Workshop on Good Governance
conducted by the Solomon Islands Office of the Ombudsman

Under a continuing program of cooperation between CDI and the Office of the Ombudsman in the Solomon Islands, the Office of the Ombudsman conducted a workshop on good governance from 12-14 November 2003. The workshop was held in the capital of the Western Province, Gizo, and involved 30 public servants from the Choiseul and Western Provinces. The workshop was developed and conducted by Mr. John Smith Pitabelama, the Ombudsman of the Solomon Islands, and included presentations by senior government officials from various departments within the public service. The workshop was officially opened by the Provincial Secretary of the Western Province, Mr. Nasily Pule.

Background

_The Ombudsman has Constitutional obligations to improve the practices and procedures of public offices and to eliminate unfair and arbitrary decisions and other mal-administration practices by public officers. Assisting public officers in carrying out their duties and responsibilities is a priority in promoting good governance, transparency and accountability in a work place and within the whole system of governance._

- John Smith Pitabelama, Ombudsman of the Solomon Islands

A common complaint submitted to the Office of the Ombudsman in the Solomon Islands is that of ‘non-compliance with procedures’ by responsible officers whilst executing their duties. With the aim of improving administration and conduct within the public service the Office of the Ombudsman held its first workshop on good governance in August 2002. This workshop was held in Honiara and most Permanent Secretaries, Chief Administrators and Directors within the government sector attended. Following the recommendations from this workshop, the Ombudsman’s Office aimed to extend its training to include other Provinces and government officials in the country. This led to the development of the workshop on good governance held in Gizo in November 2003.

Recognising the role of governance institutions such as the Ombudsman in democratic consolidation, CDI supports the development and strengthening of the Office of the Ombudsman in the Solomon Islands. In 2002 and 2003, CDI supported the attendance of the Ombudsman and officials from the Office of the Ombudsman at short professional courses held at the National Centre for Development Studies (NCDS) at the Australian National University (ANU):
- **Ombudsman Policy, Practice and Accountability** (November, 2003) attended by Mr. Daniel Damilea, Legal Officer, Office of the Ombudsman.
- **Corruption and Anti-Corruption Course** (August-September 2003) attended by Mr. John Smith Pitabelama, Ombudsman, Office of the Ombudsman.
- **Conflict and Development** (March-April, 2003) attended by Mr. John Smith Pitabelama, Ombudsman, and Mr. Daniel Damilea, Legal Officer, Office of the Ombudsman.
- **Pacific Ombudsman Course** (November 2002) attended by Mr. John Smith Pitabelama, Ombudsman, Office of the Ombudsman.

The Office of the Ombudsman reported that these courses have assisted it in developing its capacity and ability to fulfil its role more effectively. The information, resources and skills developed from these courses aided in the development of the good governance workshop and CDI was pleased to support this initiative.

**List of Participants**

1. Charles Sigoto  
2. David Kiko  
3. Goldie Ringi  
4. Francis Tofuakalo  
5. Galahad Bule Kavusu  
6. Allan Takanunu  
7. Nelmah Kabolo  
8. Joel Dereveke  
9. Alison Boso  
10. Bolton Hebala  
11. Rosevitta Nowak  
12. Nelson Kere  
13. Hilton Hoala  
14. Placida Peter  
15. Berry Poqesopa  
16. June Alenia  
17. Luke Poloso  
18. Alfred Vilaka  
19. Frank Panda  
20. Delmay Vazara  
21. Peter Buka Taisara  
22. Eric Ghemu  
23. John Marehasi  
24. Felix Maelimama  
25. Piani Lilo  
26. John Rove  
27. William Sualalu  
28. Samuel Poloso  
29. Dr. Mudi Qoqonokana  
30. Alfred Biliki

**Program Objectives and Content**

The good governance workshop aimed to better equip participants with the knowledge of relevant laws, regulations, general orders and Acts when performing their duties and responsibilities. The workshop encouraged participants to consult these regulations and laws for more effective solutions to problems.

