Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the first issue of CDI News for 2007. This edition marks an auspicious period for the Centre for Democratic Institutions. Having been established by the Australian government in 1998, CDI is 10 years old this year. To celebrate our 10 years of working to strengthen democracy in the Asia-Pacific region, we will be holding a number of special events, including enhanced versions of our flagship programmes on parliamentary and political party strengthening, over the course of 2007. Several of these activities - including our recent Pacific Parliamentary Dialogue in Samoa, one of the largest meetings of parliamentarians ever held in the Pacific - are detailed in the following pages.

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 countries in strengthening their political parties & systems of 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 parliamentarians, political party officials, 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 at any time by visiting our website: www.cdi.anu.edu.au.

Benjamin Reilly | CDI Director

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The 8th Annual CDI Pacific Parliamentary Dialogue takes place in Samoa

The 8th annual CDI Pacific Parliamentary Dialogue took place in Samoa from 11 to 13 December 2006. As in previous years, core funding for the Dialogue came from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid), with additional financial support from New Zealand’s Aid and Development Agency (NZAID) and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).

The Dialogue was held over three days at a resort on the island of Upolu, 45 minutes drive from the capital Apia.

CDI invited participants from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Cook Islands, Nauru, Kiribati, Tuvalu, New Zealand and Australia. CDI requested that each country nominate one Member of Parliament from the Government and one from the Opposition, and given the Dialogue’s goals and emphasis on public leadership, along with CDI’s ongoing commitment to helping foster young and emerging female and male parliamentarians in the region, we also encouraged the nomination of two MPs that reflected both youth and experience.

As a result, 25 MPs from 11 countries plus 10 expert presenters participated in the Dialogue, making it one of the widest gatherings of parliamentarians held in the Pacific. For the first time, Members from a provincial level assembly in the Pacific Island region, the Autonomous Bougainville Government House of Representatives, were invited and participated in the Dialogue. MPs from two countries – Kiribati and Tuvalu - which had not participated in previous meetings also attended.

The 2006 dialogue had two principal themes: improving the representation of women in politics in the Pacific, and finding the right balance between MP’s obligations as legislators and guardians of the national interest, and addressing the often parochial concerns of constituents. Managing the reciprocal relationship between parliamentarians and their constituents and the national responsibilities of MPs lies at the heart of politics in the Pacific.

The Dialogue was also structured to allow participants to focus on the host parliament, the Legislative Assembly of Samoa, and to learn how the political continued over
system in Samoa functioned. In addition, participants learned about the development of the newest parliament in the region, the Bougainville House of Representatives, and were provided with insights into the December 2006 coup in Fiji from two representatives of the suspended Fijian parliament.

The Dialogue also provided a forum for parliamentarians from the Pacific Island Countries, Australia and New Zealand to discuss public leadership with colleagues in a practical, non-partisan and dynamic environment. Participants examined ways of mediating between local concerns and the national interest, advancing the representation of women in Pacific parliaments, and gained a better understanding of the regional institutional structures. The Dialogue thereby contributed to improving political governance in partner countries by exposing participants to new ideas and enabling them to engage with fellow political practitioners on issues of parliamentary practice, constituency politics and the role of women in political representation, and to managing governance challenges in the Pacific through enhanced regional approaches.

Click on this link to access the Dialogue web page which includes a detailed and comprehensive report on the 2006 event; the full program; the list of participants; TV and newspaper coverage from Samoa; links to our Dialogue partners and much more:

8th Pacific Parliamentary Dialogue
Enhancing the Performance of Indonesia’s Parliament

A delegation of 11 Indonesian parliamentarians visited CDI in November 2006 to discuss ways to improve the performance of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR). The Working Group on Performance Enhancement of the House of Representatives was led by prominent Indonesian parliamentarian Dr Eva Sundari, and included representatives of all major Indonesian parties.

The purpose of the visit was to examine the structures and procedures of the Australian parliamentary system, including its internal administrative arrangements and budgeting procedures, in order to glean some recommendations for enhancing the DPR’s performance. To this end, discussions with CDI focussed on differences between the Indonesian and Australian systems of government, issues of legislative staff recruitment and management in each country, budgeting and financial constraints, and other administrative challenges facing the DPR.

