The Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) conducted a workshop for Members and staff of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) House of Representatives in Buka on 28th and 29th June 2007. The workshop was held at the request of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Nicholas Peniai.

The aim of the workshop was to assist the House of Representatives (HoR) with ensuring that its parliamentary committees can perform their proper roles. Members gained a greater appreciation of the value of parliamentary committees:

- as a means of ‘taking Parliament to the people’, thus enabling them to be better informed about community views;
- of providing a bridge between their constituents’ concerns and the broader community interest;
- of promoting public debate; and
- of scrutinising the Executive and contributing towards better government through a more informed administration and policy making process.

Workshop Participants

Mr Peter Loney, former Chairman, Public Accounts Committee, Legislative Assembly of Victoria, was the convenor for the workshop. The other facilitators and presenters were:

- Mr Tim Barnett - MP for Christchurch Central and Chief Government Whip, Parliament of New Zealand;
- Mrs Taeasi Sanga - Clerk of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands;
- Mr Warren Cahill - Project Manager, Parliamentary Strengthening Project, National Parliament of Solomon Islands;
- Mr Quinton Clements – Deputy Director, CDI;
- Mr Luke Hambly - Executive Officer, CDI

Mr Lawrence Daveona, Director of the Committees Secretariat of the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea also attended and greatly assisted in the facilitation of the workshop.

38 participants were present for the first day of the workshop including 28 members of the House of Representatives, the President of the Autonomous Bougainville Region,
Hon. Joseph Kabui, the Speaker, the Clerk Mr Robert Tapi, House of Representatives staff and several ABG agency heads. There were 37 participants on the second day including 27 Members plus the Speaker, the Clerk and staff. Radio Bougainville were also present to record proceedings and report on the workshop content and outcomes.

Background

Following eight years of armed conflict (from 1989 to 1997) and a lengthy negotiation process, a peace agreement was signed between the National Government of Papua New Guinea and the combined Bougainvillean factions on 30 August 2001. This enabled the creation of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, the adoption of a constitution for Bougainville and the establishment of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG). The Bougainville Constitution provides for a directly elected President who is head of the Bougainville Executive Council and for a legislature known as the House of Representatives in which the legislative power of the ABG is vested. The first presidential and parliamentary elections were held from May to June 2005.

The House of Representatives has 33 directly elected Members each representing a single member constituency, three reserved seats for women and three for former combatants each representing a constituency in a separate region. The House therefore is comprised of 39 elected members, the Speaker and the President with a total membership of 41. The four Autonomous Region of Bougainville MPs from the National Parliament are allowed to participate in debate but not vote. The Speaker is appointed by the House from outside its membership and the President is a full member of the House – the Vice-President is appointed from amongst the elected MPs.

CDI’s engagement with the ABG House of Representatives began in 2006 when two Members of the House, Hon. Robert Sawa and Hon. Laura Ampa, participated in the 8th Pacific Parliamentary Dialogue in Samoa. Both parliamentarians gave presentations on the Bougainvillean experience of building a new parliament. Hon. Robert Sawa gave an overview of the modern history of Bougainville, the creation of the Autonomous Bougainville Government and the first election for the House of Representatives in June 2005. Hon. Laura Ampa explained how the three allocated seats in the House for women worked and the positive reaction among voters to this innovative arrangement – the first of its kind in the Pacific Islands region.

The workshop follows on from discussions between CDI Deputy Director, Mr Quinton Clements, and the Speaker, Hon. Nicholas Peniai, on areas for cooperation between CDI and the ABG House of Representatives held in March 2007 in Buka. At the request

