10TH PARLIAMENT OF VANUATU

INDUCTION PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS

PROGRAM REPORT

Port Vila, 21-23 November 2012
SUMMARY

In the lead up to Vanuatu’s general elections in October 2012, the Clerk of the Vanuatu Parliament, Mr. Lino Bulekuli dit Sacsac, invited the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to assist the Parliamentary Secretariat in developing and delivering an induction program for members of the 10th Parliament.

The Clerk recognized that it was important to deliver a program as soon as possible after the first sitting of Parliament, in order to help members, particularly newly elected members, understand and perform their role as parliamentarians.

Fifty-two members from 17 constituencies were elected to the Parliament – 24 were newly elected and 28 were returning members. In a continuation of recent trends, there was further fragmentation of political party representation. Immediately after the elections there were 17 parties or groupings and four independents represented in the parliament. Twelve parties had 3 or fewer representatives and only three had more than five representatives. The Vanu’aku Pati had most representatives with eight.

The first sitting day of the 10th Parliament took place on Monday 19 November 2012 with the main items of business being the swearing-in of members, the election of the Speaker and the election of the Prime Minister. The Hon. George Andres Wells was elected Speaker and the Hon. Sato Kilman was elected Prime Minister. Before adjourning the House, the Speaker Wells announced that Induction Program would take place in Parliament from Wednesday 21 November until Friday 23 November 2012. He urged all members (both new and returning members) to attend the program.

The goal of the Induction Program was to help MPs understand and more effectively perform their role as parliamentarians. In particular, the program focused on encouraging MPs to discuss and understand:

1. the constitutional basis of Parliament as the supreme legislative, oversight and representative body;
2. the separation and balance of powers (between the Executive, Parliament and the Judiciary);
3. the role and responsibilities of an MP;
4. how parliament operates, including:
   a. the role of the Speaker and the Clerk;
   b. the business of the Chamber; and
   c. the role and operation of parliamentary committees;

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1 The new Ministry was sworn-in at a ceremony held in the parliamentary precinct immediately following the adjournment of the House.
5. the parliamentary services that are available to them;

6. the work of Vanuatu’s accountability agencies and the relationship between MPs and these agencies;

7. the structure of the Government of Vanuatu and its main public service agencies.

The program featured presentations from:

- a former President of the Republic, Kalkot Mataskelekele;
- the Chief Justice, Vincent Lunabek;
- the Clerk and his senior staff;
- senior figures in the public sector (including the Attorney-General, the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman and Directors-General from the Departments of Strategic Planning and Policy, Finance and Treasury, and Justice; and
- academic and civil society commentators.

In addition, the following international visitors contributed as presenters, facilitators and program coordinators:

- from CDI - Deputy Director Grant Harrison, program convener Warren Cahill and special advisers Rick Barker and Steve Chadwick (both former MPs from New Zealand and members of the Australian and New Zealand International Election Monitors Institute)
- from the Queensland Parliament – Deputy Speaker Dr Mark Robinson and Acting Manager of Committees Rob Hansen
- from UNDP – Brian Lenga, from UNDP’s Multi Country Office in Suva, and Donald Woulorseje and Roslyn Arthur from the UN Joint Presence Office in Port Vila.

A feature of the program was the time devoted to dialogue and exchange. MPs had the opportunity to question expert panels, participate in structured discussions and be involved in group work - meaning that all issues were considered in a local context not just from regional perspectives. Most of the presentations and almost all of the discussion sessions were conducted in Bislama, which provided further encouragement for participants to thoroughly explore issues.

Day 1 of the program focussed on the constitutional basis of government, the separation of powers and the role of members of parliament. Day 2 involved discussions about the process of law making, business in the Chamber, the role of an opposition and parliamentary oversight. The sessions on parliamentary oversight included group
exercises on drafting questions, drafting motions for urgency debates and planning for committee inquiries. Day 3 began with briefings on the services provided by the Parliamentary Secretariat and then moved to presentations on public sector accountability and government planning, budgeting and service delivery.

The theme of public leadership (and the complexity of exercising leadership in both local and national realms) recurred throughout the program. So too did the notion that being a parliamentarian (with law-making, accountability and representative responsibilities) rather than just a politician. It was clear that many participants found it to be very useful to discuss these issues openly, without constraint, and with international peers.

