on the web.

Newspaper Clippings

The term “Digital Library” is now widely accepted to mean the use of digital technology in the provision of library services and operations, which include acquisition, organization, storage, conservation and dissemination of information to users. Continued indexing and documenting of clippings from all major newspapers, press releases, relevant international news reports, audio clips and television and video footage of Parliamentary and committee meetings has been an ongoing since 2006.

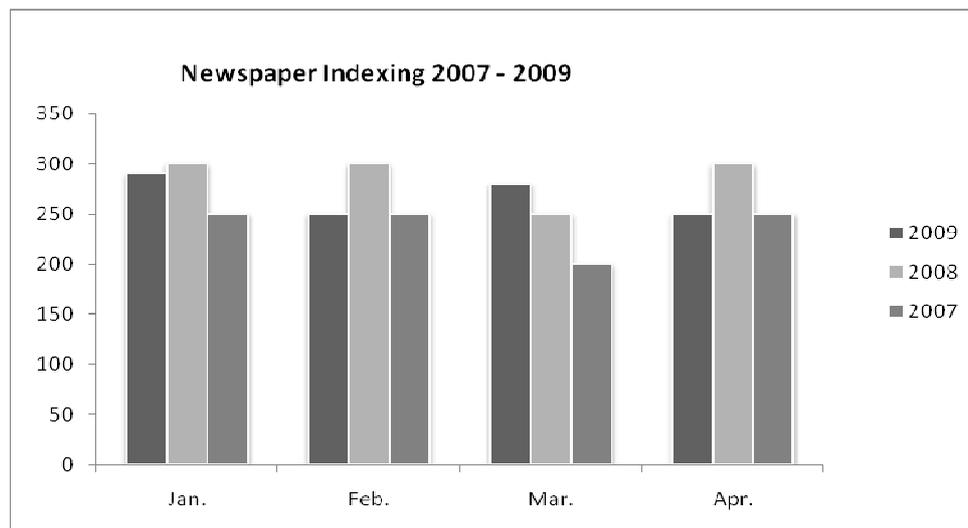


Figure 5

Above shows the comparative analysis of the number of articles that were indexed in 2007, 2008 and 2009. The collection is not heavily used by Members but as Members see their benefit and training occurs usage will grow substantially overtime. The collection is also part of the historic records of Parliament and politics in the Solomon Islands and it ensures that national heritage is maintained for future generations of Members and Solomon Islanders.

Provision of accurate and timely records of the debates of parliament

The Hansard Department has achieved significant improvements in this reporting quarter; the NPO recruited 3 new staff to fill vacancies in the department; 2 Principal Reporters and an Assistant Hansard Editor. The recruitment is part of National Parliaments initiative to enhance the performance and efficiency of Hansard reporting in the National Parliament. This is the first time that the National Parliament Office recruited University graduates to Hansard, which is expected to improve timely service delivery of debate and meeting reports. The recruitment is also expected to improve management systems in the Hansard department, subsequently leading towards better working structure that will help decrease the number of outstanding Hansard reports.

It certainly deserves that it is noted in this report that Hansard is one of the key success stories of this reporting period. Due to a number of change management factors including the employment of new staff and the installation of the new state of the art digital system and particularly as a result of the teambuilding associated with the ongoing Foreign Relations Committee review of RAMSI, Hansard has become a model of implementing and leading change to confront its enormously increasing workload.

Hansard has also seen improvement in the structure of editing process, with the two new staff taking the role of assisting in editing, allowing 3 editors and 4 Hansard officers to undertake transcribing and translation. It is expected that with improved turn-over rates, a proper annual work plan can be produced to deal with the outstanding Hansard backlog for about 6 years.

New digital recording system for Hansard

The Hansard also benefited from the new chamber sound system of Parliament. The new sound system also included a new digital recording system for Hansard, which has a higher quality audio and improved efficiency of the audio recording and transcribing processes.

