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From the People of Japan

FINAL REPORT

Pacific – Regional/Multi Country
The Project for Strengthening Legislature's Capacity in the Pacific Island Countries
as at 30 June 2024



[Project Information]

Reporting Period	Final Report
Start Date - End Date	March 2018 – September 2022
Implementing Partner(s)	UNDP
Total Contribution	USD 5,270,030.78
Project Location	Pacific Multi Country (Fiji, FSM, RMI, Samoa, Solomons, Vanuatu)
Project Beneficiaries	Parliaments/Legislatures in the Pacific
UNDP Contact Person	Thomas Gregory, Parliament Specialist

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I. Executive summary

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiated the project "**Strengthening Legislatures Capacity in Pacific Island Countries (SLIP)"** was initiated in March 2018 as a three-year project with a total budget of **USD 5,270,030.78** funded by **the Government of Japan**. The project focused on strengthening capacity and improving processes in parliaments (or legislatures)[1] in **six Pacific Island Countries** including: the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Independent State of Samoa, the Republic of Fiji, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the Republic of Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands. The primary aim of the SLIP was to support parliaments in these six counties to become more effective, efficient, inclusive and transparent.

Through the project, UNDP contributed to strengthening the capacity of parliaments to undertake their **legislative, oversight, and representation mandates,** with a special focus on engaging Members of Parliaments (MPs) to deal with key development issues whilst aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Aside from building the capacities of the MPs and the professional skills of parliamentary staff, the SLIP project **strengthened the role of parliaments in the budget process** and **enhanced their institutional capacity through the provision of ICT equipment.**

The SLIP project closely collaborated with the **Fiji Parliament Support Programme (FPSP) project** for the Fiji component. Also, the project has benefited significantly from the continuous cooperation and support of other legislatures in the region including i) the Parliament of New Zealand, ii) the Federal Parliament of Australia, iii) the State Parliaments of Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland and New South Wales, iv) State Senate of Hawaii. The International Parliamentary Union (IPU) also contributed and helped mobilize experts and resource people at short notice to assist with activity implementation. Through those joint efforts, UNDP built **south-south or regional networks** to cooperate with the common issues at the legislature level.

During the implementation, it is inevitable that the level of development challenges facing all six legislatures each with its **unique blend of cultural, political and historical context** will differ from country to country, was going to be diverse and some level of granularity to blend the project activities into cohesive outputs. The SLIP project opted to **focus common issues** across the six participating legislatures rather than addressing every issue at the risk of spreading resources thinly over every challenge. In addition, **the COVID 19 pandemic** declared by World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020, had significantly affected the operating environment of the SLIP Project, causing major delays in the implementation of activities in country and regionally. It also impacted the Project team's ability to complete the project in line with the implementation period. Although the initial timeframe for SLIP 1 was until December 2020, the project was extended twice and ended on 30 September 2022.

[1] The terms "Parliament" and "Legislature" is used frequently and interchangeably in this report and refer to the same institution in modern democracy.

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II. Background

Parliamentary democracy and system of governance is constant stage of development owing to its inherited systems, values and processes predominantly from colonial administrations. Even though Parliaments are the bedrock on which the Executive Government finds its legitimacy, Parliaments is post elections scenario are challenged in terms of finding appropriate resources to conduct its business as the third arm of the Governance tripod.

While the executive arm is content with its leading role and Judiciary with its judicial functions, the development challenge that most Parliaments in the Pacific Region face are limited capacities to discharge their mandates in relation to **legislation, oversight and representation.** Through the SLIP project and the grant from the Government of Japan, Parliaments in six countries will be supported to become more effective and efficient through strengthening the work of their committees related to legislation and oversight, especially with regards to key development issues, building the capacities of legislators and professionalism of staff and improving the budget process and financial oversight capacity of the legislatures.

To achieve the aims of developing well-functioning modern Parliaments, the project will primarily focus on capacity development of parliamentary actors, including MPs and staff. It will involve, among other activities, trainings, placements, developing manuals, assistance in drafting standard operating procedures, undertaking needs assessments, facilitating CSO and citizen engagement, and the inclusion of minority and marginalised groups, including women and youth. In addition, the project will focus on utilizing Parliament to undertake activities to increase the capacity of potential women candidates through the provision of training and capacity building activities.

III. Results

A. Strategies

The SLIP project as designed and further elaborated in the SLIP project document **(refer Figure 1 – for Project Logframe Summary)** has an overall objective, two specific objectives, expected outcomes and project outputs and activities. The expected outcomes from SLIP are also linked to the UNDP Sub Regional Programme Document and the United Nations Pacific Strategy.

The project sets the overall objective of **strengthening the parliaments of six Pacific Island Countries to become more effective, efficient, inclusive and transparent**. Specially, the project contributes to strengthening the capacity of legislatures to undertake their legislative, oversight and representation mandates, with a special focus on engaging with key development issues. It aims to build capacities of Members of Parliament and the professional skills of parliamentary staff, as well as parliamentary institutional and budget process. These objectives are linked to Outcome 5 of the **United Nations Development Programme Sub Regional Programme Document (SRPD) for the Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (2018 2022)**:

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA

- By 2022, people and communities in the Pacific will contribute to and benefit from inclusive, informed, and transparent decision-making processes, accountable and responsive institutions, and improved access to justice.