2 Note that the Commonwealth-Pacific Islands Forum Expert Team observing the 2005 election made the following point:
‘… while 25 women contested the three allocated seats, we understood that no women contested constituency seats, for which they were also entitled to stand. Some people we spoke to suggested that allocating three seats specifically for women may have had an unintended effect of marginalising them within the process. We were of the view that women should be encouraged in future to contest general constituency seats. (General Election for the Autonomous Bougainville Government, May-June 2005, Report of the Commonwealth-Pacific Islands Forum Expert Team, p.14)’
of the Speaker, CDI agreed to sponsor two officers of the ABG House of Representatives on attachments to an Australian parliament. CDI also agreed to organise and facilitate a training workshop on effective parliamentary committees for Members in Buka in June 2007. At a meeting of all Members of the House of Representatives in March organised and chaired by the Speaker, Mr Clements briefed Members on the role of CDI, its parliamentary strengthening work, and ways in which CDI could assist the ABG House of Representatives. A motion was subsequently passed in the House of Representatives acknowledging the work of CDI and extending the gratitude of the House to CDI for its assistance.

The Workshop

The workshop commenced on Thursday 28th June with a formal welcome by the traditional Chief of the Buka area, Hon. Hilary Laris, who began by invoking the ancestral spirits. Chief Laris recited the invocation in the Buka language, which he subsequently translated as follows,

I called upon the presence and guidance of my ancestral spirits from this land, from up the mountains and from beneath the sea at this workshop. To guide each and every one of us especially our foreign visitors who have come to assist us. That the success of this workshop will depend on their spirits being present in this room and finally thanked them for their being with us all.

All present then stood for the singing of the Bougainville Anthem and the reciting of the prayer.

The Speaker officially opened the workshop. Mr Clements then spoke about the role of CDI, introduced the members of the team and outlined the program. The Clerk of the House of Representatives, Mr Robert Tapi, then provided an overview of the committees of the House, their structure, functions and resources (see Attachment A). The Clerk pointed out that the Bougainville Constitution provides for the establishment of a Public Accounts Committee, a regional committee for each of the three regions of Bougainville – North, Central and South - and other committees as determined by the House. Of the latter, five sectoral and advisory committees plus a Select Committee on the Standing Orders have been established (see Attachment A).

Mr Peter Loney began the workshop proper by providing a presentation on the history and structure of the Westminster parliamentary model. He outlined the key principles underpinning the Westminster model – the separation of powers, ministerial responsibility, scrutiny of the executive and participatory democracy.

Mr Loney and Mr Barnett outlined the importance of a good relationship between parliamentarians and their constituencies and how this can be enhanced through effective parliamentary committees. The Members were then asked to discuss their experiences and ideas on how they relate to their constituents, and indeed to think of a broader definition of ‘constituents’ - particularly in relation to their committee work - that

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goes beyond electoral and geographic boundaries and concerns, and hence includes groups like ‘women’, ‘men’, ‘youth’, ‘ex-combatants’, ‘disabled’ etc.

Mr Tim Barnett then introduced a further presentation with the question ‘how could Bougainville’s Sectoral and Advisory Committees be the best parliamentary committees in the Pacific?’ He began by outlining the things that the ABG House of Representatives needs to deliver and described the role Bougainvillean MPs play in that process and the challenges they will face in trying to do so. He outlined several key points about the parliamentary committee system in New Zealand. Mr Barnett explained how the Bougainville committees can be informed and productive, be heard and seen, give the public the confidence to have their say, debate well and reach consensus and be high-profile and integrated with the House. In the general discussion that followed, participants shared some of the following ideas on the value of parliamentary committees and how to make the Bougainville committees the best in the region:

- The need for appropriate funding and resources – currently the ABG is very limited financial resources;
- The need for well trained staff;
- Commitment from all Members needed – Members a little hesitant at first about the role of committees, but now their awareness and knowledge is growing;
- Committees will improve the leadership skills of Members in the parliament and also when they leave parliament and take up other leadership roles in Bougainville;
- Being on a committee should be a prerequisite for becoming a minister – it is an important training opportunity for Members, they will learn new skills and information being on a committee;
- Committees are new to Bougainville and the way politics and parliament is conducted there;
- Committees will help Members advise Ministers and their departments in issues and problems; and
- Committees are made up of different people with different skills, so there is diversity in knowledge and experience among Members which should be taken into consideration.