This digital recording system replaces the old manual recording system and allows Hansard staff to commence transcribing in real time. It also prevents problems such as delayed or lost recordings, commonly due to human error. This will also improve on the turnover rate of reports, inevitably reducing the long number of hours usually spent by Hansard staff, working through very late at nights, simply to meet deadlines.

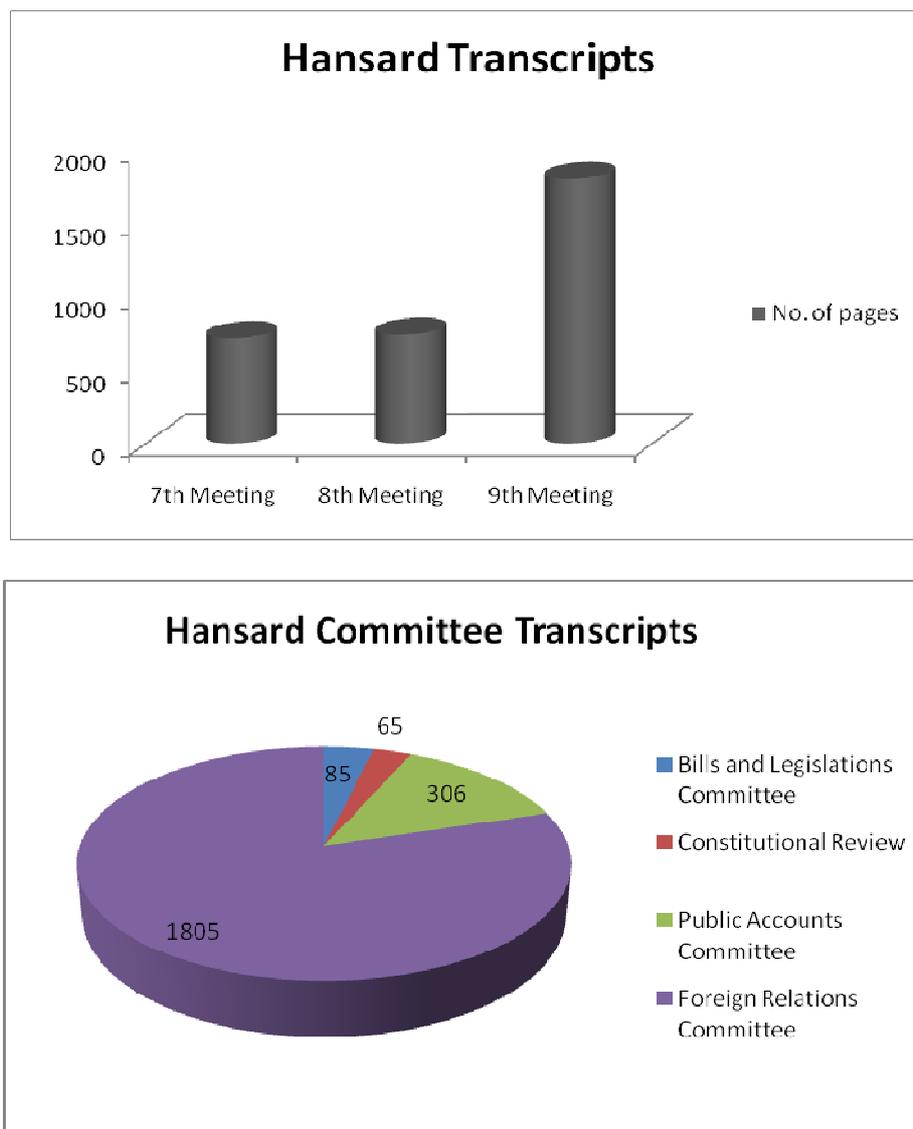


Figure 6 and 7

Above shows the number of Hansard transcripts in pages, beginning from the 7th – 9th meeting of Parliament (April 2008 – march 2009) as well as a pie chart of Committee transcripts.