During the workshop, a number of senior government officials from the Solomon Islands gave presentations including the Chairman of the Leadership Code Commission, the Deputy Accountant General from the Ministry of Finance, the Chairman of the Trade
Dispute Panel and the Director of the Teaching Service Department in the Ministry of Education. The topics covered included:

- public service procedures;
- general orders and their application;
- roles of the Public Service Commission and its power;
- delegated powers;
- the roles and powers of the Trade Dispute Panel;
- corruption in the public sector;
- how to fight corruption;
- financial instructions and procedures;
- the roles and power of the Leadership Code Commission;
- the roles and power of the Teaching Service Commission.

The workshop held in 2002 by the Office of the Ombudsman found that many problems within the system result from public servants executing duties without referring to, or having knowledge of relevant regulations and legislation. Participants were issued with the following materials for activities during the workshop and extra copies were given to participants to distribute within their working environment:

- the General Orders;
- the Public Service Commission Regulations;
- extracts from the Constitution;
- the Police Act and Regulations;
- financial instructions;
- the Trade Dispute Panel Act;
- the Leadership Code Act.

A syndicate exercise was conducted and participants were divided into five groups issued with a case study and related regulations and laws to refer to. Each group analysed a different case and identified those issues which contribute to non-compliance making reference to the required procedures and regulations. The case studies were debated and discussed on the final day of the workshop in front of a review panel that assessed the group presentations. The panel included Mr. Davies Vurusu, Magistrate of the Western Province. One case study is copied below:

**Case Study**

Samson Mark was posted to Kokeqolo Community High School as a class teacher (level 4) on 29 March 2001. On 30 April 2002 Mr. Mark was appointed by the Kokeqolo High School Board (KCHSB) to act in the Head of Science position (level 7). Having received his appointment letter from the Secretary of KCHSB, Mr. Mark performed the duties as Head of the Science Department.
Upon receiving his first payslip after taking up the new position, Mr. Mark expected his acting allowance but nothing appeared in his payslip. He wrote to the Treasury Division in the Ministry of Finance and asked about his allowance. He did not receive any reply. He asked the Chairman of the Board, but the explanation given was not satisfactory. Mr. Mark did not receive his acting allowance for almost 9 months.

Tasks:
1. Assuming that you were the Principal of the School, what actions would you have taken?
2. In your capacity as the Chief Education Officer, what actions would you have taken?
3. Critically explain to the members of the panel your findings which must be supported by legal means. Consult relevant Acts, General Orders, Regulations or the Constitution to support your argument.

Outcomes and Future Initiatives

The Office of the Ombudsman commented on the high quality of the presentations. The ability of participants to analyse a case with reference to relevant laws and regulations showed a marked improvement from the workshop held in 2002. All participants received certificates and the workshop was officially closed by the Magistrate of the Western Province, Mr. Davies Vurusu.

Due to the success of the workshop and the identified need for training of public servants, a number of government departments have requested that the Ombudsmans Office conduct similar workshops involving the other eight Solomon Island Provinces. In future workshops, the Office of the Ombudsman hopes to broaden its focus to include issues of human rights and justice. CDI was pleased with the success of the workshop and looks forward to continuing to support the Office of the Ombudsman in the Solomon Islands.

Workshop Program

**Wednesday 12 November**

10.00-11.00 Introduction to workshop and registration of participants

11.00-12.00 Public Service Procedure
   *Public Service Commission*

12.00-13.00 Lunch

13.00-14.00 General Application General Order
   *Public Service Commission*

14.00-15.00 Roles of the Public Service Commission
Public Service Commission

15.15-16.35  Roles of the Public Service  
*Under Secretary Public Service Department*

**Thursday 13 November**

8.10-9.00  Roles of the Teaching Service Commission

10.00-11.00  Roles of Police and Prison Service Commission

11.00-12.00  Roles of the Trade Dispute Panel

12.00-13.00  *Lunch*

13.00-15.00  Corruption in Public Sector

15.15-16.35  How to fight corruption

**Friday 14 November**

8.10-9.00  Financial Instructions Procedures  
*Accountant General*

10.00-11.00  Roles of the Leadership Code Commission

11.00-12.00  Role of the Ombudsman

12.00-16.35  Case study presentations