Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the last issue of CDI.News for 2008. This issue highlights the increasing number of in-country training and advisory programs which CDI is undertaking in Asia and the Pacific.

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 & 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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Recent Activities

CDI Assists Vanuatu Parliament with MP Induction Program

CDI has supported the National Parliament of Vanuatu in holding the first-ever induction program for newly elected MPs at Parliament House in Port Vila. The induction program followed the national elections held on 2 September and the first sitting of the new Parliament on 22 September 2008.

CDI Deputy Director, Quinton Clements, and Kevin Rozzoli, former Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly, assisted the Clerk of Parliament, Mr Lino Bulekuli dit Sacsac, in designing and delivering the program. They were joined by Mr Warren Cahill, the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Solomon Islands Parliamentary Support Project Manager. Additional support was provided by the UNDP through its Fiji Multi-Country Office.

Mike Reynolds MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland; Ms Leanne Clare, First Clerk Assistant, Legislative Assembly of Queensland; and Mrs Taeasi Sanga, Clerk of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, were among the facilitators and presenters at the induction program. The Queensland Parliament has a relationship with the National Parliament of Vanuatu as part of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)-initiated twinning arrangement between the two parliaments. Mr Reynolds used the opportunity of attending the induction program to discuss with the new Speaker of the Vanuatu Parliament, George Wells MP, initiatives that might be undertaken as part of the twinning arrangement.

The program was held in the parliamentary chamber of Parliament House from 30 September to 2 October 2008. Of the 52 Members, two-thirds attended the three day induction program. A majority of the new Members of Parliament and many re-elected Members attended each day, including Deputy Prime Minister, Ham Lini, and several other ministers. Members from both the Government and Opposition sides attended.

The induction was officially opened by the Speaker. Presentations were given on the structure of the Vanuatu parliamentary model covering the Constitution, the Leadership Code, the separation of powers, the Standing Orders and parliamentary privilege. All Members received copies of the Constitution, Standing Orders and Leadership Code. This was followed by discussion on the role of a Member and a panel session on the media’s role in reporting Parliament.

On the second day, the President of the Republic, H.E Kalkot Mataskelekele Mauliliu, gave the keynote address. Following this, Members participated in a mock parliamentary session during which practices and procedures were explained and demonstrated. The aim of this session was to ensure that Members are conversant with the rules of debate before they meet for the first ordinary session of the new Parliament in November.

On the final day of the program presentations were given by each of Vanuatu’s constitutional office holders – the Chief Justice, the Public Prosecutor, the Public Solicitor, Ombudsman, Auditor General, as well as the Electoral Commission and the Public Service Commission. The parliamentary staff, led by the Clerk, then explained to Members the various support services available to them such as the Library. The day concluded with presentations on the national planning and budget processes giving Members a focus on the essential information they will need in the years ahead. Prime Minister Natapei attended the official closing of the program.

As a follow-up to the induction program, the Parliament is now organising a specialised training workshop for Members on the role of parliamentary committees.

Click on this link for more on our website:
Pacific Island countries have strived to get more women elected into parliaments for some time. While recognising that dealing with the barriers to women’s political participation and decision making will take time, there is now a consensus that women’s lack of representation in the region needs to be tackled with a strong sense of urgency.

To this end, CDI’s inaugural Women in Politics “Train the Trainer” course was held on 10-14 November 2008 in Canberra. The course builds on previous capacity-building efforts in the region, and was designed to up-skill participants on key issues such as effective ways of dealing with culture and leadership issues, the impact of electoral systems and political reforms on women’s representation, pros and cons of party quotas and reserved seats, gender differences in voter behaviour, influencing; lobbying; resource mobilisation, and networking.

After a highly competitive selection process, 18 participants from eight nations (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, and Tonga) took part in the week long train-the-trainer course and developed action plans. It is anticipated that the action plans developed during the course will form the basis of national level training in the near future.

Mr Bob McMullan, Australia’s Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, opened the course. The course was well supported by Australia’s main political parties, academia and the private sector. Australian federal parliamentarians took an active role in the course - Anna Burke (MP Deputy Speaker), Senator Christine Milne (Deputy Leader, the Australian Greens), Senator Claire Moore (ALP), and Senator Marise Payne (Liberal Party of Australia) were among the speakers.

All participants hold important positions in thier national parliament, local level governments and assemblies, national government departments, NGOs or the private sector in their countries. Their participation will, we hope, help them in their goal of getting more women elected in the next cycle of elections.

This course was convened by CDI’s special adviser on gender issues, Dr Sun-Hee Lee.

Click on this link for more detail on our website:

www.cdi.anu.edu.au

CDI & the Bali Democracy Forum

CDI is assisting the Australian government in preparation for the first meeting of the Bali Democracy Forum, a new Indonesian initiative aimed at promoting democracy in Asia. The Forum will take place in Bali on 10-11 December and will be co-chaired by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. It will bring together governments from across the East Asian region to share their experiences and best practices in fostering democracy.

CDI Director Ben Reilly participated in an expert group meeting in Bali on 10-11 November aimed at producing the necessary substantive inputs for the Forum, and visited the site of the planned Institute for Peace and Democracy, which will support the work of the Forum. The Institute will be based at Udayana University in Bali, with a mandate to deliver training and research on democracy in Asia. CDI has agreed to provide intellectual and organisational support to the new Institute, including advising the Institute’s management on some of the key issues for successful democracy promotion in Asia.

Click on this link for more on our Web page:

www.cdi.anu.edu.au
Canberra Launch of Major Study of Party Politics in New Democracies

Mr Bob McMullan, Australia’s Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, spoke on the importance of political parties for building accountability and managing conflicts at the Canberra launch of CDI’s new study of political party development in fragile states on 30 October 2008.