When speaking at the opening of the program Speaker Wells expressed his commitment to strengthening the operation of parliament and he urged MPs to ‘do what they can to ensure that Parliament operates effective in the interests of our communities and our country.’ Judging from the very good turnout and enthusiastic participation throughout the program, the Vanuatu Parliament’s Class of 2012 is interested in changing the way that the Vanuatu Parliament works. The challenge for the Speaker, the members of the 10th Parliament and the Parliamentary Secretariat is to translate this interest into positive steps toward change.

During the program CDI, the Queensland Parliament and UNDP all offered to provide continuing advice and assistance to support in this transition. In early 2013 we will resume discussions with the Speaker and Clerk about how best to structure a program of assistance of the Parliament.

We would like to acknowledge the calm and insightful leadership of Clerk of Parliament and tireless work of the Parliamentary Secretariat (especially Assistant Clerk Leon Teter and the Clerk’s Secretary Stephanie Mailesi) throughout the preparation and delivery phases of the program.
PROGRAM APPROACH

The 2012 Induction Program was the second occasion on which CDI and UNDP had been invited to collaborate in support of an induction program for the Vanuatu Parliament – the first being in September 2008, after the election of the 9th Parliament.

On this occasion the program was designed having regard to the 2008 experience but also CDI’s subsequent experience on similar programs elsewhere in the Pacific – most notably in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

Typically designing an induction program involve making choices between the time spent providing procedural information to members and the time spent addressing broader concepts such as the nature of parliamentary democracy and public leadership, the separation of powers and executive oversight. The former has usually been considered a ‘safe’ option and the latter more ‘high risk’. The 2012 induction program was deliberately inclined to the latter approach, with a strong focus on enabling MPs to discuss and reflect on their role as parliamentarians: as representatives of their communities; as law makers; as overseers of Executive performance; and as participants in national policy debates.

The theme of public leadership was interwoven throughout the program. This was in recognition of the demands placed on MPs they seek to balance individual preferences, local priorities and national interests, and to negotiate Vanuatu's place in the world.

It was also resolved, early in the preparation phase, to strive for an inclusive and participatory flow throughout the program by:

1. maximizing the opportunities for MPs to discuss issues, to avoid a ‘class-room’ style event; and

2. ensuring that as much content as possible was delivered by local experts in Bislama.

These decisions resulted in a program that featured interactive panel presentations; question and answer sessions; guided discussions and facilitated group work. In the end, about 60% the formal presentations were in Bislama, as were almost all of the Q&A and group discussion sessions.

Involving international experts, principally as contributors to small group discussions but also on occasions as presenters, was a valuable adjunct to this approach; allowing regional perspectives to be considered. The international experts spoke in English but in most instance were able to respond (in English) to questions put in Bislama.

All of these approaches were developed in consultation with the Clerk of Parliament and our UN colleagues, Brian Lenga, Donald Wouleseje and Roslyn Arthur. The Clerk’s leadership of the preparation phase, and the active involvement of staff from the Parliamentary Secretariat in program logistics and administration, meant that the program was informed by local knowledge and solidly grounded as a Parliamentary Services event.
PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

There were high levels of attendance and participation by MPs throughout the program.

On Day 1, 44 of the 52 members of parliament attended and, although there was a reduction in numbers on Days 2 and 3 (with 40 on Day 2 and 36 on Day 3), the reduction was much less than has been observed in similar programs in other countries. This perhaps indicates a desire by members of the 10th Parliament to engage seriously in their roles and responsibilities. It may also indicate that the program delivered content they thought was relevant and useful.

There was better than expected turnout from the Executive, with a number of Ministers present throughout – including, amongst others, the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers for Finance, Internal Affairs and Justice. There was also consistently strong participation from members of the Opposition; with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition and senior figures from various opposition parties keenly engaged in the program.

A list of members of the 10th Parliament showing participation in the program (and indicating whether they are new or returning MPs) is at Attachment A.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The following section provides an overview of the themes explored in each session of the program. Each session of the program was designed to contribute to one or more of the program objectives described on pages 2 and 3 above.

Day 1 Wednesday 21 November

The Induction Program began with an opening prayer from Hon David Tosul MP (Member for Pentecost), welcome remarks from the Speaker and an overview of the program from Mr Harrison and Mr Lenga (on behalf of Knut Ostby, UN Pacific Resident Coordinator).