Broadcasting of parliamentary debates and Committee Hearings

Media Relations (SIBC and OneNews): The televising of parliamentary proceedings continued in 2008 with increased filming and broadcasting of committee proceedings being an important focus of this service. This added substantially to the number of hours of broadcast on SIBC and One News while the daily summary has also been maintained each night following the TV evening news. In addition to the broadcasting of the PAC hearings into the Appropriation and Supplementary Appropriation Bill; the FRC inquiry into RAMSI, the Bills and Legislation hearings and the CRC inquiry into the draft Federal Constitution also had their proceedings broadcasted live on radio and television for the first time. The Solomon Islands is one of a small number of countries in the world that broadcasts its Parliament meetings and committee hearings live on commercial television network. These broadcasts are important in terms of improving Parliaments scrutiny role in Solomon Islands as they provide the public with direct access to information about the expenditure of public money and matters of important public policy.

Broadcast of FRC Review of RAMSI: The filming and broadcasting of the Foreign Relations Committee Inquiry into the RAMSI Notice 2003 has been one of the highlights of this Reporting Period. The inquiry which featured submission and presentations from key and strategic individuals, organization and bodies including the Governor General, Prime Minister, senior RAMSI officials including the Special Coordinator, Provincial Premiers and the public, promoted transparency and accountability in government and also contributed to a strong and lasting process in educating the public about the functions and operation of Parliament. The feedback from the private and public sector was that the decision to broadcast was positive both in terms of civic education but also indicative of the more proactive role that Parliament is pursuing in terms of establishing and protecting its role and responsibilities under the Constitution. It also means the whole country has had access to the evidence provided to the Committee which will greatly assist both Members' and the community's acceptance of the report of the committee when it is tabled.

2.3 CORPORATE SERVICES

Advice and Preparation of Contract Documents

In 2008, the Project staffs were also very instrumental in providing the Office of the Clerk with legal advice and services relating to the various contractual needs and requirements of the NPO. Amongst the main contracts that were drafted by the secretariat during the reporting period were:

- **Consultancy Agreement** – ICE Design Pty Ltd (Australia) for consultation work on the repair of Chamber Sound System
- **Memorandum of Funding Arrangement** – Government of Australia and CPA Trust Fund (Australia) on funding of Chamber Sound System repair Project
- **Service Agreement** – Access Plus on printing works for Open Day 2008
- **Project Proposal** - submission to Minister of Finance for funding of Open Day
- **Project Proposal** – submission to ROC and PMO on ROC Funding of Members Office Complex

- **Contract for Construction and Design of Office Complex** – to be signed between the Solomon Islands Government, Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and National Parliament Office for Members Office Complex
- **Construction Service Agreement** – BEEPS Welding Services on the construction, manufacturing and installation of fencing on parliament land perimeter
- **Service Agreement** – Integrated Media Pty Ltd. (Australia) for work proper on the new Chamber Sound System
- **Service Agreement** – Mobile Electrics Limited on installation of energy efficient light bulbs and fittings in Parliament House
- **Service Agreement** – North Freeze Engineering on maintenance of Stand-by Generator
- **Service Agreement** – Plumbing contract for Opposition Office
- **Supervision Contract** – Pacific Architects to supervise all building and construction projects on Parliament
- **Memorandum of Agreement** – Mosese & Assoc. on Parliamentary Lands Survey

Organizing and hosting the PPAPD/FPOCC Meeting in 3 – 6 November 2008

The NPO and the Project staff played a strategic role in the organization and delivery of the '7th Forum Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference (FPOCC) 2008' and the 'Conference of the Pacific Parliamentary Assembly on Population and Development (PPAPD)' held back to back in Honiara from 3 – 6 November 2008. As the host parliament, the National Parliament Office and the organizing committee comprised of Project staff and the Office of the Clerk worked closely with the South Pacific Community representatives in the overall coordination of the conference. Involvement in planning this Project proved to be a considerable undertaking on top of the core business of the Project and the NPO which was maintained throughout, including the ongoing hearings of the FRC and preparations for the inaugural Open Day. The conference gave staff the opportunity to develop strong organizational skills important for an institution that expects to be involved in similar meetings and activities.

