Political Party Development Course 2011

Thursday 12 May – Wednesday 25 May 2011
Centre for Democratic Institutions, Crawford School of Economics and Government
The Australian National University, Canberra

The Centre for Democratic Institutions’ Political Party Development (PPD) course was held in Canberra from the 12th to 25th May 2011. This was the sixth occasion the course has been conducted, being held annually since 2006. The two-week course is based at the Crawford School of Economics and Government at the Australian National University, and is presented by Dr Norm Kelly.

The PPD course is designed to provide senior political party officials from the South-East Asia – South Pacific region with the skills to strengthen their parties and party systems, with the objectives being improved governance and more stable democracies. The intention of the course is to provide participants with:

• Information on the Australian political system, with insights into how Australian political parties administer and organise themselves;
• An understanding of party theory and the factors that influence the development of party systems;
• A better understanding of parties and party systems in the region;
• Opportunities to develop contacts and networks with other parties in their own countries and throughout the region; and
• Development of links with Australian parties and institutions.

This course was again generally well supported by Australia’s main political parties and parliamentarians, with requests for site visits, meetings and guest presenters positively received.

Course Participants

Twenty participants from seven countries were selected to attend the course. They represented the following countries:

• Philippines (2)
• Indonesia (7)
• East Timor (2)
• Papua New Guinea (4)
• Solomon Islands (2)
• Vanuatu (2)
• Fiji (1)

The majority of participants hold senior positions in their respective parties, and three are current Members of Parliament. There has been increased interest from the target countries to participate, with 80 nominations being received, a doubling from last year. Participants were required to be fluent in written and spoken English, and this enabled
good dissemination of information and exchanges of ideas between participants and presenters.

The South Pacific region has the lowest levels of women’s parliamentary representation in the world, and CDI is keen to encourage women’s participation in regional politics. This year, ten women participated on the PPD course, easily the highest level so far. The course includes specific sessions on women in politics, and meetings with senior women parliamentarians, with a focus on how Australia’s main parties encourage women’s involvement in administrative and campaign aspects of party work. CDI will continue to seek significant numbers of nominations from women for future courses.

Structure

The PPD course is composed of lectures and guest speakers, visits to Australian political institutions, and participant presentations. In addition, two social events are held – a welcoming event where participants met Australian government and party officials, ANU academics, and their countries’ embassy and high commission staff. At the end of the course, a dinner is held, with presentations to each of the participants.

As part of the course, the participants are required to give a presentation on one of six topics. These topics are – Party Law; Internal Party Democracy; Recruiting and Maintaining Members; A Voice for Women; Party Financing – Fundraising; and Campaigning.

The standard of these presentations remains high. The presentations are valuable for the group to recap on what has been learnt during the course, and to provide a better understanding of regional differences in these topic areas.

The course covered the following topics:

- Functions of Political Parties
- Party Systems & Democratic Development
- Australian Political Parties
- Electoral Systems
- Parliamentary Wing
- Women in Politics
- Regulation of Parties
- Membership
- Policy
- Campaigns
- Pre-selections
- Finances
- Media
- Coalitions

These topics were covered by a mix of lectures and visits to political institutions including party secretariats, the ACT Legislative Assembly and the Federal Parliament. Sessions with guest presenters included time for discussion and questions.

Presentations from Political Institutions

The following political institutions made presentations to the group:

Political Parties

The success of the course relies on the active involvement and support of the main Australian political parties, and this was generally forthcoming when requested, both
from the administrative and parliamentary wings of the parties. Special acknowledgement and thanks go to Bruce Edwards (Liberal), Peter Yates (Labor), and Brett Constable (Greens) for assisting this level of access and involvement.

At the federal parliamentary and ACT Assembly levels, the willingness of parliamentarians to meet with the group, especially in the final session prior to the winter recess, was very much appreciated. The group met with the following Federal Members and Senators:

**Labor:** Richard Marles MP (Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs)  
Harry Jenkins MP (Speaker of the House of Representatives)  
Senator Kate Lundy

**Liberal:** Julie Bishop MP (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs)  
Teresa Gambaro MP (Shadow Parliamentary Secretary, International Development Assistance)  
Senator Sue Boyce

**Greens:** Senator Scott Ludlam

**Nationals:** Mark Coulton MP (Chief Whip)

The sessions with these representatives were very useful for understanding the relationships between the parliamentary and lay wings of parties, as well as the group getting an appreciation of the government’s and opposition’s views on regional issues.

The experience and expertise of party officials added much value to the course. Of particular importance were the presentations from:

**Liberal Party** (national secretariat) – Bruce Edwards, Jonathan Hawkes.
**Greens** (national manager) – Brett Constable

These presentations included information on administrative structures, campaigning, and the participation of women.

**ACT Legislative Assembly**
A visit to the Assembly included presentations from the Clerk of the Assembly, Tom Duncan; the Speaker, Shane Rattenbury; Liberal Leader Zed Seselja, Deputy Speaker, Mary Porter.

**Australian Parliament House**
In two visits, in addition to meeting with Members and Senators (covered above), the group met Clerk of the House of Representatives, Bernard Wright, and Senate Clerk Assistant (Committees), Chris Reid, who both made presentations on parliamentary procedures. The group also observed Question Time in the House of Representatives and Senate Estimates hearings.
Other Sessions

During the first few days of the course, participants learn of the party systems in the represented countries. These sessions were assisted by discussion from ANU academics – Professor Paul Hutchcroft, Dr Jon Fraenkel, Dr Bill Standish, and CDI’s Director, Dr Stephen Sherlock. In addition, Professor Marian Sawer presented on the representation of women in politics, and Dr Nicole Haley presented on the performance of women in PNG elections.

Bob McMullan, former Senator and MP, presented on the role of a major party secretary, and the organization of factions in the ALP; Linda Reynolds (former Liberal Deputy Federal Director) – presented a half-day workshop on developing campaign messages and a campaign plan.

Dr Norm Kelly presented lectures on party systems, the Australian political and electoral systems, and campaigning principles.

Conclusion

The sixth PPD course has built on the successes and lessons of earlier courses. The two week model remains a preferred format, both for conducting the course, and for attracting preferred participants. The record number of applications for this year’s course indicates that there is a continuing need for this form of party development work, and that the course is achieving a reputation for helping the strengthening of political parties in the region.

Participants exhibited a genuine desire to learn, and to put that learning into practice on their return to their respective countries. Due to the overall political party development program, CDI is establishing very strong links with parties and government officials in the region, which is beneficial for identifying suitable applicants for future PPD courses, and other potential in-country CDI activities.

Several participants used their time in Canberra to further their links with Australian parties and organisations, as well as interacting with their diplomatic and expatriate communities. Many new contacts were made, and it is expected that many participants will remain in touch into the future.

The support and involvement of the Australian political parties and their parliamentarians is critical to the success of the course, and CDI acknowledges the parties’ participation. The PPD sessions also help Australian parties to gain a better understanding of some of the issues and challenges that confront political parties throughout the region.

The inclusion of the Philippines in this year’s course extends the reach of PPD to nine countries since its inception. There have been further requests to run the course in-country, and CDI is currently designing a PPD course for Papua New Guinea, ahead of that country’s 2012 election.

All this is evidence that CDI is meeting its PPD objectives of improving participants’ theoretical knowledge and practical skills in political party systems and party
administration; and developing relationships between the participant countries and the Australian government and political parties.

**Six Years of PPD**

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