Session 1: Parliamentary Democracy and Public Leadership
Hon Kalkot Mataskelekele, former President of the Republic of Vanuatu

In a keynote address Mr Mataskelekele talked about the great expectations that democratic systems of government place on those elected to parliament. MPs are expected to represent their communities: participate in national debates on policy and law; and influence or oversee government service delivery. In doing so they have to weigh community preferences and exercise personal judgement. A very real complication in the Pacific context is the often unrealistic expectations that constituents have of MPs as a source of project funding and funding for personal and community expenses, including school fees and funeral and wedding expenses.

3 Not all participating MPs attend all sessions, meaning that numbers fluctuated somewhat during the course of each day. There was, however, consistently good attendance throughout the program.
Mr Mataskelekele spoke frankly about these challenges of balancing these multiple responsibilities, drawing on his unique experience having served at senior levels in each arm of government (the Executive, as head of state; the Legislature, as an MP; and the Judiciary, as a judge of the Supreme Court). He proposed that public leadership involved service to the nation. Being an MP was about being a servant not just a 'Big Man': ‘...from now on your primary responsibility is to work as a servant of the nation, servant of the community and servant of your constituency’.

His wide-ranging address also touched on whether the electoral system was producing results that were properly representative of community intentions; whether Vanuatu’s dependence on international aid was limiting its capacity to be economically self-sufficient; and whether the constitution should be amended to limit parliamentary no-confidence motions, in order to encourage more political stability.

Session 2: Parliament in the System of Government
Hon Chief Justice Vincent Lunabek and Emeritus Professor Don Paterson.

The second session focused on the place of parliament in Vanuatu’s system of government and the unique place of parliament in that system of government. In consecutive presentations the Chief Justice of Vanuatu, Hon Vincent Lunabek, and the Emeritus Professor of Law at USP, Don Paterson, discussed some of the principles underpinning the Constitution of Vanuatu, especially:

- the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens;
- the key institutions of government;
- the separate and distinct powers that these institutions have; and
- the checks and balances that the constitution provides to guide the exercise of powers by the separate arms of government.

The Chief Justice talked particularly about separation of powers – arguing that such separation is critically important in order to avoid an authoritarian concentration of power. He highlighted the differences between traditional power concentrated in the hands of one chief and exercised according to his judgment and the way that the Constitution disperses power to ensure that more than one perspective influences decision-making. He proposed that the Constitution represented government according to the ‘best law’, rather that government according to one man (even if that man was a good or ‘the best’ man).

Professor Paterson provided an overview of the main provisions in the Constitution, highlighting issues of application and interpretation that had arisen since independence.

As in Session 1, the presentations were followed by a question and answer period in which participants explored the issues under discussion.

Session 3, Part 1: Role of a Member of Parliament

Mr Cahill began this session by referring to the principles of public leadership that have been described by the UK House of Commons, those being:
**Selflessness** Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

**Integrity** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

**Objectivity** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

**Accountability** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

**Openness** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

**Honesty** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

**Leadership** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Three experienced MPs (Mr Barker and Ms Chadwick from New Zealand and Mr Mataskelekele from Vanuatu) were then asked to explore these themes from the perspective of their personal experience. To guide the discussion, each of panel member was asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Is being an MP about leading or following?

2. How did you manage your constituent relations?

3. What makes a good MP?

The responses provoked a lively discussion period in which new and returning MPs and shared their views and experience.

**Session 3, Part 2: Role of a Member of Parliament Workshop**

The role of an MP was further explored in this session, in which participants were divided into three smaller groups to discuss in more detail the three questions listed above. The groups (of 13 MPs each) contained new and returning MPs and were accompanied by program resource people as facilitators:
After discussing these questions in small groups, the conclusions were reported back to the whole group. A summary record of each small group discussion is available at Attachment B. The main themes that emerged from the presentations were that MPs should:

- Understand the various aspect of their responsibility and let their constituents know – in order to better manage community expectations;

- Prepare well for parliamentary responsibilities – in order to contribute to debate and vote wisely

- Use the Parliament and its committees to gather information – to contribute to good government

- Have a deliberate strategy for community engagement; which reflects community needs and interests

- Understand that being a good MP sometimes means that you have to say no to your community.

The program structure of addressing this issue first through presentations and then facilitated discussions of regional experience and local context was very effective. It allowed a more complete and nuanced examination of the role of an MP than might otherwise have occurred. It was clear that this session encouraged participants to think more deeply about their role than they done in the past.