National Parliament Open Day 2009

Almost immediately following the PPAPD/FPOCC meetings in November 2008, the National Parliament Office and Project staff organized and held the inaugural National Parliament Open Day 2008 at Parliament House on Saturday 6 December 2008. Planning and preparation for the event commenced in January 2008 and continued for the most part of year. The theme 'Parliament and People: Celebrating 30 Years' was adopted and became Parliaments major commitment to the 30th Anniversary of Independence celebrations. Considerable time was spent in researching and acquiring pictures and materials on past and present Solomon Islands parliaments and designing the elaborate display boards that were to be installed at Parliament House for the public. An educational DVD on Parliament was also produced by Project staff and played in the debating chamber on the day. A quiz was organized by the civic education department, which attracted more than 5,000 competitors from the visiting public. NPO also included a number of key stakeholders including the UNDP, UNICEF, other UN bodies represented in Solomon Islands, RAMSI (MOG), the Auditor-General's Office, and World Vision to name a few who were invited to put up information stalls. The Open Day was itself a major civic education activity of the Project,

enabling the people to visit Parliament and learn about Parliament and the history of Parliament. The event exceeded expectations by attracting a crowd of almost 8,000 people.

Message of acknowledgement

“I would like to congratulate you and your Parliamentary staff on the recent National Parliament Open Day. The video on the workings of parliament, and the photographic exhibition were excellent. The displays gathered a lot of information that I have not seen in one place before, and were most thoughtful and interesting., Again, congratulations on this valuable initiative to make Parliament more accessible to the general public, and thank you and you staff for all the work that went into organizing it “.

Ms. Deborah Panckhurst
New Zealand High Commissioner
Letter to the Speaker
17 December 2008

A few weeks before the Open Day was held, Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Fred Fono stated on the floor of Parliament that an open day was needed to allow parliamentarians to show case what the various projects they had set up using the Rural Development Funds. The Project staff incorporated this suggestion into the program and Members were invited to set up their display stalls on Open Day; a total of five Members including the Deputy Prime Minister set up stalls.

In his closing remarks on the *motion of sine die* on 19 December 2008, Hon, David Sitai, Chairman of the Parliament House Committee congratulated the Speaker on the successful Open Day and noted the relevance of such program to the concept of Parliament reaching out the people. This view had also been echoed by the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands who in a letter to the Speaker applauded the initiative.

Debates

“The Open Day was a success. There must be another National Parliament Open Day. You can see from those developments that Parliament is reaching out to its People.”

Hon. David Sitai
Chairman, Parliamentary House Committee
19 December 2008

Budget and Financial Management

The implementation of an internal control system at the NPO came into effect in mid August 2008 shortly after the recruitment of a graduate accountant to assist in the accounts office. It is part of the Projects objective to strengthen the administration of the NPO and build a better and more accountable Parliament for the people of Solomon Islands. The primary goal of this activity is to strengthen and upgrade the current accounting system which was found by an independent review undertaken with technical support provided by the NSW Parliament to have a number of control risks.

As recommended by the external review the recently appointed graduate is working with accounts staff to review the following accounts functions:

- (a) Payments;
- (b) Budgetary process;
- (c) Reporting;
- (d) Record keeping and developing automated systems.

The current work is addressing identified weaknesses in the financial system and is working towards creating strong alert mechanisms to prevent errors and fraud from occurring. The four areas stated above are the key areas in any government financial system and thus can be used as test samples for evaluating the effectiveness of control system.

