2011 Vanuatu Parliamentary Strengthening Consultations

Rationale
The 30 years since independence has seen a progressive fragmentation of political parties in Vanuatu. The Anglophone Vanua’aku Party and the predominantly Francophone alliance the Union of Moderate Parties have gradually splintered into smaller factions and, as a result, politics has been dominated by shifting alliances and unstable coalitions. Marshalling the numbers to form government has become the principal preoccupation of parliamentarians, significantly weakening the capacity of Parliament to perform its law-making and oversight responsibilities.

Although CDI has worked with the Parliament of Vanuatu since 2001, frequent changes in the composition of political parties and the leadership of the Parliament have restricted the scope and depth of our engagement. In recent years CDI has supported an induction program for new MPs; delivered training for MPs on the role of parliamentary committees; and provided technical assistance for a review of Standing Orders.

In early 2011 the Clerk of the Vanuatu Parliament, Lino Bulekuli dit Sacsac, invited CDI to visit for discussions about developing a new program of parliamentary strengthening activities.

Activity
CDI Deputy Director Grant Harrison and CDI Associate the Hon Kevin Rozzoli visited the Parliament of Vanuatu from 14 to 18 March 2011 for meetings with:
- the Clerk;
- the Deputy Clerk, Leon Teter;
- the Parliamentary Librarian, Leiwa Moli;
- the Private Secretary to the Speaker, Yoan Mariasua;
- Hon Bob Loughman MP, formerly Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee; and
- Hon Ralph Regenvanu MP, Minister for Justice and formerly a member of the Standing Orders Committee.

The discussions focussed on:
1. what, if any, the further action was required to complete the review of Standing Orders, a project in which Mr Rozzoli had been closely involved; and
2. other activities which could be undertaken in 2011-12.

1 Members of Parliament, parliamentary staff and party officials have also participated in CDI’s regional training events on women in politics, party operations and financial scrutiny of government agencies.
During the visit, CDI also met with the Australian Ambassador to Vanuatu, Mr Jeff Roach and his staff and with Derek Brien (the Executive Director of the Pacific Institute of Public Policy).

**Outcome**

Mr Loughman and Mr Regenvanu had been leading figures in the review of Standing Orders project and were keen to take advantage of Mr Rozzoli’s presence to:
- examine in detail the feedback that had been obtained from members of parliament on the proposed revisions to Standing Orders; and
- plan for the final adoption of the Standing Orders.

These and the other discussions resulted in the development of the following draft program of activities:

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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Project</th>
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<tr>
<td>Procedural Development</td>
<td>Standing Orders Implementation Workshop</td>
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<td>1 day workshop for MPs on opportunities provided by revised Standing Orders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Procedural Manual preparation of manual to guide MPs in parliamentary procedures</td>
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<td>Parliament of Vanuatu Act support for Standing Orders Committee examination of purpose &amp; content of a Parliament of Vanuatu Act (eg, provisions relating to parliamentary privilege and committee powers)</td>
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<td>Committee Development</td>
<td>Public Accounts Committee Inquiry Mentoring program of practical advice and assistance on all aspects of the conduct of an inquiry, over the life of an inquiry</td>
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<td>Consultations with Committee Chairs to prepare committee annual work plans, as required by revised Standing Orders</td>
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<td>Member Development</td>
<td>Parliamentary Leadership Training 3 day course on constituency representational skills, integrity in leadership and national leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parliamentary Induction Training 3 day course on parliamentary operations, representational skills, integrity in leadership and national leadership</td>
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CDI will continue to consult with members and staff of the Vanuatu Parliament to confirm timing and delivery arrangements for these activities.

We expect that the provision of such support will enhance the capacity of the Vanuatu Parliament to operate effectively and fulfill its legislative and accountability responsibilities. This is consistent with CDI’s aim of strengthening the operation of parliaments in its target countries.

Centre for Democratic Institutions
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