**Session 4: The Role of the Opposition**

This session began with a panel of former and current MPs (Mr Barker, Ms Chadwick and the Deputy Speaker of the Queensland Parliament, Dr Mark Robinson) discussing their experience as members of a parliamentary opposition. The panel members were interviewed by Mr Cahill, who posed the following questions:

1. What do you see as the role of a parliamentary opposition?

2. What was the best thing about being an opposition MP?

3. What was the worst thing about being an opposition MP?

4. What was the most effective thing you achieved in your time in opposition?

5. If you are opposing the government does that make you disloyal?

6. How do you build your reputation for effectiveness while in opposition?

The participants were very engaged in this session, and the questions indicated a strong awareness of the important role that a strong opposition can play in ensuring Executive accountability. Participants were particularly interested in considering the way that opposition MPs can use forms of the parliament (such as question time, urgency debates
and parliamentary committees) to scrutinise the Executive and draw attention to policy alternatives.

Day 2 Thursday 22 November

At the end of the first day of the induction program participants had been asked to jot-down (on Post-It Notes) the most interesting points arising from the discussions on Day 1. These responses were categorised and discussed at the beginning of Day 2 to help consolidate participant understanding. A summary of the responses is at Attachment C. Some of the responses which were most widely endorsed were:

On the Constitution

‘Chief Justice was thought provoking with his comment that we need to be governed by the ‘best law’ rather than the ‘best man”

‘Do we need to amend the Constitution to limit the number of motions of no confidence?’

On the Role of an MP

‘Former President’s comment about MP as ‘servant’ is important’

‘To say NO at times can make a good MP’

‘It is vital to educate the population that the role of an MP is to be a legislator not a social worker, because at the moment the general expectation is that MPs are a source of social need (and money)’

On the Role of an Opposition

‘Effective opposition is essential – an opposition must have funds to be effective’

‘Oppositions should shoot the message, not the messenger – ie, hold the government to account but be cordial’

‘More support and advice is needed on this issue’

On Parliament

‘MP’s must be law makers, not endorsers of what the Executive proposes’

‘Parliamentary Secretariat must be better resourced to assist MPs’

‘MPs must use committees to help parliament be effective in supervising the government’
**Session 5: Law Making**

In this session the Clerk of Parliament, Lino Bulekuli dit Sacac, and the Acting Attorney-General, Angelyne Saul, gave an overview of the law-making process. They stepped through the process of translating a policy idea into law – outlining the role of both the Executive and the Parliament in the process. Ms Saul, who is the head of the State Law Office and a public official, focused particularly on the role of the Executive and its agencies in drafting and presenting laws, while the Clerk focused particularly on the role of Parliament in considering and voting on laws.

The discussion that followed the presentations, participants were particularly interested in the action that could be taken to:

- make more time available for parliamentary consideration of proposed laws (in the chamber and in committees); and

- provide more support for MPs to prepare private members’ bills (which is currently not provided by the Government’s Parliamentary Counsel).  

The Clerk reported that proposed revisions to the Standing Orders prepared by the Standing Orders Review Committee in the previous (9th) Parliament would allow all Bills to be referred to committees for detailed consideration before debate in the Chamber. He noted that the proposed revisions have not yet been endorsed by the Parliamentary Management Board. A number of MPs urged that this be a priority for the new Parliament. The Clerk undertook to provide copies of the proposed revisions to all MPs.

**Session 6, Part 1: Business in the Chamber - Practice**

Mr Barker, Ms Chadwick and Dr Robinson began this session by addressing a series of questions about the way parliamentary business is conducted in the Chamber. The questions were:

1. As a new member, how did you learn the ropes and become confident in your role in the chamber?

2. Is the speech in the chamber completely free?

3. What is the role of the speaker?

4. What is parliamentary privilege?

5. What is the best use you made of your time in the chamber?

6. Interjections are commonplace in the chamber - what works what doesn't work?

Comments from the panel members and their responses to questions from the floor provided MPs with a practical perspective on the Chamber operations. The aim was to

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*The Clerk noted that six private members’ Bills were presented in the previous Parliament (the 9th Parliament).*
ease MPs into an appreciation of why parliamentary exists and is useful without overwhelming them with confusing detail.

Session 6, Part 2: Business in the Chamber – Procedure

In Part 2 of this session, the Clerk of Parliament began to introduce some of the main rules relating to the operation of the Chamber. He guided MPs through the Standing Orders - highlighting the order of business for each sitting day and the way in which each item of business is conducted. He discussed the division between government and private members business and the opportunities available for MPs to raise issues of community concern and examine government policy and operations.