Indonesia is one of CDI’s target countries for assistance, and the role of CDI as a democracy promotion organisation and our established program of assistance and expertise on the Indonesian parliament was discussed at some length. The Indonesian delegation were particularly interested in CDI’s track record of working to help build the capacity of the DPR via training programs for parliamentary officials and political parties, study tours and visits, and joint activities between Indonesian and Australian parliamentary committees.

CDI has agreed to work with the Working Group as they prepare their report on reform options and move into the implementation phase of their programme. This will involve further cooperation as part of CDI’s mandate to strengthen parliamentary government in the Asia-Pacific region.

Click on this link for more detail and see item on page 5 in this newsletter regarding CDI Deputy Director’s visit to Jakarta and Dili:

Community of Democracies Asia Roundtable

CDI is an active participant in the Community of Democracies, a US-led grouping of democratic governments and NGOs dedicated to the promotion of democracy throughout the world, and which also acts as a caucus within the United Nations.

CDI Director Ben Reilly participated in the Community of Democracies Asia Roundtable organised by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, held in Taipei January 23-25. The Asia Roundtable was the first event in the region to discuss progress towards the goals of The Community of Democracies Ministerial Meeting which will take place in Mali at the end of 2007.

The Asia Roundtable attracted democracy promotion organisations from around the Asia-Pacific region, and featured presentations on democratic progress in Asia on issues such as rule of law, press freedom, election standards, gender equality, education for democracy, freedom of association, and the link between free enterprise and democracy.

The meeting was followed by a conference on “Transformations in New Democracies”. Further information on both meetings is available on our website:

CDI & International IDEA

In December 2006 CDI hosted the Secretary-General of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Mr Vidar Helgesen, on his inaugural visit to Australia. CDI and IDEA currently have an active program
of cooperation such as the joint CDI-IDEA-UNU project on the regulation of political parties in conflict-prone environments, and continue to explore options for additional joint projects.

During their discussions, Mr Helgesson and Dr Reilly discussed the broader challenges confronting democracy promotion in the Asia-Pacific region, and the prospects for collaborative CDI-IDEA projects in the South Pacific as part of IDEA’s increased focus on the Asia-Pacific in their revised work program.

Click on this link for more information:

CDI Deputy Director in Indonesia & Timor-Leste

CDI Deputy Director, Quinton Clements, recently visited Jakarta and Dili as part of CDI’s ongoing assistance to parliaments in our region to determine agreed areas of co-operation with Indonesia’s House of Representatives or Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR) and the National Parliament of Timor-Leste. Accompanied by CDI Associate, Dr Stephen Sherlock, Mr Clements held discussions in Jakarta on areas for cooperation between CDI and the DPR with the Speaker, H.E. Mr H. R. Agung Laksono, the Secretary General, Mr Faisal Djamal and other Members of the DPR and Secretariat Officials.

Discussions also took place with Mr Theo L. Sambuaga, the Chairman of the DPR’s Commission on Foreign Affairs, Defense, Communication and Information (Komisi 1), on CDI’s forthcoming workshop on the role of parliamentary committees in policy making involving Komisi 1 and the Australian Parliament’s Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. Mr Clements also met with a number of donor and non-government organizations with an interest in parliamentary assistance in Indonesia.

In Dili, Mr Clements was assisted by Mr Karlito Nunes and met with the Vice-President of the National Parliament, Mr Jacob Fernandes, the Secretary General, Mr Adelino Afonso de Jesus and other Members of Parliament and Secretariat Officials to discuss both the proposed committees workshop and other areas for cooperation between CDI and the National Parliament of Timor-Leste. Mr Clements also held discussions with multilateral and donor organisations such as the UNDP, the Asia Foundation and the International Republican Institute on their activities in cooperation such as the joint CDI-IDEA-UNU project on the regulation of political parties in conflict-prone environments, and continue to explore options for additional joint projects.