Mrs Taeasi Sanga spoke of the experience with committees in the Solomon Islands National Parliament, in particular how the Public Accounts Committee has been revived in recent years. As part of her presentation, the workshop was shown television footage of public hearings held in early 2007 as part of the Public Accounts Committee’s inquiry into the 2007 budget appropriations.

Mr Warren Cahill explained the process for conducting an inquiry. He described how and when an inquiry should be initiated. He went on to explain the benefits of inquiries including involving the public in the work of parliament.

It was clear that these sessions focusing on the very successful revival of the committee system in recent times in Solomon Islands particularly impressed the Bougainvillean participants, providing a concrete, local Pacific example of what was possible and practical in this committee strengthening work.
The final session of Day One involved all the presenters describing good practice in a range of areas of committee work. The presenters noted the importance of bipartisanship and consensus in committee work, holding manageable inquiries, using external assistance for inquiries, properly preparing for hearings, producing evidence based reports, and avoiding “re-inventing the wheel”. One of the issues canvassed was the need to agree on the appropriate role of committees. Parliamentary committees are extensions of the Parliament and as such they inquire into issues on behalf of the Parliament and report their findings to the Parliament; their role is not to develop and implement government policy.

If the first day could be characterised as the theoretical and listening part of the workshop, the second day was about the practical — ‘learning by doing’. Accordingly, the second day was centered on role playing a committee meeting and planning mock committee inquiries in which the lessons of Day One were put into practice. Members and staff were grouped into four committees based on actual ABG House of Representatives committees. Each committee elected a Chair, chose a Member to act as secretary, selected an inquiry topic, prepared terms of reference for the inquiry and then planned how they would conduct the inquiry. In planning their inquiries, the committees considered such aspects as:

- The cost of conducting the inquiry;
- Who to invite to provide evidence;
- A list of questions the Committee intends to ask witnesses;
- Planning the inquiry visits – eg. which centres to visit, whom to call in as witnesses;
- The inquiry timetable;
- How to publicize the inquiry;
- Research and analysis support; and
- A risk management strategy.

Each committee chair then presented his committee’s inquiry topic, terms of reference and inquiry plan to the workshop. These sessions highlighted to the participants the importance of planning an inquiry and ensuring adequate resources are available to complete the inquiry.

Following the final plenary session, Mrs Sanga and Mr Cahill conducted a training session with some Committee Chairs, the Clerk and staff of the House of Representatives on the roles and support for committees provided by parliamentary staff.

In the evening, the ABG House of Representatives hosted a dinner for the workshop participants and the CDI team. At this function each of the participants was presented with a certificate acknowledging their participation in the workshop.

What Next?

A key question raised by participants, and the Speaker and Clerk in particular, was what next? They were anxious to ensure that the workshop was not simply a one-off activity and that there would be ongoing support for the ABG House of Representatives.

The Speaker noted that since the election of the House of Representatives and the establishment of parliamentary committees, very little had occurred by way of committee activity. He identified several problems including:
1. Lack of experience with parliamentary committees; and
2. Resource constraints, primarily the lack of appropriately trained staff and limited funding.

He has therefore sought assistance from CDI, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the New Zealand Parliament in building the capacity of the ABG House of Representatives. The CPA has undertaken a technical needs assessment of the Bougainville Parliament and a draft three year technical support programme has been developed. The draft programme includes assistance with the review of Standing Orders, ICT provision, professional development and capacity building for Members and staff and workshops on procedure and financial scrutiny.

Following the workshop, the CDI team met with the Speaker, the Clerk and Mr Moses Havini from the parliamentary secretariat to discuss future assistance to the ABG House of Representatives. It was agreed that the Speaker would write to the Speaker of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, Rt Hon. Sir Peter Kenilorea, seeking to build a close relationship between the two parliaments and to develop joint training and development initiatives for both Members and staff. As part of this proposal to build a closer relationship between the Bougainville and Solomon Islands parliaments, CDI proposes to invite the Speaker, Hon. Nick Peniai, to participate in the planned CDI committees workshop for the Solomon Islands Parliament in Honiara later this year. The discussion also focused on the ABG House of Representatives, with the assistance of CDI and the New Zealand and Solomon Islands parliaments, exploring the possibility of seconding an Australian or New Zealand parliamentary officer to the Bougainville parliamentary secretariat to assist with committee work. Post-workshop it was agreed that at least one of the ABG Sectoral and Advisory Committees should start conducting an inquiry as soon as possible drawing on the lessons from the workshop and that specific training for individual committees such as the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) should be pursued. In relation to the latter, it was suggested that the Speaker seek the assistance of the Papua New Guinea Auditor General and former PNG National Parliament PAC Chairman, Hon. John Hickey.