Session 7, Part 1: Parliamentary Oversight

Mr Cahill introduced this session with an overview of three of the ways in which parliaments seek to scrutinize Executive performance: by allowing MPs to ask questions of government ministers (in writing and orally without notice); by allowing MPs to call for urgent debates; and by allowing MPs working in committees to examining issues in detail. Mr Harrison and Mr Teter followed this overview with presentations that explored more thoroughly the work of parliamentary committees.

Mr Harrison talked about why parliaments appoint committees and the opportunities they provide for MPs to contribute meaningfully to the work of the parliament. He argued that committees enable:

- the legislative, oversight and representational work of parliament to be spread evenly amongst MPs;
- MPs to contribute or develop specialized knowledge;
- Expert and community opinion to be sought and considered;
- Better informed debates and decisions on the floor of parliament; and
- More accountable and responsive public administration.

Mr Teter reinforced these points by explaining the work of committees in the 9th Parliament of Vanuatu and outlining the likely structure of committees in the 10th Parliament.

Session 7, Part 2: Parliamentary Oversight
Workshop

To examine these principles of parliamentary oversight in more detail and to allow MPs to consider the practicalities and tactics involved in such work, participants were again divided into three groups for a workshop session. The groups were given a number of scenarios (including, the sinking of an inter-island transport ship and public concerns

5 The value of this session was indicated when one MP described it as offering a ‘car driver’s point of view rather than a car designer’s perspective’.
about the natural disaster response capability of government agencies) and asked to consider how they as MPs could use the forms of the parliament to ensure government accountability. Group 1 prepared questions without notice; Group 2 prepared motions for an urgent debate, and Group 3 prepared a plan for a committee inquiry.

The group work and the feedback sessions were lively and engaging. Each group developed thoughtful and well-structured responses to their task:

- Group 1 drafted a series of oral questions (including supplementary questions) which sought explanations from relevant ministers and, in some instances, to sheet home responsibility for policy decisions and public administration;

- Group 2 drafted a motion for an urgent debate on the government response to the shipping accident scenario and investigated the procedural steps required to inform the Speaker and then move such a motion;\(^6\)

- Group 3 prepared a workplan for a committee inquiry into the state of government preparedness for the relief and reconstruction effort required in the event of a tsunami.

The feedback session included a spontaneous ‘mock’ question-time in which Ms Chadwick and Dr Robinson, playing the role of government ministers, provided answers to questions prepared by Group 1. This allowed participants to observe and comment on good (and ‘bad’) practice in the answering of questions.

For most participants (including returning MPs) this session was a rare opportunity to consider, in practical terms, how they can contribute to the work of the parliament.

Summaries of the questions, motions and workplans prepared by each of the groups are at Attachment D.

**Session 8: Continuing Professional Development**

Parliaments face great challenges in fulfilling their potential, including making sure that MPs have access to information and skills; that parliamentary administrations are well resourced; that ministers and public servants understand the role of parliament; and that communities understand that MPs have national not just local responsibilities. But there are regional partners (such as CDI, UNDP and the Queensland Parliament) who are committed to helping support professional development for MPs and secretariat staff. Mr Harrison, Mr Lenga, Dr Robinson and Mr Hansen all talked about the practical capacity building and institutional strengthening support that can be provided.

Pointing to recent reforms that have occurred in the Solomon Islands and are being planned in PNG, Mr Harrison argued that, when MPs and parliamentary staff are united in their commitment to change the way parliaments work, change can happen.

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\(^6\) A number of returning MPs commented that they had never seen an urgency motion moved or debated in the Vanuatu Parliament. Opposition members present during the induction program were particularly interested in the accountability potential of such motions.
The day concluded with a ‘vox pop’ vote which showed that:

- 70% of MPs believe the public perception of parliament is that it is working badly and 30% think the public perception is that parliament is working OK. No MPs think the public perception is that parliament is working well.

- 50% of MPs think that parliament is working badly and 50% think it is working OK. No MPs believe parliament is working well.

- MPs think that the top four areas for improvement are the operation of committees, debate in the chamber, consideration of Bills in the chamber, and research and information services.7

**Day 3 Friday 23 November**

*Session 9: The Parliamentary Management Board and Parliamentary Services.*

The final day of the induction program began with the Clerk and his senior staff briefing MPs on the role of the Parliamentary Management Board and the library, hansard, security and corporate (including salary payment) services provided by the parliamentary secretariat.