To help parliaments deliver on their three core functions – legislation, oversight and legislation – the project aimed to achieve the following four interlinked outputs:

- Output 1: "**Committees have enhanced capabilities** to undertake their legislative and oversight functions, including skills to ensure that the SDGs and development issues are mainstreamed across Parliament's work, including gender mainstreaming".

- Output 2: "**MPs, including women MPs, and staff have increased capacities** and improved professionalism to fulfil their obligations, benefitting from exposure to other parliaments through south-south triangular cooperation".

- Output 3: "**Parliamentary financial oversight is improved** with system becoming more participatory and transparent"

- Output 4: "**Increased number of potential women candidates** are aware of the work of Parliament and increased number of citizens recognize women as potential parliamentarians".

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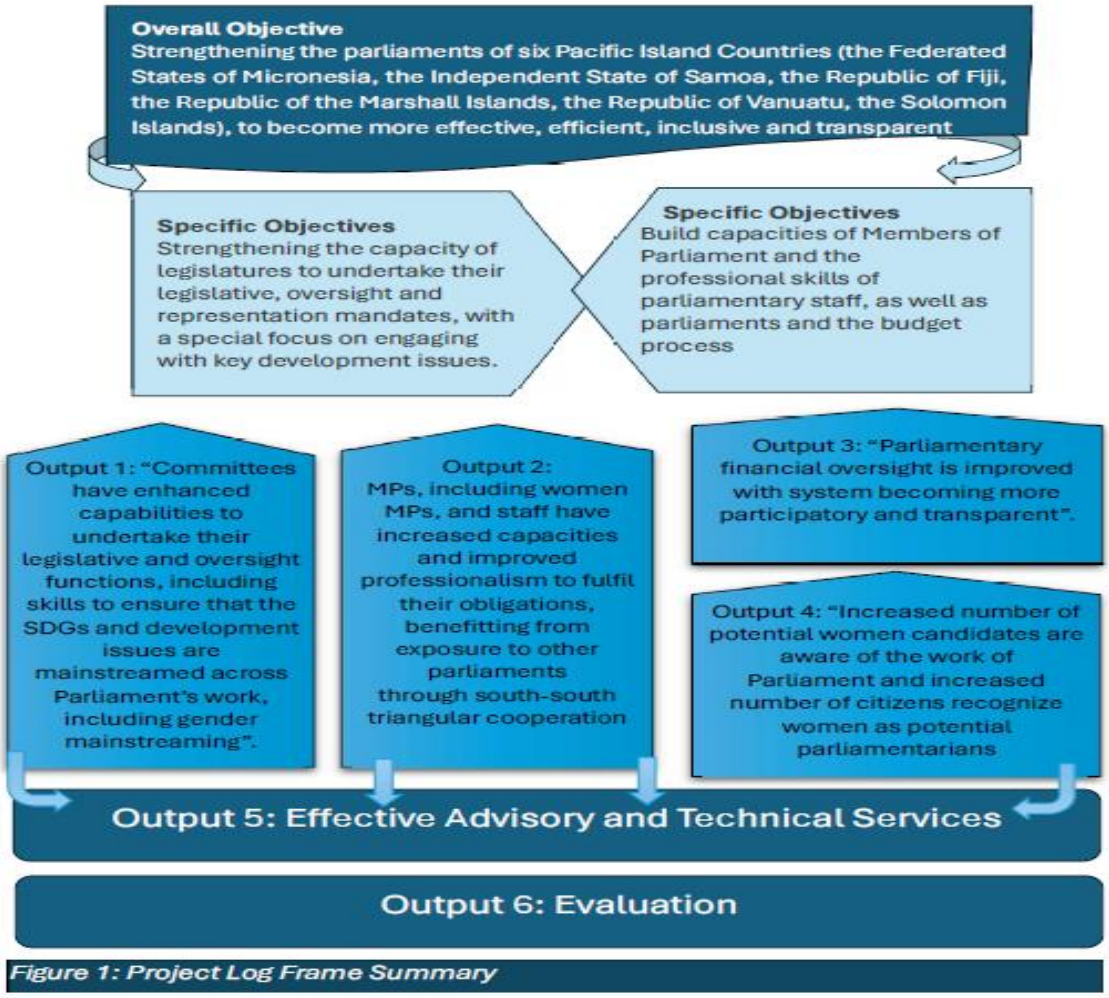


Figure 1: Project Log Frame Summary

B. Output level key results

Output 1: Committees have enhanced capabilities to undertake their legislative and oversight functions, including skills to ensure that the SDGs and development issues are mainstreamed across Parliament's work, including gender mainstreaming

UNDP held series of the training programme to build Committee's capacity to undertake their legislative and oversight functions. UNDP highlights the **technical support** provided by the project to the Parliament Standing Committee, Public Accounts Committee, Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, etc. For example, the launch of the Handbook on Parliamentary Reporting for Fiji Journalists and the finalization and launch of the **SDG Guidance Note for MPs**. Testament to the project's continued evolution, some of the structures and mechanisms developed by the Fiji Parliament with support of the project were recognized as parliamentary development innovations by other international organizations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

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Output 2: MPs, including women MPs, and staff have increased capacities and improved professionalism to fulfil their obligations, benefitting from exposure to other parliaments through south-south triangular cooperation

This output focused on the ability to increase skills and knowledge through activities such as training, attendance at courses and conferences and through exposure to other parliaments in the region through south-south triangular cooperation, has been largely affected due to the closures of boarders as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Building on the ICT investments made by the Project, the Staff and MP were able to participate in limited capacity building initiatives and **south-south triangular cooperation online.** Under this output the Parliament benefited from the partnerships with the New Zealand Parliament, Parliament of Victoria, Australia, and IPU.