Facilities Management

Major renovation and maintenance program: In 2008, Parliament continued on its program for the maintenance and repair of the Parliament building. This program includes the following:

- Plumbing repair and maintenance works
- Renovation and refurbishment of toilet facilities and construction of ceiling areas
- Repair and maintenance of doors and windows
- Supply and installation of energy efficient light bulbs, fixtures and other electrical works
- Repair and maintenance of the air-conditioning systems
- Repair and maintenance of Standby-generator
- Replacement of the Parliament House signboards

Office Facilities for MPs: Following approval by the Parliamentary House Committee of the design for a shared office facility for Members of Parliament and Parliament staff in 2008, the NPO commenced negotiations with the Solomon Islands Government and the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) for Taiwan to fund of the building. In January 2009, a Taiwanese company, Overseas Engineering & Construction Co. LTDA. ASA (OECC) devised plans and drawings based on the design for the office complex, which were then approved by the Parliamentary House Committee and following negotiations on the funding and building arrangements, the Project staff were involved in preparing the service agreement, together with the Attorney General's Chambers and OECC. The agreement is expected to be signed after approval is granted to the Taiwanese Embassy, by Taipei.

Installation of National Parliament Chamber Audio system: In 2008 the National Parliament engaged the services of independent sound system experts from Australia to carry out the assessment on the current audio system. The findings of the assessment were submitted in a report to the Speaker. On the basis of the recommendation, the National Parliament engaged Integrated Media Pty. Ltd., an Australian company to design and install a new system. Funding for the project was secured through the generous support provided by the Australian Government through the RAMSI Machinery of Government program and the Solomon Islands Government under a two thirds one third cost sharing arrangement. The system was installed and commissioned in February/March 2009, on time and on budget before Parliament's first sitting in March 2009.

Human Resources Management

Human Resources Database and Leave Recording System: During the reporting period, the Project also focused on improving the records management systems of the National Parliament, particularly in terms of recording and monitoring the leave of all staff. A Human Resources Database and Leave Recording Management System was created by the ICT Manager to enable responsible staff to monitor and track all leave entitlements as well as other important human resources data of all staff. This is a new initiative within the Parliament and it currently complements the manual leave recording system that has been used in the past but was largely ineffective in monitoring HR processes. The new system is designed to provide leave and other vital information of staff more efficiently for planning and management purposes.

Staff Professional Development Training: The engagement of Project and Parliamentary staff in professional development training continued in this reporting quarter. The training programs ranged from areas concerning Parliamentary Committees, Effective Public Sector and Financial Management, Civic and Parliamentary Education, Parliamentary Procedure and Practice, Legal Drafting and Information Technology.

Training				
Officer	Date	Program	Key Organizer	Location
Ellen Rii	10-14 Nov 2008	Women in Politics	CDI, Aust.	Canberra (Aust.)
John Taupongi and Calvin Ziru	9-15 Nov 2008	PDL (Legislative Drafting)	CPA, London	Suva, Fiji
In-Country attachment				
Ms. Julie Langsworth (NSW Parliament)	10-27 Feb 2009	Report Writing – Committees	NSW Legislative Council & UNDP PSP	Honiara, Solomon Islands

Forth coming Training				
Staff	Date	Program	Key Organizer	Location
Hon. Clement Kengava, (Deputy Speaker) and John Taupongi	27-30 Apr 2009	High Level Conference on Security Sector Governance in the Pacific Region	UNDP Pacific Centre & Forum Secretariat	Tongatapu, Tonga
Mrs. Taeaasi Sanga	21-22 Apr 2009	2 day attachment with House of Commons	CPD	London, United Kingdom
Hon. Clay Forau	24-30 May 2009	Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar	CPA	Sydney, Australia
Stanley Hanu and Jean Resana	9-12 June 2009	2 nd Annual Professional Development Course for Parliament staff from Melanesia	Centre for Democratic Institution (CDI)	Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

The Project mobilized most of the training opportunities and received continuous support through its relations with the Center for Democratic Institutions (CDI), New South Wales Parliament, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) headquarters in London as well as the Australian chapter and the CPA Trust Fund managed by the Australian Parliament.