**Conclusion**

Despite a 24 hour delay in the flight departing Port Moresby for Buka, administratively there were few problems. The administrative support provided by the ABG House of Representatives was excellent. The workshop program was extremely well received and very effective in delivering the right mix of presentation and participation. Rather than being overly academic, the program was interactive and needs-focused. Each of the presenters used an inclusive, friendly and sharing approach in getting their messages across and engaging with the audience. As a result, the sessions generated lively discussion and numerous questions from participants. All participants exhibited a genuine desire to learn about committee practice and procedure and gain a better understanding of how to make the ABG House of Representatives committees function effectively.

The participants expressed great enthusiasm for the workshop and the approach taken. Feedback from the participants has been overwhelmingly positive. It was evident that the Members could see the benefits of committee work.
The Speaker expressed his gratitude to CDI for putting together a professional team of facilitators with many years of parliamentary experience. In welcoming the Clerk of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, the Speaker made special mention of the very close relationship between the people of the Solomon Islands and Bougainville and the fact that both are now post conflict societies with all that entails. Indeed, the inclusion of presenters from the Solomon Islands and New Zealand proved to be invaluable. The Bougainvillean participants were especially interested in the lessons learned from the Solomon Islands experience of rebuilding a Parliament post-conflict.

Like all of CDI’s activities, the workshop provides the basis for the continued strengthening of links between regional counterpart democratic institutions, and between individual legislators. As is always the case at successful events, an important benefit of this workshop is the informal interchange and fostering of relationships that occurred between and after the formal sessions and at the social events. Workshop participants and the CDI team got to know each other and to exchange ideas and experiences as individuals involved in public life.

CDI has developed strong links with the ABG House of Representatives which will greatly assist in future CDI Papua New Guinea focused activities.

This was the first workshop of this type that CDI has organised. It proved not only to be a successful formula in the Bougainville context, but is clearly transferable to other parliaments in the region.

Acknowledgements

The workshop would not have been successful without the active involvement and support of the ABG House of Representatives. CDI extends its deepest appreciation to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Nick Penai, the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Mr Robert Tapi, and the staff of the House for their generous assistance, advice and excellent preparations. CDI is especially grateful for the enthusiastic participation of the Members of the House of Representatives. CDI also acknowledges the kind assistance and support of the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea.

CDI greatly appreciates the involvement of the presenters in the workshop. Without their genuine interest, enthusiasm, patience, extraordinary skill as facilitators and presenters and deep knowledge of parliaments, the workshop would not have been the success it clearly was.
ATTACHMENT A

Autonomous Bougainville Government House of Representatives

Bougainville Executive Council

1. Joseph Kabui  President
2. Joseph Watawi  Vice President (Selau Constituency)
3. Ezekiel Massat  Police Ministers (Tonsu Constituency)
4. Mathias Salas  Minister for Finance (North Nasioi)
5. Gerard Sinato  Minister for Health (Tewa Constituency)
6. Magdalene Toroansi  Minister for Woman’s Affairs (Women’s Representative, Central Bougainville Region)
7. Glynn Tovirika  Minister for Veterans Affairs (Ex-combatant Representative, Central Bougainville)
8. Jonathan Ngati  Minister for Local Level Government (Motuna/Huyono/Tukunuto Constituency)
9. Taehu Pais  Minister for Economic Services (Atolls)
10. Patrick Nisira  Minister for Works (Halia Constituency)
11. Jeffrey Nabuai  Minister for Communications (Makis)
12. Michael Otoroa  Minister for Education (Lato Constituency)