Output 3: Parliamentary financial oversight is improved with system becoming more participatory and transparent

Parliament's oversight of the executive is **strengthened by its ability to analyse budgets** before and after they are implemented. To perform this oversight function effectively and participate in public debates, Parliamentarians must have a good understanding of budgeting and public finance. Having a better understanding of the laws, processes and issues relating to the budget will help MPs to fulfil their oversight responsibilities and develop a fiscally assertive legislature. Improved oversight will lead to better budget accountability and enhance the developmental impact of the budget on citizens. The UNDP provided a series of training programs to enhance MPs' financial analytical skills in a transparent manner.

Also, the **digitalization** has enabled Congress to approve stimulus packages, continue committee meetings, and oversee government actions as per citizens' urgent needs. It also facilitated Congress to participate in webinar series coordinated by UNDP and other organizations, where many Pacific and global parliaments have benefitted from Congress's experience. UNDP provided **ICT equipment and digital solutions to ensure Parliaments could maintain its core functions of lawmaking, oversight, representation during the COVID pandemic.** It will be important to build on and broaden these interventions to foster more participatory and transparent Pacific Legislatures.

Output 4: Increased number of potential women candidates are aware of the work of Parliament and increased number of citizens recognize women as potential parliamentarians

The UNDP has supported **gender equality and women's representation and economic empowerment** through the organization of several Women's Forums, such as the "Pacific Women in Power" Forums. They have also provided strategic assistance for the formation and launch of the non-partisan Fiji Parliament's Women Caucus. This multi-party group aims to promote common issues for women MPs, focusing particularly on mainstreaming gender equality in the work of parliamentary committees and the parliament as a whole. Experiences from other regions suggest that such groups can effectively serve as platforms for women to discuss policy across party lines, and they have successfully **contributed to the development of legislation related to gender issues.**

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C. Key Results



5 Parliaments assisted in IT and Telecommuting Capacity



Mock Parliaments targeting Women and Youth conducted in 5 countries



Inter Parliamentary Learning between MP and Staff Capacity conducted for all 6 Parliaments



Inter Parliamentary networks and twinning arrangements strengthened for all 6 Parliaments.



Parliamentary Rules and Procedures reviewed in Solomons and Vanuatu



Civic education programmes targeting Teachers and youths developed and implemented in Solomon Islands.



Provided capacity-building training to 534 Parliament members and staff



Inter-Parliamentary relationships strengthened through 11 exchange activities, visits, and attendance at conferences.



29 Committees work strengthened capacities that are conducting inclusive and accountable law making and oversight

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D. Key Highlights by Country

1. FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

Elected the first female Senator to the FSM Congress

The last quarter of year 2021 witnessed a historic event for the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) Congress: following a by-election, FSM elected its **first female senator to the Congress** from the state of Chuuk. Congress was part of only three parliaments globally that did not have any female representation. With this remarkable elections, Dr. Perpetua Sappa Konman was sworn into the FSM Congress as the first women senator in the federal legislature. UNDP had been championing the introduction of the special measures for women's political participation in the FSM. The Congress leadership had been supportive such initiatives. The election marks a significant achievement for the SLIP project and UNDP and expected to inspire further election of women senators in FSM.

Boosted FSM Congress's ICT Capacity

The Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) has boosted its **digital capacity** to continue its sessions and committee meetings online, which it had started last year following the outbreak of COVID-19. UNDP through the SLIP project supported the upgrade of the information and communication technology (ICT) equipment that was handed over to the Congress's Vice Speaker, Hon. Mr Esmond B. Moses, by H.E. Mr Sobashima Hidenobu, the Ambassador of Japan to FSM. The ICT equipment worth US$40,000 included web-conference system, video cameras, TV screens and related accessories included.



Figure 1: The ICT equipment was handed over from H.E. Mr Sobashima Hidenobu, the Ambassador of Japan to FSM (left) to Hon. Mr Esmond B. Moses, Vice Speaker of Congress (right) during the ceremony in Pohnpei, FSM (Photo: FSM Congress).

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA

Hon. Mr Esmond B. Moses, Vice Speaker of Congress appreciated UNDP's support to cope with the COVID situation and be able to continue parliament work. He stated, "As COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, we decided to organize a virtual session following the travel restrictions. I want to thank our staff who made this possible through their hard work. We conducted a lot of mock sessions and when we were sure, we called a five-day session to begin. With the challenges we faced in organizing virtual sessions, the Government of Japan and UNDP stepped into to help us resolve these challenges by providing us technical assistance and hardware and software solution."

Supported on the Universal Health Access Legislation

Congress of FSM passed a resolution to rollout universal health access in the country. Congress's committees were discussing this for a while. However, the pandemic strengthened the need to move ahead for rollout of universal health coverage in the country. Following the resolution, the FSM Congress reached out to UNDP to help provide technical support on **designing a suitable legislation on universal health access/coverage**. Based on the Congress's request, UNDP provided support in designing terms of references for a consultant to support the Congress in undertaking this important task. These terms were shared with the Congress Secretariat leadership, which approved them. Following their approval, UNDP and Congress are now jointly finding suitable expertise to support Congress on this important initiative in the year 2022.