The Clerk mentioned that the secretariat is significantly under-resourced, making it difficult to fulfill the service delivery expectations of members. He indicated that although the Parliamentary Management Board is empowered by the Parliamentary Administration Act 2006 to ‘oversee the efficient and effective management of parliament’, the Board has not been an effective management mechanism. Funding and staffing arrangements have, for all practical purposes been handed-over to the Executive, which has little incentive to properly resource the Parliament.8

A number of participants remarked that improving the operation of the PMB was a necessary first step in revitalizing the performance of parliament and allowing it to fulfill its potential. This point had also been made in earlier discussions about the role of an MP (see the report from Group 2 at Attachment B).

*Session 10: Role of Accountability Agencies*

This session featured excellent presentations from:

- John Path, the Auditor-General, on his role in encouraging an accountable, efficient and effective public sector and on the potential for a close and effective

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7 These are all areas where CDI, UNDP and the Queensland Parliament can provide continuing assistance.
8 The Parliamentary Management Board is chaired by the Speaker and has, as its members, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Parliamentary Counsel (a government official). In addition to being responsible for overseeing the management of the parliament, the PMB ‘oversee[s] the management and operation of the Standing Committees’. It seems that the PMB rarely meets – meaning that basic decisions about parliamentary operations are not being made. This includes decisions about the engagement of staff. The Clerk himself is unsure about his future. He is currently engaged on a one year contract which is due to terminate in March 2013.
partnership between the Audit Office and the Parliament’s Public Accounts Committee; and

- Alan Molgos, the Acting Ombudsman, on the role of the Ombudsman in promoting good public administration and administering and enforcing the Leadership Code.

**Session 11: Role and Structure of Government.**

A large proportion of Day 2 was devoted to presentation from senior public officials on the role and structure of government.

Benjamin Shing, Director-General of the Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination, talked about the role of the Executive Government; in particular about government planning and policy processes.

Tony Sewen, Acting Director-General of the Department of Finance and Treasury, talked about government budgetary and financial management processes.

Mark Bebe, Director-General of the Department of Justice and Community Services, talked about the justice sector in Vanuatu, particular about the intersection between the formal system of justice (including the judiciary) and informal, chiefly-based systems of dispute resolution.

Each of these presentations (and the earlier presentations from the Auditor-General and Acting Ombudsman, generated many questions and comments. Some of the issues canvassed in the question and answer sessions were:

- the weaknesses in institutional, management and staff capacity in all government agencies,
- the impact of the global financial crisis on state finances,
- the control risks associated with the fact that the government’s investment program is largely financed by international donors (1/3rd of the national budget is sourced from international aid or borrowings),
- the consequences of political instability (constant coalition making) for decision-making and service delivery’,
- fragile regard for the rule of law, including by senior leaders, and
- the limited reach of the formal system of justice outside of Port Vila (with 80% of the population having little or no access to the formal system of law and its enforcement.
Session 12: Political Communication

The final session of the program was a lighted-hearted discussion about political communication, featuring a panel involving Mr Barker, Ms Chadwick and Kiery Mannassah from Pacific Institute for Public Policy. The program was running well over time at this stage but participants declined the opportunity to cancel this session – a sign perhaps that they valued the program.

The panel members offered their experience and views in response to the following questions:

1. Why is effective communication important in politics?

2. Should MP’s have a communication plan and if so what should it contain?

3. What are the main elements of effective political communication (when making a speech, when being interviewed by the media, and when speaking to your constituents?

4. What do the media look for in a story?

5. What are the opportunities and barriers to effective political communication in Vanuatu?

As in previous sessions, the discussion phase was free-flowing with participants keen to share their own communication experiences – especially community-based experiences from their recent election campaigns.

Concluding Remarks & Program Close

The Clerk of Parliament, Mr Harrison and Mr Lenga each made concluding remarks at the end of Day 3, summarizing the main themes covered during the course of the program and urging MPs to take the opportunities that are available to make the 10th Parliament the most effective parliament Vanuatu has seen. A copy of Mr Harrison’s remarks are at Attachment E.