Office of the Speaker
13. Nick Peniai  Speaker

Office of the Deputy Speaker
14. Francesca Semoso  Deputy Speaker & Women Representative (North Bougainville Region)

Ordinary Members

15. William Epota  Member for Torokina Constituency
16. Robert Hamal Sawa  Member for Hagogohe
17. Thomas Lugabai  Member for Baubake
18. Benedict Pisi  Member for Ioro
19. Joseph Kinani  Member for Lule
20. Alfred Andrew Bakate  Member for South Nasioi
21. Janarius Tenevi  Member for Haku
22. Thomas Keriri  Member for Rau
23. Dominic Ita  Member for Kongara.
24. Lawrence Kabul Belleh  Member for Peit
25. Michael Komoiki  Member for Kopii
26. Rodney Job Osioco  Member for Kokoda
27. Hilary Laris  Member for Tsitalato
28. Alphonse Pemuko  Member for Eivo Torau
29. John Tabinaman  Member for Mahari
30. Leo Reivasi  Member for Terra
31. Joseph Gitovia  Member for Taonita Teop
32. Thomas Pabakumi  Member for Baba
33. Andrew Topensi  Member for Nissan
34. Wilfred Komba  Member for Konou
35. Luke Karaston  Member for Suir
36. Aloys Devui    Member for Taonita Tinputz
37. Tony Siona     Member for Bolave
38. Laura Ampa     Regional Women’s Representative (South Bougainville)
39. Marcelline Getsi Ex combatant Representative (North Bougainville Region)
40. Benedict Paula Takusi Ex combatant Representative (South Bougainville)
41. Vacant         Ramu Constituency

Parliamentary Sectoral and Advisory Committees

1. Social Development Affairs including Veterans Affairs
   Members
   Benedict Pisi  Chairman
   Tony Siona
   Dominic Ita
   Marcelline Getsi

2. Foreign and Internal Peace, Reconciliation, Bougainville Peace Agreement and Autonomy Development Affairs
   Members
   John Tabinaman  Chairman
   Benedict Takusi
   Leo Reivasi
   William Epota
   Michael Komoiki

3. Economic Development and Public Service Affairs
   Aloysius Devui  Chairman
   Thomas Lugabai
   Luke Karaston
   Alfred Bakate
   Lawrence Belleh

4. Information Technology, Science and Research and Higher Education Development Affairs
   Wilfred Komba  Chairman
   Hilary Laris
   Alphonse Pemuko
   Vacant (to be filled in June)

5. Infrastructure Development Affairs
Thomas Keriri  Chairman
Joseph Gitovia
Laura Ampa
Joseph Kinani

Functions
Functions of the Parliamentary Sectoral and Advisory Committees are to consult with and advise Ministers on matters relevant to their portfolios and on policy and legislative proposals relevant to their portfolios.

The quorum of the Committee is three members;
The Committee has the power to search for persons, papers and records and to act during recess;
The meetings of the Committee shall only be held during the week immediately before or during the week immediately after a meeting of the House of Representatives.

6. Public Accounts Committee

The Public Accounts Committee is established under the Public Accounts Committee Act 2005. Members of the Committee are:-

Rodney Job  acting Chairman
Andrew Topensi
Thomas Pabakumi
2 vacancies to be filled in June

Functions
To carry out the functions and exercise the powers of the Committee in accordance with the Public Accounts Committee Act 2005.

7. Parliamentary Select Committee on the House of Representatives

Standing Orders

Nick Peniai  Speaker & Chairman
Francesca Semoso  D/Speaker
Robert Hamal Sawa
Rodney Osioco Job
Januaries Tenevi

Functions
a) to consider the draft Standing Orders of the House of Representatives prepared by the Clerk
b) to liaise with the Clerk in respect of any amendments and/or additions to the draft Standing Orders; and
c) to report to the House and to present the draft Standing Orders to the House for consideration and adoption.