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA
Workshop for Committee Chairs
Technical Support to Update Rules of Procedure of the FSM Congress
Briefing session on key parliamentary development Issues for Congress Members
Meeting with State Legislatures of Chuuk, Yap and Pohnpei
Official launching of SLIP in FSM
Support the Floating Budget Office
The Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) becomes the first Pacific legislature to convene a virtual session
Adoption of the Sexual Harassment Policy
Support in the Development of Business Continuity Policies
Election of First Female MP in FSM's National Congress
Boosting FSM Congress's ICT Capacity
Support in designing Clerk's Capacity Building Programme
Support on the Universal Health Access Legislation
Support to the FSM Women conference
FSM Participation at the Pacific Women in Power Forum

2. FIJI

Induction for Parliament Standing Committees

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA

UNDP conducted **a three-day induction for Standing Committee members and staff** from 22 to 24 January 2019. The programme provided both new and returning Standing Committee members an opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills, share information and exchange ideas on the workings of Standing Committees. Discussions during the workshop helped members deepen their understanding about: 1) their functions and place within parliaments; 2) the roles of a Committee Chair and Clerk; 3) how to convene meetings; 4) committee rules and regulations; and 5) consideration of Bills and developing a report. Participants also had the opportunity to undertake mock committee meetings. Participants commended the opportunity to practice through these sessions.

Pacific Women in Power Forums

The ten Fiji women Members of Parliament participated in **two two-day Pacific Women in Power Forums** held separation in Nadi (from 26-27 March 2019 in Nadi). The forum featured exchange of information and knowledge on key issues relating to gender equality, economic empowerment of women, integrity in leadership and benefits of a gender sensitive parliament. The Forum provided a platform for interaction and sharing of best practices for Pacific women MPs who share common contexts and challenges and to extend their regional and international parliamentary networks. The delegates agreed to the formation of a network for Pacific women MPs for peer to peer mentoring and support and a space to draw on sub regional experiences.

ITC Support

In 2020, to ensure that six Standing Committees effectively performed their role in legislation, oversight, and representation within the context of COVID-19, the focus of the project support under this Output was aimed at the provision of targeted support for **ICT infrastructures to enable remote working of parliamentary committees and the exploration and adoption of new methods** of providing peer to peer support and interparliamentary cooperation. Due to the ICT investments made by the Project, the Fiji Parliament was able to quickly adapt its mode of working by moving part of its Business online and therefore ensuring that Parliament business remained uninterrupted.

FIJI
Technical Assistance to Parliament Standing Committees
Induction for Parliament Standing Committees
Launch of Guidance Note for the Standing Committees of the Fiji Parliament
Training for Public Accounts Committee members
Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee attend the IPU Seminar for Parliaments of the Pacific on the implementation of the UNSCR 1540
Handing over broadcast equipment
Handbook on Parliamentary Reporting for Fiji Journalists
Training for Parliament Staff on mainstreaming the SDG into the work of parliament + Communications training
Training for Members of Parliament on mainstreaming the SDG into the work of parliament
Support to Committees on Gender analysis
Attachment to the Fiji Parliament for PNG Hansard Staff

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA

Attachment to the Fiji Parliament for the Speaker of the Cook Islands Parliament
Budget analysis support to the Fiji Parliament
Floating Budget Analysis mission
Dialogue for Pacific Women Clerks and Deputies
Strategic Support to and Launch of Fiji Parliament's Women Caucus

3. INDEPENDENT STATE OF SAMOA

Seminar for Members on the Standing Order (SO)

In preparation for the end of the last term of Parliament before the April 2021 election, the project supported the Samoa Legislative Assembly and its Members in a 2-day workshop to review and finalise the proposed amendments to the Standing Orders. The Workshop provided an opportunity for Members to collective discuss and reflect on the part of the SOs that were working and the applications and interpretation of the provisions of the SO that were perceived not to be working. The workshop also provided an opportunity to Members to hear comparative experiences from parliaments in the region.

Launch of the History of Parliament Handbook

As part of its Parliament's outreach efforts, the Project supported the Legislative Assembly to launch its Samoa Parliament History Project (SPHP). Under this Project, SLIP supported the design and documentation of the history of the parliament. SLIP support has resulted in a launching of Volume 1 of the "**History of the Parliament of Samoa**". In launching the publication, the former Prime Minister acknowledged the contributions of the UNDP and the SLIP project.

Development of the new Strategic Plan

A strategic development plan is a document developed by an institution that identifies the reforms required and the necessary actions to make the institution more productive and responsive to stakeholders. Through the SLIP Project, UNDP, since July has been supporting the Legislative Assembly in reviewing and designing its **new strategic plan for 2021 – 2025**. In light of the recent political challenges in Samoa, discussions on the design of the new strategic plan are quite timely. UNDP, has therefore been providing technical assistance to the legislative Assembly to ensure that the new strategic plan takes into account the changing political landscape, puts in place mechanism to determine and structures for consultation process of Members and Staff to determine collectively the institution's long-term goals for development and then identify the best approaches for achieving those goals. Through the project's support, the Legislative Assembly is also benefiting from comparative experiences of other parliaments who have developed their own development plans in a changing political context.

