Dear Colleagues,
Welcome to the February/March 2006 issue of CDI.News from the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI), Australia.

CDI was established in 1998 by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Hon Alexander Downer, to assist in the development and strengthening of democratic institutions in developing countries. CDI’s work combines technical assistance and capacity building programs, networking, and interpersonal and knowledge exchange, including the dissemination of CDI’s original research on democracy and its institutions. Our focus countries comprise Indonesia and Timor-Leste in South East Asia and Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in Melanesia.

CDI’s central goal is to support these regional focus countries in strengthening their Political Parties & Parliamentary Governance. Accordingly, CDI works to:

- Improve the operation and understanding of parliamentary machinery by members of parliament and parliamentary staff in focus countries
- Strengthen political parties in focus countries through improving the knowledge and skills of members and officials of political parties
- Extend networks in the region between Australian political party officials, parliamentarians and parliamentary staff and their counterparts from focus countries

CDI’s core budget is provided by AusAID, Australia’s Agency for International Development.

CDI.News will keep you informed periodically of our activities and events, and you can access this information and more at any time by visiting our website @ www.cdi.anu.edu.au

Contact us

Centre for Democratic Institutions
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
AUSTRALIA

Phone: 61 2 6125 0605
Fax: 61 2 6125 9726
Email: cdi@anu.edu.au
Website: www.cdi.anu.edu.au

In this issue

CDI Projects
The 7th CDI Pacific Parliamentary Forum ........................................2
Indonesian Political Parties Study Program - Report Update ............2

CDI Research, Networking, & other Activities
Michael Morgan elected Secretary of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies ........................................3
Election Schedule Updates on the CDI website ..........................3
New Parliamentary Secretary....3

Feature Articles
Building Better democracies; Why Political Parties Matter.......3
Mapping European Democracy Assistance: Tracing the Activities and Financial Flows of Political Foundations ..................4
Stronger Legislatures, Stronger Democracies ......................4
The 7th CDI Pacific Parliamentary Forum

After 5 days of dialogue, participants in 7th CDI PPF agreed that good public leadership is at least as important to effective democracy as appropriate institutions of governance.

Hosted jointly by the Parliament of the Fiji Islands and the Centre for Democratic Institutions, the PPF brought together 17 members of parliament from the Pacific Islands region, including Speaker of the Fijian House of Representatives, Ratu Epeli Nailitikau, for discussions with international colleagues on the theme of public leadership. The program was designed around presentations by Australian, New Zealand and Pacific Islander legislators and political party organisers, including Geoff Walsh (former Federal Secretary of the Australian Labor Party), Graham Jaeschke (NSW State Director of the Liberal Party), Hon. Krishna Datt (Fijian Labour Party Whip), Hon. Brian Donnelly (NZ First, Hon. Taito Philip Field (NZ Labour Party) and the Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Bruce Billson. Participants also took part in discussions with Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General Greg Urwin, and University of the South Pacific academics, Prof. Graham Hassall and Jeanette Bolenga. The President of the Fiji Senate, the Hon. Taito Waqavakatoga, an alumnus of the PPF, hosted a reception for workshop participants at the Fijian Parliament.

Discussions focused on the roles that MPs play, the choices they make and the actions and frameworks that allow them to pursue their respective and collective political agendas. In particular, it looked at the way that parties bring force to MPs’ convictions and the processes through which platforms are designed and campaigns fought. Further topics addressed were how policies are pursued in coalition governments and how up-and-coming leaders can be fostered.

While participants noted the need for better regulatory frameworks, participants agreed that the best means of improving public leadership in the Pacific Islands is for leaders themselves to take up the responsibility for making well-informed judgements in the collective interest. Despite the prevalence of money politics, the pull of region, ethnicity and family, and the intense localisation of issues, public leadership demands an eye for the national interest. The Forum concluded with a speech by Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Bruce Billson, who addressed the core themes of managing expectations and risks in public leadership. As Billson stated, MPs are in the "trust business": people trust that their support for an MP will result in some kind of benefit to themselves. The challenge for MPs in Australia and the Pacific Islands alike is making sure that they do not become beholden to particular demands for money and support, but bring benefit to the whole community. With an eye for the future, members acknowledged the effect that their behaviour has on public perceptions of leaders. As keynote speaker Chief John Momis stated, the failure to provide for future generations will determine how the current cohort of political leaders in the Pacific Islands are remembered.