The Project staff continued to attend and be actively involved in a number of workshops that were organized by other government Ministries in 2009, namely the Temporary Special

Measures Working Committee and the Youth Parliament Working Group, both with the Ministry of Women Youth and Children Affairs. It is expected that through the active involvement and participation of Project staff in such programs, capacity building and network building will take place which will enhance and strengthen the capacity of the parliamentary secretariat and improve working relationships between the Parliament and other ministries.

Legal drafting training: Two of the legal officers were recipients of the Commonwealth scholarships to undertake the Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Drafting (PDL) Course from the University of the South Pacific. The course was provided by the University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Island Forum. With additional financial support from the Project the legal officers completed the course in November 2008 and have been awarded their Diploma's in Legal Drafting.

Twinning arrangements: Development, together with the Parliament of New South Wales and the Bougainville House of Representatives on agreed plans for the implementation of our twinning arrangements under the auspice of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Corporate Planning and Reporting

As mentioned above, another achievement by the Project and the National Parliament Office is the due completion and tabling of the National Parliament Office Corporate Plan 2008 – 2012. Work on the Corporate Plan commenced in mid 2007.

2.4 PARLIAMENTARY EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

New Recruits

In September 2008, Parliament recruited two officers to perform the functions of educating the public about parliament and democratic system of government in Solomon Islands. The recruitment was in line with Parliament's and the Project's goal to engage new graduates (taking into account gender balance) to participate in educating the public about the functions and roles of Parliament. The two local graduates, Ms. Ellen Rii and Mr. Patteson Lusi have broad experience in the areas of education and community outreach.

As a result a new unit was established in the NPO through Project support. The Parliamentary Education Unit (PEU) aims at increasing knowledge and understanding of the role and functions of the Parliament and its Members and assisting individual citizens to develop positive and informed attitudes towards democratic processes. The work of this unit with the support of all staff has been one of the other principal highlights of the reporting period. The speed with which the new staff developed and commenced implementation of the unit's work plan combined with the decision to link the unit with the work of the FRC has led to an unanticipated level of interaction with community's right across the country.

Community Outreach Programs

As of October 2008 to March 2009, a total of 17 outreach programs were conducted. These outreach programs were done in the provinces, particularly in schools and communities of

Guadalcanal, Malaita, Western, Choiseul and Isabel Provinces (*See table below*). The programs greatly enhance community participation and inform the public of parliament's role and responsibilities. The sentiment expressed by the Deputy Principal of Kukudu Secondary School sums the public positive reaction and appreciation of the reach out program in saying "I am very glad that our school has the opportunity to learn about our Parliament, as I am pretty sure that even teachers have very little knowledge about our Parliamentary system and how it operates".

Date	Institution /Community group	Province	Students/ Participants
31 Oct 2008	Selwyn College	Guadalcanal	254
12-13 Nov 2008	Auki Community High School (CHS)	Malaita	280
	Kilusakwalo Community High School	Malaita	250
	Aligegeo Secondary School	Malaita	228
12-17 Feb 2009	Goldie College	Western	348
	Kokegolo CHS	Western	429
	Biulah CHS	Western	390
	Vonunu Secondary School	Western	476
	Kukundu College	Western	300
	Ngari CHS	Western	51
19 Feb 2009	Taro Primary School	Choiseul	124
	Choisuel Bay Secondary School	Choiseul	427
20-21 March 2009	Buala Village women group	Isabel	60
	Guguha CHS	Isabel	340
	Kamosi Secondary School	Isabel	360
	Buala Village Youth group	Isabel	25
Total			4342

Parliament Open Day

As mentioned early in the report an open day was organized by parliament on Saturday 6 December 2008. The program offered the public an opportunity to view and learn about the history, roles and functions of Parliament. Approximately 8,000 people came to Parliament House to be part of the inaugural Open Day. This provided a wonderful avenue for the Parliament to engage with the general public.

Parliament Visits and tours for the public and other visitors

During the course of the year, a number of visitors made tours to the parliament house. Visitors were both from overseas and the public of Solomon Islands. A total of 154 overseas visitors paid parliamentary visits from October 2008 to March 2009. Students doing research about parliament, politics and democracy processes in Solomon Islands regularly visit parliament. Others, made online visits to the parliament website at www.parliament.gov.sb

The PEC/U will work closely with the formal sector, that is the Ministry of Education to develop school programs about the role and functions of Parliament through curriculum development and model lesson plans. This will be supplemented with school tours and a youth Parliament. The unit will also work and engage with community and stakeholder groups, churches and NGO's through constituency visits, community awareness programs

and the development of resource materials. One of the first initiatives will be to engage with schools and community groups when the Foreign Relations Committee travels to communities throughout Solomon Islands as part of its inquiry into RAMSI. For example the unit proposes to engage with students and teachers of Selwyn College in West Guadalcanal when the committee holds its hearing to explain and highlight the work of the Parliament and its committees and allow the students the opportunity of seeing this first hand.

3. PROJECT RISKS, 2008

Financial

The global financial crisis and its effects on the Solomon Islands Government finance has had, and will continue to have implications for the Project. The current financial and economic situation in Solomon Islands has resulted in a 10% cut across the whole of government budget including the National Parliament Office. It has been suggested that this may increase to 35%. A Public Service staff freeze has also been instituted. This has impacted on the NPO and the Project in two important ways already.

One of the major successes of the Project has been to build sustainability by assisting the National Parliament Office to achieve budget increases in both the recurrent and the establishment budgets. This has resulted in key Project staff transferring onto the NPO establishment when they have been fully trained for example. The current economic situation will mean that the absorption rate by the NPO will be substantially reduced. Secondly, the Project will likely incur greater expenditure in 2009 because of the budget cut across Government. Since the ultimate aim of the Project is to support the effective functioning of the NPO, expenditure related to the delivery of key outputs may need to be picked up by the Project to maintain the current level of output. Having said this, the demand for services from the NPO continues to rise despite these financial difficulties. The mitigation of this particular risk is challenging but nevertheless, Senior Management of NPO will continue to pursue government uptake of services and implement cost saving efficiencies and ensure the support provided by the Project is highly visible and relevant to all Members of Parliament.

Strategic

Another major risk that will need to be managed properly is the transitional arrangements for Project Management and Technical Assistance. It is proposed that the current operational and administrative aspects of the Project Manager's role be transferred to a Project Manager - Support, who will be a national officer. The current Project Manager's position will concentrate on the provision of technical advice and support to the Speaker, Clerk and Members, while the newly created position of Project Support Manager will be responsible for the implementation and reporting requirements of the UNDP. Transition arrangements always pose a risk and will require additional focus and management by the principal stakeholders.

Another risk that is ongoing is that the demand for services has far exceeded expectations in the first 12 months of phase 2 of the Project. The capacity of Parliamentary and Project staff

to meet this additional demand has put pressure on staff to work additional hours including weekends especially in relation to the FRC inquiry. The Project Manager and the NPO team will monitor demand for services, and ensure increased demand is addressed through a range of mechanisms including staff development and training, targeted recruitment and resources and leave.

Political

In 2010, the Solomon Islands will have a general election and a major risk for the Project is that there will be high turnover of MPs resulting in decline for support for the Project. This risk is coupled with the fact that the election of Speaker of Parliament is also due after the general elections. The Project team should ensure that new MPs are supported in their new positions, including through a targeted induction program following the 2010 election as a key buy-in point. Preparations for the Induction Program should also begin early in 2010 to ensure that its design and content are well reviewed, and resource mobilization commenced to acquire support of key partner agencies.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

The main lessons learned by the Project in this reporting period can be identified in the following points:

That the twinning arrangement between the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, New South Wales Parliament and the Autonomous Bougainville Government House of Representatives provides an opportunity to compliment the current work of the Project and for the long term entrenchment of Project outputs and outcomes. To achieve this the Project manager will provide advice and assistance in developing strategic objectives and annual work plan for agreement by the relevant parliaments so that the assistance moves from the approval of ad hoc requests to a more formal and assessable program of support..