SAMOA
Seminar for Members of Parliament on their engagement with the SDGs implementation

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA

Seminar for MPs on Committees of the legislative and oversight role of Committees
Social Committee consultations on Savaii Island
MPs Seminar on the Economic Priorities in SDS
Seminar for Members on the Standing Order
Participation at the Strategic Retreat for Fiji Parliament senior management
Study attachment on research and parliamentary security to Tasmania
Study Visit by the Samoan Parliamentary Committees to the Australia House of Representative and the Tasmanian State Parliament
Planning for the Induction of up-coming Parliament Members
Launch of the History of Parliament Handbook
Official launching of SLIP
Floating Budget Support and Budget Briefing seminar for MPs
Support to the Legislative Assembly of Samoa in developing a new Strategic Plan
Participation in Floating Budget Office missions throughout the Pacific region
Hardware and Software Solutions to enable Samoan Committee's to stay operational
Technical Advisory Services: Review of Standing Orders
Technical Advisory Services: Development of the Business Continuity Plans for Parliaments
Development of the new Strategic Plan
Technical Support on Women Leadership Development Programme

4. THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Outreach Activities by the Health and Bills and Legislations Committee

SLIP supported **two (2) parliamentary consultations of citizens** in the Western and Choiseul provinces of Solomon Islands on the Public Health Emergency Bill between 29 June and 9 July 2021. With the pandemic casting several strains on the health systems of the country, the Parliament Health Committee and the Bills and Legislations Committee undertook consultations in three provinces engaging with **more than 1,000 citizens to understand the health-related issues** and also inspect the quarantine facilities in these provinces. Information gathered would feed into the proposed legislation that would enable the Government to promptly and effectively respond to a potential public health threat, an outbreak or spread of an infection or disease, or the risk of the outbreak or spread of infection or disease, within Solomon Islands.

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA



Members of the Bills and Legislation Committee in the Western Province

"Mini-Induction" for New Woman Member of Parliament

As a direct contribution to MPs capacity building, UNDP supported **a two-day induction programme for the (newly) elected woman member of parliament** in the Solomon Islands and other interested MPs. Held on 11 and 12 August 2021, the content focussed on their professional development and covered elements that would strengthen the role of Members of Parliament (MP) in the oversight and scrutiny of Government. The Honorable Speaker Patterson Oti congratulated the newly woman MP and stressed that all MPs have important responsibilities in their role as a member of parliament. He reminded them that their constituents have elected them to act with commitment and integrity in fulfilling these responsibilities.

Public Outreach Activities

The project supported **three major parliamentary outreach and information campaigns** allowing more than **500 citizens to get informed about the institution of Parliament**, the role of the members of parliament and staff and how they can effectively engage in parliamentary processes. The Speaker hosted the first ever Speaker's Dialogue held in Honiara on 13 May 2021 for provincial based CSOs and the NPSI Civic Education Team implemented the Temotu Parliament Outreach activity in November 2021.

Support on the Strategic Plan

In response to a request from the National Parliament of the Solomon Islands (NPSI), the UNDP Pacific Office through the SLIP Project supported the National Parliament in the development of its **new**

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA

Strategic Plan for period 2022 - 2026. UNDP's technical support was through the provision of an expert who, together with the leadership of the NPSI, scheduled a series of bilateral and plenary consultations on the Strategic Plan with MPs and staff over a period of a few months. The consultations focused on key elements like understanding of the purpose and benefit of strategic planning for legislatures, the various stages involved in strategic planning and identifying the strategic objectives for the next years. Staff actively engaged in the discussions to shape the Strategic Plan which should be finalized in mid-January 2022. The strategic plan will lay down solid foundation for holistic reforms within committees, legislation, oversight and representation. It also sets targets for improving the NPSI outreach to and engagement with the citizen.

ICT Assessment

Consistent with efforts to upgrade and **improve Pacific Parliaments ICT infrastructure** so it is better able to respond to the changing global environment, UNDP also supported the rollout of a similar assessment with the NPSI. UNDP met with Parliament's ICT staff and leadership and completed the assessment. UNDP shared the assessment report with his findings and recommendations on further ICT work in the Solomon Islands.

SOLOMON ISLANDS
Solomon Islands Parliament Committee Review
Seminar for Members of Parliament on their engagement with the SDGs implementation
Induction workshop on Solomon Islands Parliamentary Committees
Participation at the Strategic Retreat for Fiji Parliament senior management
National Parliament of Solomon Islands Induction Training
National Parliament of Solomon Islands Induction Training
"Mini-Induction" for New Woman Member of Parliament
Budget analysis support to the National Parliament of the Solomon Islands
ICT Needs Assessment
Official launching of SLIP
Parliamentary Staff Attachment to Fiji Parliament, Suva
Budget analysis support to the National Parliament of the Solomon Islands
Support to the Floating Budget Office
Parliamentary Staff Attachment to Fiji Parliament, Suva
Support to the Floating Budget Office
Floating Budget Office Workshops for CSOs
Staff Corporate Training
Technical support to the Hansard Team
Support on the Strategic Plan
ICT Assessment
Support in the Preparation of the Floating Budget Office 2022 exercise

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA

Support to the Launch of the Civic Education in Schools Progamme
ICT Assessment
Support in the Preparation of the Floating Budget Office 2022 exercise
Practice Parliament for Women

5. REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Attachment to the Senate of Hawaii – Information Technology and Translation (17-19 July 2018)

Two staff members of the Republic of Marshall Islands Nitijela benefitted from a work attachment to the Senate of the State of Hawaii in the areas of Information Technology (IT) and translation. During the attachment period, the staff shadowed their counterparts learning aspects of their work related to **data system management, communication and skills of translation.** The attachment enabled the staff to observe and compare the Senate systems and processes against their own and identify best practices that could work in the Congress. Additionally, they had the opportunity to interact with other Senate staff, Senators and members of the judiciary.