Speaker George Andre Wells closed the program by repeating his commitment to strengthening the operation of parliament and encouraging MPs to ‘do what they can to ensure that Parliament operates effective in the interests of our communities and our country.’
### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
#### VANUATU PARLIAMENT INDUCTION PROGRAM

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<th>NAME</th>
<th>CONSTITUENCY &amp; PORTFOLIO</th>
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<td>6. Hon. CARCSES K. Moana</td>
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<td>8. Hon. HILTON Dunston</td>
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**Party Abbreviations:**

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<td>People's Progressive Party</td>
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<td>People's Services Party</td>
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<td>National United Party</td>
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<td>Melanesian Progressive Party</td>
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<td>Iauko Group</td>
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<td>Reunification Movement for Change</td>
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WORKSHOP ON THE ROLE OF A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

REPORTS FROM EACH DISCUSSION GROUP

Group 1

*Members:* Toara Daniel Kalo, Philip Boedoro, Bruno Leingkone, Bob Loughman, Patrick Manarewo' Alfred Maoh, Tony Nari, Edward Natepai, Richard Namei Ruan, Simeon Kaltaliu, Nato Taiwia, Jimmy Tapangararua Willie

*Facilitators:* Mr Barker and the Clerk

*Report:*

Is being an MP about leading of following?

- *Blong kam olsem member*
  1. *yu save lid (eg, natural disaster)*
  2. *yu save folem (eg: kustomary issues – land etc)*

How should you manage constituent relations?

- *Meet wetem*
  1. *public forums*
  2. *political sub-committees*
  3. *social groups (eg, churches)*
  4. *individuals*

What makes a good MP?

1. *Trustworthy, honest and reliable*
2. *Active in parliament (on local and national issues)*
3. *Planning and patience*
4. *spiritual*
Group 2

Members: Ralph Reganvanu, Robert Bohn, Morking Stephen Iatika, Ham Lini, Jerome Ludvaune, Kalfau Moli, Richard Mera, Tesei John Nawei, Esmon Saemon, Maki Stanley Simelum, Silas Ratan Rouard, David Tosul, Tony Wright

Facilitators: Ms Chadwick and Mr Cahill

Report:

Is being an MP about leading of following?

Both

More leadership needs to be shown on parliamentary development:

- on conduct of public accounts committee inquiries
- on review of Bills by committees
- on supervision of policy implementation

How should you manage constituent relations?

One staff per MP would help

Need to be accessible by phone. Newsletters help. Attend invited events

Need clearer rules and approval timeframe for managing community project allowance (eg, requests in writing, budget cycles)

Not enough money to tour/visit all parts of electorate (transport is very costly)

What makes a good MP?

1. Speaking in parliament (asking questions, moving & participating in urgent debates)

2. Considering legislation and preparing private members’ Bills (Parliamentary Counsel should meet all MPs requests for assistance)

3. New Standing Orders should be implemented (to improve parliamentary operations) Trustworthy, honest and reliable

Parliamentary Management Board should be reviewed – it is an impediment to effective parliamentary operations
Group 3

Members: John Vacher Amos, Isaac Hamariliu, Jonas James, John Lum, Havo Molisale, Danil Nalet, Joe Nauman, Hosea Nevu, Samsen Samson, Paul Telukluk, Peter Vuta, Gillion William

Facilitators: Mr Mataskelekele, Mr Teter and Mr Harrison

Report:

Is being an MP about leading of following?

MP i lead when:

1. Representing community in parliament & government
2. Helping people access government services
3. the issue is to do with financial obligation

MP i follow when

1. community decide on project priorities
2. providing financial support to community (or supporters)
3. the issue is to do with social obligation

How should you manage constituent relations?

1. Through committees of political parties
2. Through Chiefs and other community leaders
3. Through provincial authority
4. Through media (radio, TV)

What makes a good MP?

1. Punctuality and presence in parliament
2. Participation in debate
3. Reading and understanding Bills before voting
4. Respectful & patient behavior in parliament
5. Listening to the community BUT being able to say NO sometimes
SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS FROM DAY 1 - BY PARTICIPANTS
WORKSHOP ON PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

SUMMARY OF GROUP RESPONSES

Group 1 – Questions Without Notice

On School Provision

(To the Minister for Education) – Has the Minister seen press reports stating that the new school for XX village promised in the Government’s budget will now not be built? Are these reports correct? If so, why has the Government decided to deny children in XX village access to education?

Supplementary Questions – Will the Minister attend a public meeting being held in XX on Friday to explain this broken promise to the people of XX village? If not, will the Minister take responsibility for this broken promise and resign?

On Hospital Closures

(To the Minister for Health) – Will the Minister confirm that the Government has decided to close the health clinic on XX island? Why has such a decision been taken?

Supplementary Questions – Will the Minister take responsibility for any and all deaths that occur as a result of this decision and apologies to affected families for the preventable loss of life?