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2007 Political Party Development Course (PPD)

CDI’s 2007 Political Party Development Course (PPD) will be run at the ANU in Canberra, 7 - 18 May

The course will cover the nuts and bolts of party politics from the inside. Topics to be addressed include running effective campaigns; public opinion and polling; successful electoral strategies; media relations; policy development; membership recruitment; issue management; and political party funding. This year for the first time, a special focus on women in party politics is also planned.

The course is aimed at those engaged in the actual business of politics, political advising and political campaigns - political advisers, campaign workers, party activists, and politicians themselves - in the new democracies of the Asia-Pacific region.

Specific subjects covered will include:

- Political parties and party systems
- party constitutions
- ethical and legal issues
- Party politics from the inside
- pre-selections and internal party democracy
- public opinion and focus group polling
- policy development and agenda setting
- the role of the media
- strategic approaches to elections and electoral systems
- parliamentary party politics
- dealing with the bureaucracy
- campaign finance, funding and disclosure
- membership management
- political advising
- international dimensions

Click on this link to access the 2007 PPD nomination form; draft course outline; and all the details and reporting from the inaugural PPD in 2006:
Democracy & Diversity: Political Engineering in the Asia-Pacific
Benjamin Reilly

The book examines whether there is an emerging there an Asia-Pacific model of democracy. Over the past two decades, numerous Asian and Pacific states have undergone transitions to democracy. One of the most distinctive aspects of democratization has been innovative forms of ‘political engineering’ in what are often highly diverse societies.

Emerging democracies in Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands have sought to manage political change by far-reaching reforms to electoral, parliamentary and party systems.

Taking a comparative approach, Dr Reilly analyses the causes of this new approach to the design of democratic institutions, and its consequences for broader challenges of governance, conflict and development across the Asia-Pacific region.

A public launch of the book was held at the ANU on February 6. Click on this link for more details and to purchase the book:

Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies
Thomas Carothers

Political parties are the weakest link in many democratic transitions around the world—frequently beset with persistent problems of self-interest, corruption, ideological incoherence, and narrow electoralism. A large and ever-growing number of U.S., European, and multilateral assistance programs seek to help parties become effective prodemocratic actors. But given the depth of the problems, is success possible?

Confronting the Weakest Link is a pathbreaking study of international aid for political parties. Beginning with a penetrating analysis of party shortcomings in developing and postcommunist countries, Thomas Carothers draws on extensive field research to diagnose deficiencies in party aid, assess its overall impact, and offer practical ideas for doing better. This broad ranging analysis, which spans Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, sheds invaluable light on a major element of the contemporary challenge of democracy-building, a subject now occupying center stage in the international policy arena.

Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies is published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC.

Click on this link for more details and to purchase:

New Article in Democratization

One of the major challenges facing democratization in fragile states is the development of coherent political parties. In a new article in the international journal Democratization, CDI Director Ben Reilly examines the record of attempts to encourage broad-based, aggregative and multi-ethnic political parties in new democracies. Drawing on remarkable recent attempts to ‘engineer’ political parties in conflict prone societies including Indonesia, Nigeria, Kenya, Thailand, the Philippines, Bosnia, Kosovo, Turkey, Fiji and Papua New Guinea, Dr Reilly examines the international record of these attempts to shape the way political parties form, develop and function. He identifies four strategies of political engineering that have been used to promote broad-based, cross-regional or multi-ethnic political parties in new democracies around the world.

Click here to access the article:
**Political Party Development around the Globe:**

**The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD)**

The IMD is an institute of political parties for political parties. In line with the development cooperation policy of the Dutch Government and as a response to international requests for support by political parties and groups abroad, the Dutch political parties PvdA, VVD, CDA, D66, the Green-Left party, the Christian Union and SGP decided to set up a new foundation: the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD). This foundation was established in April 2000.

The mandate of IMD is to encourage the process of democratisation in young democracies by providing support to political parties as the core pillars of a multiparty democracy. IMD works in a strictly non-partisan and inclusive manner.

You can read more about the IMD approach @ their website: 

Institute for Multiparty Democracy

All suggestions and comments are welcome to cdi@anu.edu.au

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