REPUBLIC OF MARSHALL ISLANDS
Updating of Handbook for the Members
Attachment to the Senate of Hawaii – Parliamentary Inventory and Asset Management, Information Technology and Translation
Support to write options paper on parliamentary autonomy
Support to Nitijela on Business Continuity During COVID-19
Practice Parliament for Women

6. VANUATU

Support on the Parliament Bill

Following the approval of new standing orders in year 2020, the Vanuatu parliament started working on the parliament bill to further augment parliaments legislative and oversight functions. The Parliament team had requested UNDP to provide technical assistance on the topic and help parliament **develop a Parliament Bill** in this regard. UNDP deployed a technical consultant to support the parliament leadership in preparing a draft of the bill. The UNDP team, consultant and the parliament team worked together to produce the bill. UNDP also supported parliament in organising two consultations on the bill, one with the Members of the Parliament in Port Vila in May 2021 and the second in the Sanma province in July 2021. On the first consultations in Port Vila, political parties present gave their concrete inputs for further improving the bill. The Japanese Ambassador to Vanuatu had participated in the inaugural of these sessions together with the fourth Deputy Speaker of the parliament.

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA



Parliament Bill Consultation – With MPs, Port Vila, Efate

Floating Budget Office analysis support

Utilizing the budget briefs produced by researchers in November 2020, the Vanuatu Parliament convened a briefing session on the 2021 budget for representatives of Port Vila based CSOs on 20 February. The Parliament of Vanuatu received the government's budget for approval in October 2021. Following this, the parliament team requested UNDP for support in organising **floating budget mission to produce the analysis of the budget.** 22 CSOs reps including 10 women appreciated the opportunity of receiving such briefing by the parliament and recommended that parliament organises extended and detailed briefings in future. The Clerk of the Parliament welcomed the CSO suggestion and asked them to engage in the committee processes on a long-term basis and help track budget implementation as well.

Outreach Activities in Outer Islands

Vanuatu parliament is one of the regional leaders in arranging **substantive community engagement activities on work of the parliament**. During the reporting year, UNDP supported the parliament arranging series of outreach activities. Constituents in Espiritu Santo, the largest island of Vanuatu, where Vanuatu's second-largest town and the provincial capital, Luganville is located, attended public outreach activities conducted by Vanuatu's National Parliament, enabling citizens to raise their concerns and express their opinions on governance issues including public finance, laws and parliamentary procedures.

VANUATU
Workshop for Committee Staff
Support to Public Accounts Committee and other Committees
Workshop for Committee Chairs and Deputies on enhancing committee effectiveness
Technical support to the Vanuatu Standing Orders Review

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA

Newly Elected Committee Members Induction
Staff Training Workshop on Revised Standing Orders
Adoption of the Standing Orders to Strengthen Parliament and Its Committees
Support on the Parliament Bill
Standing Committees Division Staff Retreat
Regional Seminar for Asia-Pacific Region Parliament on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, Mongolia
Twinning Parliament Study Program
Vanuatu's participation in the Victorian Parliament hosted regional forum for the 2019 Australian and New Zealand Parliamentary Information Technology (ANZPIT), Melbourne
Induction for new and returning members of the Vanuatu Parliament
Vanuatu's participation at the Australian Pacific Hansard Editors Association (APHEA) conference in Sydney, Australia
Hansard Attachment to Fiji
Pacific Floating Budget Office" at the Parliament of Vanuatu engagement with the SDGs implementation
Vanuatu National Parliament Staff Training at the Congress of New Caledonia, Noumea
Editorial Support to the Hansard Unit of the National Parliament of Vanuatu
"Pacific Floating Budget Office" at the Parliament of Vanuatu
Procedural Support on COVID-19
National Youth Parliament Programme
Upgrading ICT Infrastructure for the National Parliament of Vanuatu
Parliament Open Day
Pacific Floating Budget Office at the Parliament of Vanuatu
Peer to Peer Exchanges for Parliament staff
Outreach Activities in Outer Islands
Floating Budget Office analysis support
Upgrade of Parliament of Vanuatu's Live Televised Broadcasting through procurement of cameras

E. **Impact**

In summary, both direct project beneficiaries as well as independent project interlocutors have stressed that that the SLIP project was a success in most aspects, **technological transformation** being a major success, and successfully embedded the **portfolio approach towards resolving capacity issues in PIC legislatures**. Pacific Parliaments are accustomed to operating on fiscally tight budgets which was further compounded by the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Revenue flows in small and micro economies of the Pacific was severely impacted and many countries had to rely on bail outs from World Bank and other donor countries.