Launching the book, Mr McMullan - a former national secretary of the Australian Labor Party - emphasised the key role of parties in unifying not just governments but also societies around clear programmes and policies, and how the lack of coherent party structures created difficulties for many states in the region, particularly in the Pacific. He also noted that studies of the ways in which party systems could be strengthened, such as this one, were important for governments both in Australia and other countries looking for ways to build stronger and more responsive political parties.

The event was presided over by another former party secretary, Mr Tony Eggleton AO CVO, the chairman of CDI’s Consultative Council, in front of an audience which included members of parliament, representatives of the Australian parties, diplomats, academics, and government officials.

The study, Political Parties in Conflict-Prone Societies: Regulation, Engineering and Democratic Development, is co-edited by CDI Director Ben Reilly and was produced in cooperation with International IDEA and the United Nations University (UNU). It looks at the ways in which new democracies can strengthen their party systems by regulating the way parties form, organise and behave.

The study is the first work to analyse the growing trend towards ambitious political party regulation in new democracies, drawing on the comparative experiences from new democracies in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the South Pacific. As well as contributing to the scholarly work on this subject, it also offers guidelines for governments and international organisations seeking to strengthen party systems in developing democracies.

Click on this link for more detail on our website:

Media Coverage

In late October CDI Director Ben Reilly was interviewed on Australia Network Television about the impact of the global economic crisis on the South Pacific.

On 6 November Professor Reilly spoke to ABC Radio Australia about Bhutan’s move towards democracy.

Click on this link for more detail on our website:
Semi-presidentialism is an increasingly popular constitutional model which combines a directly elected president with significant powers as well as a prime minister chosen by the legislature. Many new democracies have adopted this form of government in recent years, making it one of the most distinctive features of the ‘third wave’ of democracy. But semi-presidential constitutions are also prone to problems of political gridlock and instability due to competing power-bases and dual authority structures, particularly during periods of political division when rival parties command the presidency and the parliament.

In an examination of these issues in the Asia-Pacific, CDI Director Ben Reilly presented a paper on the record of semi-presidentialism in East Timor, Mongolia and Taiwan to an international conference on “Semi-Presidentialism and Democracy: Institutional Choice, Performance, and Evolution”, held on 17-18 October 2008 in Taiwan. Professor Reilly argued that semi-presidential constitutional models mitigated against successful democratic consolidation, particularly during periods of divided government when the president and the prime minister are drawn from different parties.

The conference, organised by the Institute for Political Science at Academica Sinica (IPSAS), featured leading scholars of semi-presidentialism from around the world, and highlighted the impact that such systems have on democratic governance.

Click on this link for more detail on our website:

CDI Advises Solomon Islands Government

CDI Director Ben Reilly was one of several international experts to advise the Solomon Islands government on proposed political reforms at a special forum in Honiara in September.

The forum, “Political Stability and Governance in Solomon Islands: Potential for Reform” was organised by the Lowy Institute and the Solomon Islands government to examine the potential for increased stability through political integrity legislation in Solomon Islands. The conference discussed the different reform models available to strengthen political stability, drawing on the experience of key cases such as Papua New Guinea, as well as other Pacific countries.

The recommendations from the conference have been passed on to the Solomon Islands government to use as a guideline for new legislation on this subject.

The reforms discussed were an example of the growing international trend towards ambitious political party regulation and engineering which are examined in CDI’s new book ‘Political Parties in Conflict-Prone Societies’. As well as speaking at the conference, Prof Reilly presented a copy of CDI’s new study on this subject to Mr John Keniapisia, Special Secretary to Prime Minister Derek Sikua.

Click on this link for further detail on our website:
Striking A Balance: The Role of Parliament in Managing Development

PORT VILA, VANUATU | 9 – 11 December 2008

The 10th Annual CDI Pacific Parliamentary Dialogue in 2008 will provide a forum for Members of Parliament from the Pacific Island countries and Australia to discuss the role that parliamentarians can have in addressing political, economic, environmental and social development issues. Creating personal networks among parliamentarians, the Dialogue will explore the ways Parliaments can and ought to have a critical role in scrutinising and contributing to the development agenda, resource allocations, and policy making in their countries.

Conceived and supported by CDI, in association in 2008 with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade and the New Zealand High Commision in Vanuatu, the annual CDI Pacific Parliamentary Dialogue constitutes part of Australia’s ongoing support for elected public officials, their staff and the formal institutions of political governance in the Pacific. The Dialogue helps contribute to improving political governance in partner countries by exposing participants to new ideas and enabling them to engage with fellow political practitioners on issues relating to the role of Parliament.

This event will be held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, marking the fourth consecutive year it has been held in a Pacific Island nation.

Click on this link for more detail on our website:

Journal of Democracy

Thailand Since the Coup By Thitinan Pongsudhirak

Torn between populism and those who fail to respect democratic limits in combating it, Thailand badly needs to locate a middle ground where the best of its old traditions can help it adjust to the new challenges that it faces.

Click on this link to access this article and much more at the Journal of Democracy website:

Brookings | Foreign Policy Paper Series

“Democracies: In a League of Their Own? Lessons Learned from the Community of Democracies:”

By Ted Piccone, Senior Fellow and Deputy Director, Foreign Policy, The Brookings Institution

In this Brookings Policy Paper, Ted Piccone addresses neoconservative and liberal internationalist proposals that democracies are natural allies that should unite to form the core of an international system. Drawing on his more than eight years of experience with the Community of Democracies, Piccone describes the challenges that democracies face in working together. Piccone argues that until democracies find common ground on a host of issues ranging from democracy promotion to human rights, a larger agenda of cooperation is unlikely.

Click on this link to access this policy paper and much more at the Brookings website:

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

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