The high expectations and uptake of Project deliverables by Members and Committees is expected to continue and grow. This will continue to place pressure on the NPO and the Project to increase resources to meet this demand. It is expected that the completion of the Member's Office Complex will result in a further major increase in resource demand. This requires that strategic and corporate planning focuses on address the issues and risks related to demand for services.

That monitoring, evaluation and reporting is a complex and relatively resource heavy process which however provides important information to build Project success. While the Project has assisted the NPO to build effective monitoring and reporting processes it is suggested that the mid-term Project review be focused on obtaining detailed information from Members on matters that will assist in the development of the 2010 post election induction program. A well designed evaluation will provide important information relevant to the Project as well elicit information that will be the basis of training and development programs for members.

5. NEXT STEPS

The next six months will be focused on delivering on the five key areas of the Project's outcomes in the following way:

Procedural Support: will be highlighted by the mid year meeting in June/July and then the budget meeting of Parliament in late 2008, which will see the enactment of the 2010 Appropriation bill. Both are expected to be extremely busy meetings and include major pieces of legislation relating to political parties and integrity, constitutional amendments and appropriation. The election of the next Governor-General is also scheduled for early in the min year meeting.

Another key feature will be workshops from members on the new Standing Orders following their circulation to members during the reporting period. The next six months will see the House Committee hard at work in finalizing the document for presentation to the House for adoption during the Budget meeting or in the last meeting of the Parliament in early 2010.

It is expected that staff will also assist with the education and training of new Provincial Members after elections in a number of provinces

Committee Support: This area will feature the final stages of the Foreign Relations Committee' work into the review of RAMSI and its presentation of the report to Parliament for consideration. As mentioned, the House Committee will also be working to finalize the new Standing Orders as well as consider the comments by Members during the debate of the report of the Special Select Committee on Privileges following its tabling in Parliament. The Public Accounts Committee will be conducting its yearly review into the Government's Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2009 and Appropriation Bill 2010, a process which tends to utilize much of the Project's resources. The Special Select Committee on the National Referral Hospital will commence its inquiries in the next six months and this will also see Committee Members and secretariat busy on another important review of public policy and administration.

Information Services: In the areas of ICT, the next six months will be focused on the training and development of 2 new ICT staff that have been recruited during the reporting period. Consolidation and regular updating of the website is a priority as is supporting the change management process underway in the Hansard section. Further training of staff and the upgrade of equipment will continue as well as the first attachment of a Hansard officer to the NSW Parliament.

Further effort and focus will be targeted towards setting up a Press gallery which aims to build the relationship the parliament has with the media. The Project sees the media as an important agent in assisting the Parliament in carrying out its scrutiny role and in corruption prevention. The broadcasting of Parliamentary debates and committee proceedings will continue in the upcoming meeting of parliament and coming months.

Corporate Services: The refilling of the finance graduate position will see the work of upgrading the financial management and reporting systems of the NPO continue. Further improvements in the HR functions are also necessary and maybe addressed through the twinning arrangement with the NSW Parliament. Staff training and development will continue in the usual manner of mobilizing resources from donors and partner agencies such as CDI, CPA and the New South Wales Parliament. The Parliament office will continue to restructure its establishment to ensure that it meets the demands and needs of Members.

Parliamentary Education and Community Engagement: The next six months will be focused on implementing the activities developed under the units 2009 work plan particularly in the areas of curriculum development for schools, the youth Parliament and Open Day. The linking of education activities with committee work has been particularly effective and will continue and further opportunities for outreach with provincial communities will be investigated.