The timely funding support and assistance which the PICs availed through SLIP will not be easily erased from memory. Across all the six benefiting legislatures, and with UNDP leading the procurement, equipment and upgrades were sourced and provide to the legislatures which enabled the critical

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA

functions of **law making and accountability** continued. With this direct investment in equipment, legislatures were able keep on par with their global counterparts and were able to carry out their constitutional roles and functions, even though most members and staff were physically separated and dialling in remotely. SLIP **empowered legislatures to use online telecommuting tools to communicate and undertake their day-to-day responsibilities**.

UNDP managed to conduct **an external evaluation of the Fiji component** and submitted the results of the evaluation to the Government of Japan. Although external evaluations were not conducted in the other five countries due to limited access during the COVID, UNDP held **regular stakeholder meetings with the Embassy of Japan in each country** and received direct feedback from stakeholders. The evaluation concluded that while the support provided under the Parliament Portfolio has been efficient, it needs to be upscaled and more focussed on citizen's engagement and interaction with their MPS.

F. Result framework

Outputs	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Achievement	%
Output 1 Committees have enhanced capabilities to undertake their legislative and oversight functions	No. of Committees improved capacities that are conducting inclusive and accountable law making and oversight	0	18	29	161%
Output 2 MPs increased capacities and improved professionalism to fulfil their obligations, benefitting from exposure to other parliaments through south-south triangular cooperation	No. of Induction workshops conducted	0	6	4	67%
	No. of south-south triangular cooperation activities conducted	0	3	11	367%
	No. of MPs and Staff of the parliament provided capacity-building training	0	657	534	81%
Output 3 Parliamentary financial oversight is improved with system becoming more participatory and transparent	No. of parliaments maintained their financial oversight role through the provision of ICT equipment during the COVID pandemic	0	6	5	83%
Output 4 Increased number of potential women candidates are aware of the work of Parliament and increased number of citizens recognize women as potential parliamentarians	No. of Conferences or Mock Parliaments targeting Women and Youth conducted	0	6	5	83%

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IV. Lessons Learned

After experiencing a successful 2-year implementation period, SLIP experienced a low point in 2020 in terms of delivery and activities due to COVID. The resulting pivot towards procurement of equipment and implementation of system to support hybrid parliamentary sittings and to comply the post covid 2-meter social distancing was critical to keeping the parliaments open. This proves that projects can always be tailored to provide the support which beneficiaries needed despite drastic changes in the surrounding and immediate working environment. In terms of lessons learned from the first phase of SLIP, the following are some points to consider:

- In terms of scope, there is ample evidence to suggest that most parliaments are willing to advance and strengthen the progress already made in legislative, oversight, accountability, and citizen engagement. Recent self-reflection and strategic planning exercises in Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, Solomon Islands provides useful insight.

- There is a need to involve parliamentary leadership i.e. the Speaker and Clerk, Legislators and the administration, in the beginning of the project and in the preparation of the Annual Work Plans. The self-awareness exercise in Fiji assessed the strengths, weaknesses and needs for institutional development and priorities for institutional strengthening. It found universal support for further parliamentary strengthening to build on and entrench successes of the work done so far, while also identifying new opportunities to address ongoing systemic weaknesses.

- A new range of challenges have been highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic, which require long-term capacity building of the Pacific legislatures in order that they are better prepared to face any future crises.

- With support through the project, there was some ability to adapt quickly to the aftermath of the pandemic through the provision of technical support which helped legislatures to stay operational and relevant during the crisis. For example, through the project's hardware and software solutions, the Congress of FSM became the first Pacific Legislature to organise virtual sessions amid travel restrictions which impeded its ability to organise 'in person' sessions. Similarly, the Samoan Legislative Assembly received hardware and software which enabled its five Permanent Committees and two Special Committees to continue operating virtually despite government's travel, social distance, and safety measures. And in Fiji, resources were rapidly and effectively shifted to areas of urgent need such as ICT and digital solutions that ensured that the Parliament was able to maintain its core functions of lawmaking, oversight, representation and engaging with the public. It will be important to build on and broaden these interventions, to foster more sustainable and resilient Pacific Legislatures.

- The pandemic has revealed a common area of weakness across Pacific legislatures in planning, accumulating, and consolidating lessons from similar previous disasters including epidemiological disasters, and applying them in current or future disasters. The Pacific is one of the most disaster-prone regions globally in terms of cyclones, floods, and tsunamis. However, when looking at the recent impacts of Covid-19, it is quite evident that legislatures

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generally do not have protocols or plans in place to deal with the impacts of disaster on their core business processes.

It will be important for legislatures to learn from each other and other regional partners on how they addressed the Covid-19 crisis and other disasters and put together lessons learned for future planning. For example, work has been advanced since 2020 by Japan's, Disaster Management Bureau of the Cabinet Office, and the Ministry of the Environment, to enhance Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate actions, and to identify what kind of DRR measures adaptive to climate change should be put in place. This could provide valuable collaborative opportunities for relevant PIC parliamentary committee.

V. Way Forward

In hindsight, the logical next step would have been to lobby for a second phase of SLIP with the lessons learned in the first phase of SLIP 1 determining how the second phase will be shaped. However, given the delay in the submission of this final report, largely due to some accounting issues, resulting from UNDP's migration of its Enterprise Risk Planning (ERP) system from ATLAS to Quantum.

Involving the parliamentary leadership, Legislators and the administration, the exercise in Fiji assessed the strengths, weaknesses and needs for institutional development and priorities for institutional strengthening. It found universal support for further parliamentary strengthening to build on and entrench successes of the work done so far, while also identifying new opportunities to address ongoing systemic weaknesses.

Resources to be shifted to areas of urgent need such as ICT and digital solutions to ensure Parliaments can maintain its core functions of lawmaking, oversight, representation and engaging with the public. It will be important to build on and broaden these interventions, to foster more sustainable and resilient Pacific Legislatures.

SLIP Phase II will aim at supporting PIC Legislatures to become more effective, responsive, and representative in undertaking their legislative, oversight, and representational functions through efficient, inclusive, transparent, accountable, and accessible processes.

Legislatures will need to be better engaged and informed about the range of support that is being provided. Opportunities exist for Committees and Legislators to be more strategically engaged and knowledgeable about official development assistance, particularly in terms of its goals and returns to PIC citizens.

All of this will require forward looking 'anticipatory governance'. Institutions of governance and oversight will need assistance to ensure that they are more flexible and agile, able to move and respond quickly to rapidly changing and evolving circumstances, while maintaining effective engagement with, and facilitating participation by, a diversity of their citizens.

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA

VI. Financial Status

UNDP received a total of USD 5,270,030.78 as generous support from the Government of Japan. Due to the currency exchange gain of USD 369.29 during the implementation, the project total available budget of the project became USD 5,270,400.07. The project utilized USD 5,268,979.21 and refunded the remaining balance of USD 1,420.86. All output was delivered within the budget regulation.

Table 1: Allocation of SLIP Funding by Project

Output	Budget	Expenditure	Delivery Rate (%)
Output 1	1,867,078.71	1,980.028.88	106.05%
Output 2	1,751,104.60	1,886,508.01	107.73%
Output 3	720,920.15	652,940.32	90.57%
Output 4	477,479.00	295,475.84	61.88%
Evaluation	62,688.71	63,731.48	101.66%
GMS (8%)	390,759.62	390,294.68	99.88%
Sub-total	5,270,030.78	5,268,979.21	99.98%
Exchange gain	369.29	-	-
Total	5,270,400.07	5,268,979.21	99.97%

VII. Human Interest Story and Visibility Achievements

The 2024 general elections in Solomon Islands were both historical and momentous occasions in every sense. Historical because voters turned up to vote for both their provincial and national parliament representatives, a first in Solomons Islands electoral history. Momentous as more than 345,000 voters (out of 420,000 registered voters)[2] turned up to vote making it one of the first elections in the Pacific to cross the 80% threshold in terms of turnout. With several pertinent issues at stake including the much-discussed pivot towards China and the "Friends to all and Enemies to none" policy of the then ruling Government (led by Hon. Manasseh Sogavere), the high turnout in the elections was anticipated. The election results were also seen as a referendum on the policies of Sogavare Government and its policies over the preceding 4 years.

Another contributing yet unproven factor towards the high turnout was the interest of young people ensure that their political voices are manifested through the candidates that they have chosen as their representatives in both the provincial assemblies and the national parliament. Young people in Solomons Islands have felt the brunt of inadequate and uninspiring national policies that have led to disenfranchisement and lack of growth opportunities. The latter is manifested is manifested by the high rate of unemployment in the country.

[2] https://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/196/

Docusign Envelope ID: BDDF42CB-5A34-4EA7-901B-CAF2B2A0BCDA

UNDP partnering with the National Parliament of the Solomin Islands under the SLIP project collaborated with the Ministry of Education in Solomons to develop a comprehensive civic education programme aimed at Year 10 students so that they may increase their understanding of the roles and functions of the three arms of Governance: Executive, Legislative and Judiciary. The programme was developed as a two-way teaching guide; a teacher's module to support teachers enhance their knowledge while at the same time imparting knowledge to their students and a student's guide to help them in understanding the course content and carry out activities in a self-paced and self-regulated environment.

The feedback from both teachers and students were generally positive as both the groups understood the contents that were attributed to them. Some even mentioned that topics such as civic education should not be confined to classroom environments but taught as essential life skills subjects to community and civic minded audiences. The concept of democratic and accountable leadership was very important to all the students and teachers as many felt that Solomon Islands, despite its wealth and abundance of resources, has not done well in economic terms. Consequently, democracy and the democratic system of governance has yet to prove its worth to the citizens of Solomon Islands. The country and the citizens deserved better, and it is up to the elected officials to forge a new and prosperous vision for the country. In this way, the current and future elections are important as they as intrinsically linked to people's wishes, beliefs and hopes for a better future.

Publications & News

Strengthening Legislatures' Capacity in Pacific Island Countries Project Brochure | United Nations Development Programme

Regional meet reflects on performance and cooperation for Pacific parliaments | United Nations Development Programme

Training to benefit Regional Parliaments - Parliament of the Republic of Fiji

UN and Japan help Samoa politicians work remotely | RNZ News

Vanuatu MPs undergo induction for new term of Parliament | United Nations Development Programme

FSM Congress advances its digital capacity to continue functioning online - Island Times

Recovery in Pacific Island Countries: An Orientation Guide for Parliamentarians | United Nations Development Programme

Solomon Islands: Practice parliament for women to level the playing field for women's political participation | International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics

Samoa's Legislative Assembly to Conduct Virtual Parliamentary Committee Meetings - Samoa Global News

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This version of the report, as amended, signed 21 July 2025

Signature

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Deputy Resident Representative

The United Nations Development Programme

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