Group 2 – Motion for Urgent Debate

Mr Speaker – in accordance with Standing Order 22, I move that that the Parliament immediately debate the following urgent matter:

The response by the Government (or the Minister for Internal Affairs) to the grounding of the MV Malekula on the reef of Ipota, east of Erromango, which continues to leak oil causing damage to fish stocks, bird life and the adjacent shore and waters. In particular, the action taken by the Minister and the government agencies for which he is responsible to clean-up the mess, to seek recompense from the vessel operators and to assist nearby villages who are bearing the brunt of the environmental and livelihood damage caused by the grounding.

Group 3 – Workplan for Parliamentary Committee Inquiry

Terms of Reference
The Standing Committee on Tsunami will blong fainem out weta olgeta communities lo costal erias oli kat plan blong fesem tsunami mo wantem plan olgeta blo rilif mo reconstruction.

**Contributors to the Inquiry**

1. Gavmen agency (Meteorologie and Geohazard)
2. Disasta Management Komity – national level
3. Provincial Disasta Management Komity
4. Chiefs and komunity leaders

**Inquiry Process**

1. Askem riten submission
2. Allowem olketa blo aresem komity
3. Q & A
4. Ratem report mo adem back lo parlement
5. Chairman blo komity askem parlement blo debatem report
CONCLUDING REMARKS

GRANT HARRISON, CENTRE FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

I would like to conclude by going back to where I started on Wednesday morning – by thanking the Speaker and the Clerk from inviting CDI and UNDP to assist in this induction program.

It is a rare opportunity and a privilege to be asked to share our thoughts and experience with you.

I would like to acknowledge all of our presenters (both Ni-Vanuatu and international) and thank them for their contributions.

At the outset we expressed our hope that the by the end of the program you would have a greater understanding of:

1. the constitutional basis of Parliament as the legislative arm of government;
2. the separation and balance of powers (between the Executive, Parliament and the Judiciary);
3. the role and responsibilities of an MP;
4. how parliament operates, including:
   a. the role of the Speaker and the Clerk;
   b. the business of the Chamber; and
   c. the role and operation of parliamentary committees;
5. the parliamentary services that are available to MPs;
6. the work of Vanuatu’s accountability agencies and the relationship between MPs and these agencies; and
7. the structure of the Government of Vanuatu and its main public service agencies.

I hope also that you now feel more able to help parliament achieve its potential.

Of course there are challenges to be overcome in achieving this potential. But, when I looked out on Day 1 and saw 40 out of 52 MPs participating actively and enthusiastically in this program I didn’t see obstacles or problems, I saw people keen to find solutions.
Overcoming these challenges and helping Parliament achieve its potential is within your grasp:

- you have within your power to ask good questions, to raise matters of urgency, to demand more time for the consideration of Bills;

- you have it within your power to influence your friends and colleagues in the Ministry to make sure information and adequate resources are available to you and the Parliamentary Secretariat to allow you to do your job;

- you have it within your power to motivate chairs of parliamentary committees (and committee members) to scrutinize policy and administration and to review Bills and to take Parliament to the people;

- you have it within your power to influence the operation and decisions of the Parliamentary Management Board. The PMB has significant authority over the management of this place, but it is important to remember that this Parliament is your place. You have a legitimate interest in how this place works and is resourced.

In short, you have it within you power to ‘push-back’ so that Parliament is not just a rubber stamp.

I know that it is easy for us, who are outsiders and largely ignorant of your political realities, to say such things. But the last three days have given us a strong sense that there are champions for reform in this 10th Parliament.

And that is all it takes – a few champions who see the potential and who inspire others to share the vision and motivate decision-makers to make the right decisions. We have all seen such change occur in our own parliaments and in other Pacific parliaments.

I put it to you that to be a member of the Vanuatu Parliament that decided change is possible is a legacy worth striving for.

And, as I mentioned yesterday, there are regional partners available to help. CDI and the Queensland Parliament are ready and able to provide training, advice and mentoring on any aspect of parliamentary operations and administration.

- We can offer refresher or more detailed workshops on any of the issues canvassed in this program;

- We can support study tours and regional networking;

- We can support long-term planning for reform.

And, as Brian has mentioned, UNDP has developed a parliamentary strengthening program of considerable breadth and is well placed to offer assistance.
We encourage you to talk the Clerk and the Speaker and the PMB to invite such engagement – we would be delighted to oblige.

My final comment is to thank you all: for your attendance, your participation and your enthusiasm. And thanks for making us feel welcome.