CDI SUPPORTS THE FIRST REGIONAL VISITS OF THE BOUGAINVILLE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MONDAY 29 APRIL - FRIDAY 3 MAY 2013

At the request of the Speaker of the Bougainville House of Representatives (BHOR) the Hon. Andrew Miriki, CDI in conjunction with the New South Wales Parliament’s twinning program supported the BHOR undertake its first regional visits program to all three regions of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB).

The objective of the one day program in each region was "to enhance and strengthen the performance of leaders at all levels of authority and promote political stability through a better understanding of parliamentary procedures and the roles and responsibilities of leaders in the ARB." Participants included Ministers, Members of the BHOR including women's representatives and the Deputy Speaker, Members elected to the Papua New Guinea National Parliament, and Council of Elders Chairmen.

Presentations and facilitated discussions were led by the Speaker, the Clerk and senior officers of the BHOR as well as Ministers and members from each region who outlined the structure and authority of government in the ARB and explored how members undertook their constitutional duties of lawmaking, scrutiny and representation effectively. The afternoon included an open discussion session on mechanisms for enhancing linkages between the ABG and other levels of authority including in particular the role and functions of the Chairmen of the Council of Elders. The session was moderated by the Hon. Speaker and included lively discussion about the respective roles of the two levels of government and how members and chairmen elected to represent the region and its communities respectively could better coordinate and improve effectiveness in undertaking their respective duties.

The program was also enhanced by the attendance of Ms Melanie Gibbons MP, Member for Menai of the New South Wales Parliament who contributed her experience as a parliamentarian and representative of approximately 50,000 electors across a large and diverse electorate. CDI Associate Warren Cahill and Twinning Project Coordinator Simon Johnston also supported the presentations of parliamentary staff with relevant examples of effective House and Committee membership and also discussed the work of their respective organisations/programs and how programing was designed to support the strategic objectives of the BHOR.
Attendance at the workshops was excellent and the Speaker, Clerk and staff were strongly praised by participants for coordinating the workshops and bringing the parliament to regional centres. While participants identified that there was still much work to be done to improve collaboration and effectiveness between the two levels of government a roadmap of future actions was developed and agreed upon at each workshop and now forms the basis for future engagement by the BHOR. [or The morning sessions were very well received and the afternoon sessions were a welcome first step toward addressing issues and improving the relationship between the Chairs of COEs and Members.] The workshop also provided an opportunity for discussions that identified future technical assistance support that could be provided by CDI and the NSW Parliament.

The three workshops were held in Buin (29 April), Arawa (1 May) and Buka (3 May), with the intervening days used for travel and preparation. The workshops were co-funded by CDI, NSW Parliament's twinning project and the BHOR.