The forum was supported by and planned in collaboration with New Zealand’s International Aid & Development Agency (NZAID), the New Zealand Parliament and parliamentary parties, and the Parliament of the Fiji Islands. Core funding for the project came from AusAID, the Australian Agency for International Development. Click on this link for the complete report on the 7th CDI PPF.
Michael Morgan elected Secretary of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies

Acting CDI Director Michael Morgan was elected secretary of the inaugural conference of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies (AAAPS) held 24-27 January at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Brisbane, Australia. The four day conference included the formal launch of the AAAPS as an important initiative designed to promote the teaching and study of the Pacific Islands in Australian Universities.

At this event, Michael Morgan presented key findings of CDI’s major research project, *Political Parties in the Pacific Islands* (Pandanus Press, 2006 forthcoming), and outlined avenues for using this applied research in CDI’s political parties strengthening programs. His presentation surveyed the recent adoption in PNG of stronger national regulatory frameworks for parliamentary parties, the strengthening and democratizing of internal governance arrangements, and broadening the appeal of political parties beyond specific groups of voters, and charted what avenues exist for political party strengthening more generally in Melanesia based on these experiences. Given the recommendations of the Senate Committee on Australia’s relations with Papua New Guinea and the islands of the south-west Pacific (2003), which pilloried the absence of any pervasive, coherent practice of engagement which brings Australia and Pacific countries together, the paper also explores the implications of CDI’s “practitioner-oriented” approach to political parties’ capacity building and reform programs.

Election Schedule Updates

CDI has added a new page to the Asia Pacific Region section of its website which lists upcoming elections in the CDI focus countries of Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The following link will take you to this page:

New Parliamentary Secretary

The Hon Bruce Billson MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, has stepped down as Chair of the CDI Consultative Council after becoming Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence. Mr Billson was an enthusiastic supporter of the centre who played an active role in CDI’s programs, most recently as a speaker at the 7th Annual CDI Pacific Parliamentary Forum in Sigatoka, Fiji. He will be replaced as Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs by the Hon Teresa Gambaro MP (Lib, Petrie).

Feature Articles & Publications

Building Better democracies: Why Political Parties Matter

Written by Peter Burnell and published by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), an extract from the foreword to Building Better democracies: Why Political Parties Matter follows here, and the entire work is available electronically via the link overleaf, as is the WFD web site.

*Political parties are crucial for long-term political development in emerging democracies. Yet for many years they have been neglected by those working in the developing world who have preferred instead to concentrate on human rights and civil society as ways to deepen democracy.*

*Political parties haven’t had a good press. In both mature and emerging democracies they are often held in low esteem, while the people who run them are viewed as*
pursuing their own interests rather than those of the people they seek to represent.

But it would be a mistake to write parties off just because they do not always work well. Political parties form a pivotal institution in a healthy democracy. Without well-functioning parties, governments and legislatures have little chance of representing wider society in a meaningful way. Parties are the bridge between government and society, both in the ways they translate society's demands into political ideas and programmes, and in the way they hold government to account on society's behalf.

And now, gradually, political parties are being taken more seriously. The United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the British Government's Department for International Development, for example, are all increasingly recognising the place of parties on the wider development agenda. They and other important development agencies understand that, in the pursuit of healthy democracies, political parties cannot be neglected...

David French
Chief Executive, Westminster Foundation for Democracy

Stronger Legislatures, Stronger Democracies

The third featured item in this newsletter is an article by M. Steven Fish entitled 'Stronger Legislatures, Stronger Democracies', published in the Journal of Democracy, Vol. 17, No. 1, January 2006.

In the opening paragraphs, M. Steven Fish notes:

There has been extensive debate among students of democracy over the merits of different types of constitutional design. For the most part, discussion has focused on the relative advantages and drawbacks of the three major modes of structuring the relationship between the executive and legislative branches: parliamentarism, presidentialism, and semipresidentialism. That debate has yielded some very useful insights, but it has also been largely inconclusive.

This essay proposes a new and arguably more fruitful way of thinking about how political institutions influence democratization, one that examines the capacity or power of specific offices. In particular, it focuses upon the strength of the legislature and its consequences for the advance of democracy. The evidence shows that the presence of a powerful legislature is an unmixed blessing for democratization.

The full article appears in the latest issue of the Journal of Democracy: