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Strengthening Legislatures: Some Lessons from the Pacific Region

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There is universal agreement among development stakeholders that parliaments play a crucial role in enhancing good governance, economic growth, and development as well as the general quality of democracy. It follows from this fact that several international organizations (IOs) have embarked in activities that seek to strengthen legislative capacity. However, we note that there is a lack of consensus—among IOs and in key literature—on the right approach to strengthen parliaments. Consequently, IOs have been offering varying legislative-strengthening exercises that have inevitably produced significantly different and, at times, disappointing outcomes. Using a multicase study design that includes five Pacific countries, we show that to attain positive and significant outcomes, legislative capacity-building initiatives need to be country specific and informed by local needs assessment. We further reassert that no amount of legislative capacity-building effort can enhance parliamentary performance in the absence of local political will.

Keywords: Governance and Democracy, Comparative Politics, Legislative Training Needs Assessment, Asia-Pacific, Legislative Strengthening, Legislative Capacity-Building Initiatives, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Vanuatu.

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Hay un consenso entre los interesados en el desarrollo de que los legislativos juegan un papel crucial en la ampliación del buen gobierno, el crecimiento economico y el desarrollo asi como de la general calidad de la democracia. Es por esta razón que varias Organizaciones Internacionales (OI) han asumido actividades que buscan fortalecer a los legislativos. Sin embargo notamos que no hay consenso entre las OI, sobre la forma correcta de fortalecer la capacidad legislativa. Consecuentemente, las OI han estado ofreciendo varios ejercicios de fortalecimiento, que inevitablemente han producido diferentes, cuando decepcionantes resultados. Con un diseño de multicasos de estudio de cinco naciones del pacífico demostramos que para obtener resultados positivos y significativos las iniciativas necesitan ser específicas y basadas en evaluaciones de necesidades. Concluimos que se require acompañar de voluntad política cualquier esfuerzo de construcción de capacidades para que efectivamente se pueda mejorar el desempeño legislativo.

The international community has held the belief that parliaments or legislatures are essential for keeping governments accountable for their actions and that, by doing so, play a key role in preventing corruption, creating the conditions for sustainable growth, paving the way for sustainable development, and ensuring higher quality of democracy (Beahan *et al*. 2010; Hudson and Wren 2007; Power 2008). They are therefore one of the most important institutions in any progressive country around the world—if not *the* most important.

However, given the weaknesses, the inadequate development, and the poor institutionalization of legislatures—particularly those in the so-called nascent democracies which, among others, include the Pacific countries—international organizations (IOs) and donor countries (such as Australia) have devoted considerable resources to improve the design, organization, and administration of legislative-strengthening programs (see Dinnen 2004; Hayward-Jones 2008; Henderson 2003; Hughes 2003). Indeed, being a single major aid provider in the Pacific region, Australia has consistently been spending up to $1 billion a year to, among other areas, improve governance in the region particularly through its Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI), which is mostly sponsored by the Australian Aid Agency (AusAID) (Hayward-Jones 2008).

It should be noted that this amount of aid does not include the substantial amount of further aid from other donors in the region such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Asian Development Bank, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and the World Bank Institute, just to mention but a few. Put together, the total aid from these IOs translates into an annual figure of more than $220 per capita, making the Pacific region the highest aid per capita recipient in the World (Mellor and Jabes 2004). Despite such a huge amount of aid that is provided in the Pacific countries, the region has consistently exhibited negative economic growth and development, something that is strongly associated with the weak state of parliaments in the region (Alasia 1997; Boege *et al*. 2008; Chand and Duncan 2004; Mellor and Jabes 2004; Morgan 2004; Powell 2007; Richardson 2009). The same authors nevertheless agree on the fact that, if strengthened more effectively, Pacific parliaments could more ably perform their constitutionally mandated functions; that is, promote good governance, fight corruption, improve the quality of democracy, and hence help the region to attain desired economic growth and development levels.

Following from this background, the purpose of this article is to test whether and to what extent legislative-strengthening programs have enhanced parliamentary effectiveness. We do so by analyzing the data we have generated through extensive fieldwork undertaken in five Pacific Island states:[1] the Marshall Islands (RMI), Papua New Guinea (PNG), Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Vanuatu. By doing so, we show that, in contrast to what happened in other countries that displayed very similar constellations of contextual conditions, legislative-strengthening programs in the Pacific Island states have failed to enhance the effectiveness with which legislatures perform their traditional functions. Building on the analyses of our original data, we show that there is an urgent need for IOs to prioritize legislative capacity needs assessment for their well-intended programs to have positive and significant outcomes.

The article is organized in the following way. First we present a historical analysis of how the position held by the international community regarding democratic institutions has evolved over time. In particular, we argue that there has been a shift from total disinterest to the realization that democratic institutions such as parliaments are indispensable if good governance, quality democracy, economic growth, and development are to be attained. It is not surprising, then, that a number of IOs have since devoted their resources toward building legislative capacity. Nevertheless, we note that there is still a general disagreement among IOs on how to best approach legislative capacity building particularly in terms of where the focus should be.

[1] For the purpose of this article, the Pacific region excludes developed countries such as Australia and New Zealand because of their comparative advanced levels of democracy and development. It includes Timor-Leste because it forms part of the Pacific region as per AusAID, which is one of the major parliamentary strengthening stakeholders in the region.

Second, we present evidence from an elite survey conducted in five Pacific parliaments to argue that effective performance, which IOs claim to pursue when offering legislative-strengthening programs, is not a function of some random capacity-building initiatives, but rather one that is specifically informed by local needs assessment. We conclude this part of our analysis by reporting that stakeholders in the parliaments under analysis consider these programs to be mostly ineffective. The respondents attribute this failure to the fact that programs are poorly designed and delivered. Building on this discussion, the article suggests that greater attention should be paid to enhancing in-house technical support, political party systems, and the quality of democracy in these countries. Most importantly, we contend that legislative-strengthening programs should be country specific. This is argued on the ground that, while generally parliaments perform similar functions (i.e., legislation, representative, and oversight roles), they have different capacity needs given the fact that they operate under different constitutions, political culture, and differ in terms of the level of institutional development.

IOs

From the publication of *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Huntington 1968) to the publication of the *Third Wave of Democratization* (Huntington 1991), the international community held the belief that democratic regimes were not strong enough to cope with modernization, that they could be destabilized by economic development, that they could be overthrown in countries experiencing rapid development, and, therefore, that democratic regimes did not provide the best setting for making development and social stability coexist. In those years, there were not many IOs devoted to promoting democracy worldwide, and the organizations devoted to promoting development and reducing poverty worldwide were not particularly interested in political issues, questions, and institutions.

Given the scant consideration democracy enjoyed at the time and the fact that parliaments are the democratic institution par excellence, it is not surprising that for more than two decades legislatures were almost entirely neglected by the international community. However, following the end of the Cold War era, the end of the bipolar order, the democratization of an unprecedented number of previously nondemocratic countries, the publication of *The Third Wave of Democratization* (Huntington 1991) and its rehabilitation of democracy (democracy is good in and by itself, but it is also good for development), parliaments started to receive considerable attention. IOs devoted to democracy promotion (see e.g., Centre for Democratic Institutions [CDI] 2011) had great consideration for parliaments as they continuously appreciated the fact that they are among the most, if not the most important, democratic institutions. Meanwhile, IOs devoted to development promotion and poverty reduction saw

in parliaments and/or legislatures the cornerstones of those systems of accountability that, by keeping government accountable for their actions, choices, policies, and expenditures, they promote good governance, curb corruption, ensure economic growth, contribute to the pacification of post-conflict society and, ultimately, create the conditions for sustainable growth (see Beahan *et al*. 2010; Hudson and Wren 2007; O'Brien, Stapenhurst, and Johnston 2008; Pelizzo and Stapenhurst 2012).

The renewed interest in legislatures led some IOs to start to provide legislative capacity-building programs in parliaments around the world. For instance, the CDI (2011) has conducted a range of training programs in Pacific parliaments in collaboration with other parliamentary stakeholders for over ten years. These include, but are not limited to, induction programs for newly elected Members of Parliament (MPs) on their roles and responsibilities, training for committee members on how the committee system works, and role performance training for speakers, clerks, and parliamentary staff on the functioning of parliamentary system.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2011) has been strengthening parliaments using four different strategies. These are: (1) improving the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of MPs and parliamentary staffs; (2) supporting parliamentary reforms; (3) promoting the way parliaments relate to other branches of the government including civil societies; and (4) increasing female participation in various levels of parliaments. Furthermore, UNDP builds networks between parliaments and has created web-based parliamentary resources such as the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics and a portal for parliamentary development (UNDP 2011), which allow MPs across the globe to share not only knowledge but also resources for development of their respective parliaments. The available resources consist of various materials concerning parliamentary good practice benchmarks.

In sum, the literature on legislative capacity building (see e.g., Beetham 2006; Hudson and Wren 2007; Olson and Norton 1996; Power 2008) has generally outlined four approaches that IOs employ in their attempt to strengthen parliaments around the world. These include: (1) reforming parliamentary structure; (2) building the capacity of specific institutions working under parliaments, such as the independent office of the Ombudsman, Auditor-General, and anticorruption commissions; (3) promoting a sound external environment such as an open and fair electoral system that affects the makeup of parliaments; and (4) improving KSAs of MPs.

Note, however, that while these legislative-strengthening programs provide a great deal of improvement in terms of renewed efforts to enhance parliamentary performance, they do not provide much information on how effective each approach is and when to use them. This is precisely because legislative performance is neither always nor necessarily a function of legislative capacity building.

Two things stand out from what we have said so far. The first is that to IOs, legislative capacity building denotes different parliamentary-strengthening activities. Indeed, depending on the IO in question, legislative capacity building may refer to the process of strengthening the so-called parliamentary best practices, the size of the staff, the quality of the staff, the availability of resources, the range of powers assigned to the legislature, the scope of its mandate, the number of oversight tools that could be employed to oversee the activities of the government, and the presence/absence of specific oversight mechanisms such as Public Accounts Committees. Thus, while there is a nearly unanimous agreement on the importance of legislative capacity building regarding the fact that it should be promoted, and that it would lead to improvements in parliamentary performance, there is no common understanding of what is the best possible executing approach. As a result, legislative capacity building is associated with a plurality of activities.

This plurality of capacity-building exercises could be viewed as a simple case of polysemy (Eco 1978) or as evidence of the fact that the international community views parliamentary strengthening differently (Connolly 1993). Consequently, capacity-building exercises by IOs generally tackle different legislative weaknesses, attempt to promote different capacities, adopt different capacity-building methods, and thus reach very different outcomes.

The second thing that stands out is that while some practitioners were aware of the fact that legislative capacity, however understood, was a necessary but insufficient condition for improved parliamentary performance, the vast majority of IOs kept promoting the legislative capacity-building exercises they deemed best. In other words, in spite of the fact that it had become clear that untargeted legislative capacity building was at best insufficient and at worst quite useless to promote parliamentary performance, legislative-strengthening programs never changed their focus, rendering information and knowledge generated by IOs redundant. Using empirical evidence from the Pacific region, this article shows why legislative capacity-building programs may not lead to improved parliamentary performance.

Methodology

This research, which investigated the overall efficacy of legislative training programs provided in five Pacific parliaments (RMI, PNG, Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Vanuatu parliaments), was undertaken using a multicase design approach following Yin (2009). Generally, the approach seeks to use sampled cases as a series of experiments in such a way that each case confirms or disconfirms conclusions drawn from the rest of the cases.

Semistructured interviews provide the principal source of data. Reproducibility, which entails validity and reliability of data, was achieved because standard questions were asked to 63 MPs, three parliamentary clerks (see Table 1), and seven training providers (Brugha, Bebbington, and Jenkins 1999; Dearnley 2005). Interview questions (see Appendix A) focused on

Table 1. Parliaments Investigated

Country Name	Number of MPs Interviewed	Number of Clerks Interviewed	Type of Regime	Type of Parliament	Main Ethnic Group
Marshall Islands	13	1	Modified parliamentary system	Bicameral	Micronesia
Papua New Guinea	11	0	Parliamentary system	Unicameral	Melanesia
Timor-Leste	13	0	Semipresidential system	Unicameral	Austronesia
Tonga	11	1	Hereditary constitutional monarch	Unicameral	Polynesia
Vanuatu	15	1	Modified parliamentary system	Unicameral	Melanesia

MP, Member of Parliament.

perceptions of MPs regarding training programs, their effectiveness, and reasons to support these perceptions (Freeman 1983). Eventually, the data from semistructured interviews were triangulated with other important materials—such as parliamentary corporate plans and the relevant literature—to enhance the generalizability of conclusions drawn from the separate cases (see Eisenhardt 1989; Voss, Tsikriktsis, and Frohlich 2002).

As Table 1 shows, there are several reasons why the five sampled Pacific Islands states provide the perfect setting for examining whether legislative capacity-building programs can improve parliamentary performance and hence further our understanding of what it takes to make legislatures work better. The first reason is that, in spite of their geographic proximity, the Pacific Island states are fairly diverse in various important respects. First, the Pacific Islands states included in our sample differ in terms of size of population. There are about 68,480 inhabitants in RMI, 106,146 in Tonga, 256,155 in Vanuatu, 1.2 million in Timor-Leste, and over 7 million people in PNG (Banks *et al*. 2010). Second, they differ greatly in terms of ethnic diversity. For instance, while the population in Melanesian countries of PNG and Vanuatu are highly fragmented with the former reputed to have more than 1,000 different living languages and the latter with 108, the population of Tonga is highly homogeneous with 98 percent Polynesians. The population in Timor-Leste is also reasonably homogeneous. In spite of having 16 distinct languages, and excepting a small Chinese minority, the Timor-Leste population belongs to two main ethnic groups: the Austronesians and the Papuans.

The countries in our sample also differ with regard to the form of government they employ. Timor-Leste follows the semipresidential system that has a popularly elected and nonpartisan president who plays a ceremonial role as the head of state, while the head of majority parliamentary party/coalition becomes a prime minister (PM) and the head of the government. By contrast, the constitution of Vanuatu provides for a variant of a parliamentary system in which a largely ceremonial president is elected by the Electoral College—formed by the parliament and the presidents of provincial governments—with the executive power vested in a PM elected by parliament. Similarly, the 1979 constitution of the RMI provides for a variant of the parliamentary system of responsible government in which a president elected by popularly elected MPs serves both as head of the government and head of state. Also similar to parliamentary (Westminster) systems, the Crown—represented by the governor-general—heads the state of PNG, while the PM—elected by parliamentary majority—heads the government. Finally, Tonga practices a constitutional monarchy where a king with significant legislative powers heads the state while the parliament elects the PM to head the government.

It should be noted that clause 50 of the 2010 amended Constitution of Tonga gives the king the power to appoint a privy council whose duty is to advise him and act as the court of appeal on matters pertaining to the determination

of hereditary estates and titles. In all these matters, the king's judgment is considered (by the Constitution) to be final. Similarly, the constitutions of RMI and Vanuatu establish the Councils of Chiefs, which perform a role of advising the parliament on matters pertaining to customs and traditions.

Some differences can also be detected with regard to the legislatures operating in the region. Here are at least two basic differences of note. One concerns the length of term in office for the parliament/legislature. There is a term of three years in Tonga, four in Vanuatu, and five years in Timor-Leste and PNG. The other concerns the size of the legislature. There are only 26 members (MPs) in the parliament of Tonga, 33 in the RMI, 52 in Vanuatu, 65 in Timor, and 109 members in PNG (Pelizzo 2010).

Moreover, while the parliament of Tonga is the smallest and the parliament in PNG is the largest in our sample, the number of citizens per seat tells a slightly different story. There is a seat for every 2,075 inhabitants in the RMI, every 4,082 inhabitants in Tonga, every 4,926 people in Vanuatu, every 17,594 in Timor, and every 65,000 people in PNG. The high level of representation in the sampled states can partly be explained by the fact that these countries are spatially populated, making it difficult for more people to be represented by a single MP.

While the ratio between seats and citizens varies greatly across countries and, as a result, the cost of a seat varies greatly, even greater variation is seen regarding how MPs are elected in the region. While all members are popularly elected in both PNG and Vanuatu, the selection of MPs in Tonga is remarkably less sensitive to the outcomes of the electoral process and is notably more affected by the influence of traditional organizations of power. Specifically, two MPs are appointed *ex officio*, nine are indirectly elected/selected from among the 33 noblemen, and 17 are directly/popularly elected.

The final reason why legislatures in these countries were selected for conducting the present study is that all have been exposed to a reasonable number of legislative-strengthening programs. Indeed, there is evidence that a substantial investment in legislative strengthening has been conducted in the sampled countries, particularly by the CDI and UNDP for over a decade (CDI 2011; UNDP 2011). Specifically, while UNDP has been heavily involved in all five sampled parliaments, CDI provides legislative capacity building in PNG, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu. It follows that, given the diversity of our sample and the fact that it has been extensively exposed to capacity building, it should provide the perfect conditions to test the extent to which legislative capacity-building programs work; that is, whether they are able to improve legislative performance.

Legislative Capacity Building and Parliamentary Performance

Over the years, studies (Alabi 2009; Romzek and Utter 1997) have exposed the lingering perception that executive governments hold an unfair capacity

advantage over parliaments, given the ample expertise the former garners from the bureaucracy. This argument is based on the view that executive governments are, among other things, richly endowed with capable technocrats who augment the KSAs of government ministers in a manner that provides executive governments with an advantage in KSAs over parliaments (particularly opposition parties) in the legislative process. It follows from this line of argument that IOs argue for the need of MPs to be exposed to effective training programs, thus boosting their KSAs to better match that found in executive governments. In particular, because Pacific parliaments suffer in this manner from policy-domineering executive governments, the need to train Pacific MPs is crucial. Training in such cases is intended to facilitate the process of equipping MPs with KSAs that can enable them to soundly perform their traditional roles comparably to "experts" from the bureaucracy.

Importantly, effective training can potentially improve performance of both the MPs and their parliaments. Indeed, the literature in the human resources development (HRD) field (see e.g., Holland and De Cieri 2006; Kramar *et al*. 2011; Rahaman 2008; Tharenou, Donohue, and Cooper 2007; Wright *et al*. 2005) strongly suggests the existence of a possible link between improved performance of MPs and parliamentary performance. Specifically, the human capital theory (HCT) in the HRD field contends that organizations such as parliaments can create, maintain, and retain human capital (HC) by exposing their workforce to relevant training programs, thereby improving the performance of the workforce and that of the organizations in which they work (Holland and De Cieri 2006; Kramar *et al*. 2011). HCT suggests that exposing MPs to effective training programs can: (1) "create" or equip MPs with relevant KSAs; (2) "maintain" KSAs acquired by MPs by constantly updating training programs to reflect the latest and most relevant KSAs; and (3) help to "retain" or improve reelection chances of MPs following improved performance of MPs, as a result of the possession of KSAs that enable them to more effectively and efficiently perform their roles.

One should note the subtle difference between the terms human resource and HC. According Orton, Marcella, and Baxter (2000), while all members of the workforce can collectively be referred to as human resources, only the workforce with quality KSAs qualify as HC. This is further emphasized by Kramar and others (2011), who define HC as the list of KSAs and other relevant human characteristics that an individual should have to effectively perform a particular job. Hossain (2004) expands this definition by arguing that HC is constituted by KSAs embodied in individuals (including MPs) that can enhance the performance of a particular organization. He further points out that HC is formed by exposing individuals to relevant training programs. It is not surprising, therefore, that in building the training model for Bangladesh's parliament, Hossain (2004) argues that even MPs can be transformed into HC if they are equipped with KSAs that are relevant to the roles they ought to perform.

Findings

The main purpose of this article is to evaluate the relationship between legislative capacity-building exercises (in this case training) and the performance of Pacific Island MPs and their respective parliaments. The next five subsections stress the major point of this article: to a large extent, legislative capacity-building efforts in Pacific parliaments have hitherto *not* been successful as far as participating political actors in sampled parliaments are concerned. The case-by-case analyses of sampled Pacific parliaments below demonstrate this reality.

Training in the RMI Parliament

The majority of RMI MPs (nine out of eleven) describe training programs provided to them as failing to positively and significantly affect their performance and that of their parliament. This is contrary to what theories of adult education and training (Knowles 1973; Merriam 2001) and HRD (Tharenou 2006; Yamnill and McLean 2001) suggest. The results were mainly attributed to what MPs described as poorly designed and delivered training programs, which are often too short to be effective, too general to be relevant or reflect actual roles, too pedagogical to be interesting, and too *ad hoc* to consider the differing academic and parliamentary experiences of participating MPs.

According to these MPs, programs leave a lot to be desired principally because they do not result from a comprehensive undertaking of a training needs assessment (TNA). The majority of concerns of these MPs, like those explained earlier, could have been addressed had a comprehensive TNA been conducted prior to designing and delivering programs. This is because a comprehensive TNA can identify the main areas that a particular program should focus on (Hossain 2004). The ability of external trainers to design and deliver training in the parliament is also questionable. This is because trainers with basic experience in what they do are expected to at least appreciate the fact that adults are almost always uncomfortable with didactic types of training delivery techniques (Hossain 2004). That the technique is still widely used, at least according to Marshallese MPs, raises a question concerning whether parliamentary trainers in this country possess standard qualifications and experiences necessary for them to train Pacific MPs.

The failure of training to significantly and positively affect the efficacy of the RMI parliament is also affected by factors other than the KSAs of MPs. For example, Marshallese MPs have strongly blamed a lack of discipline among parliamentarians as one of the main reasons for the ineffectiveness of their parliament. According to them, parliamentary sessions are, more often than not, dominated by unnecessary infighting that leads to poor quality of debate. This is coupled with poor attendance at parliamentary sessions, which usually involves MPs attending only a small part of a parliamentary session, often resulting in the lack of a quorum. In consequence, the RMI parliament has had minimal policy output, and this has created a negative image of the institution

in the eyes of the Marshall Islanders (Jacklick and Ueno 2010). Note that the lack of an official political party system may have contributed to the lack of discipline among Marshallese MPs because in the absence of parties, there is no authority parliamentarians feel they are accountable to between elections.

Another challenge hampering the effectiveness of the RMI parliament is the lack of significant technical support that MPs receive from parliamentary staff. This is caused by inadequacy in both the quantity and the quality of such staff (Morgan and Hegarty 2003). The earlier problem, coupled with the fact that there is high turnover rate of MPs at every election, has meant that there are little if any institutional memory and mentoring opportunities in the parliament. RMI MPs therefore almost entirely depend upon on-the-job experience and training for acquisition of the KSAs. As training is also inadequate, the lack of quality parliamentary staff in the RMI has had a negative impact on the effectiveness of the parliament. The urgent need for improving the quality and quantity of Marshallese parliamentary staff is essential to improving the performance of the parliament.

Training in the Republic of PNG Parliament

PNG MPs overwhelmingly (ten out of eleven) judge training programs to have failed significantly, and this affects their performance and that of their parliament. Parliamentarians in PNG described their perceptions as resulting from the fact that the programs they receive are poorly designed and delivered. Specifically, they point out that training sessions are too short to be effective and too general to be relevant to the cultural and constitutional context of PNG. They also describe the timing of training sessions as poor because they prevent MPs living in remote islands from attending sessions at short notice. Moreover, while some MPs describe the programs they receive as being too basic to improve KSAs, the majority of new MPs perceived these programs as too complicated to understand. Once again, just as in the case in the RMI, the source of all these problems can be traced to the lack of a comprehensive TNA prior to designing and delivering training programs (Hossain 2004).

Furthermore, training tends to only take place immediately after elections, with little occurring thereafter. This has resulted in a situation where a great deal of material is transmitted during training, leading to informational overload. By extension, MPs are faced with the difficult task of trying to process much material in a short time. This, and other problems explained previously, raises once again the issue of the credibility of the trainers. Seasoned trainers should have been able to identify some of the basic issues, such as the poor delivery of training materials. Research in adult education and training (see e.g., Knowles 1973; Merriam 2001) has shown very clearly for over half a century how to train adults such as MPs. There is, therefore, no justifiable excuse on the part of trainers to continue to use didactic techniques for training delivery, as the majority of PNG MPs said was the case.

Lack of discipline among MPs has also played a significant role in preventing them and the parliament from being more effective. This can be seen in various forms. First, MPs have pointed to poor attendance at training sessions and parliamentary sittings. This has limited the ability of the parliament to function effectively. For example, according to the majority of MPs, the parliament of PNG, like the parliament in the RMI, has lacked the required quorum to pass legislation in a number of cases. Second, party indiscipline among MPs has led to a situation in which the parliament is reduced to a platform where MPs scramble for support to form the government. This detracts from parliament's capacity to be a policy-making/policy-influencing body. The situation is evidenced by the fact that no government has survived a vote of no confidence since PNG gained independence in 1975, thereby leaving PNG in a constant state of political instability (Reilly 2006). It is not surprising, then, that the parliament usually sits for fewer days than those stipulated in the constitution, in a veiled, politically motivated attempt by successive governments to avoid the almost inevitable vote of no confidence, according to one senior MP.

The inadequate technical support that MPs receive from parliamentary staff has also played a significant role in hindering MPs (and the parliament) from executing their duties effectively. Once again, inadequacy on the part of parliamentary staff is compounded by the fact that the turnover of MPs at every election is very high in PNG (see Panapa and Fraenkel 2008). This has meant that the parliament continues to lack sufficient institutional memory that is urgently needed for it to function effectively. The situation is evidenced by the fact that the majority of interviewed MPs reported that they had never been mentored by another MP in their entire parliamentary careers.

Another factor affecting the effectiveness of the parliament as reported by MPs is committee dysfunction. Lack of material and human resources have been blamed here, and this has resulted in a situation where very little if any scrutiny of the government occurs. It has also meant that incoherent policies are largely being formulated in the parliament (Feeney 2005).

Finally, analysis of the interviews identified a new parliamentary role that involves securing and managing Constituent Development Funds (CDF). Specifically, MPs overwhelmingly identify CDF acquisition and management as one of the main roles that they ought to perform (Allen and Hasnain 2010). A well-designed training program in the parliament should therefore equip MPs with project management KSAs to assist them to efficiently and effectively distribute these funds.

Training in the Republic of Timor-Leste Parliament

The majority of Timorese MPs (eleven out of 13) consider training programs to have failed to affect positively and significantly the effectiveness of their performance and that of their parliament. This finding is ironic as, unlike

in other case parliaments, MPs in Timor-Leste have, on average, longer parliamentary careers (approximately two terms per parliamentarian) and higher educational qualifications. The average length of terms served by MPs—a little less than eight years—is interesting because the Timor-Leste parliament was only in its second term at the time of the interviews. The data collected from the interviews also show that MPs have been exposed to more training days than MPs in other case parliaments. Since the factors surrounding MPs are favorable to the smooth transfer of KSAs from training (Hirsch and Wagner 1993), it was expected that their perceptions would suggest that training had been effective. However, this was not so, which raises a question as to whether the logic governing theories of HRD is compatible with parliamentary careers.

Some of the reasons reported by Timor-Leste MPs in attempting to explain the failure of training in their parliament are the same as those given in previous case parliaments. Chief among them is the overwhelming feeling that the programs provided are poorly designed and delivered. According to MPs, programs are more often than not too short and infrequent to be effective, too irrelevant to be practical, the content too superficial to capture the constitutional and cultural context of Timor-Leste, and the delivery technique too didactic to transfer meaningful KSAs to MPs. Once again, the lack of a comprehensive TNA that can potentially make these programs more relevant, practical, and therefore more effective has been reported by MPs as the main reason for this failure. The didactic techniques used by external trainers and the continual recycling of failed training programs in case parliaments again raise questions concerning whether training providers themselves receive adequate training prior to taking on the difficult task of training MPs.

In addition, the issue of MPs lacking adequate technical support from parliamentary staff surfaced in Timor-Leste. Yet, unlike other case parliaments, the majority of Timor-Leste MPs went a step further in recommending more training be provided to parliamentary staff rather than MPs. Interestingly, even though the turnover of MPs in Timor-Leste is the lowest among the case parliaments, MPs cite the fact that their careers are not permanent as the main reason why training should be concentrated on parliamentary staff. This, they argue, would ensure that the parliament is always supplied with the institutional memory it lacks currently.

However, unique to challenges facing case parliaments is the issue of the language barrier in the Timor-Leste parliament. Specifically, while the national language is Portuguese, the language used by the majority of MPs is the local pidgin, Tetum. As a result, the majority of training programs, which are given in English with a few in Portuguese, are usually "lost in translation." This was the overwhelming sentiment expressed by MPs. Relatedly, the lack of specialized KSAs to interpret and enforce standing orders, as well as other parliamentary regulations, is exacerbated by the fact that most MPs cannot understand Portuguese, the language used in all official documents in

Timor-Leste. There is therefore a need in Timor-Leste for both training and documentation to be in Tetum so that the maximum impact in relation to enhancing parliamentary effectiveness can be achieved.

Unique structural challenges have also been cited by MPs as the reason training is ineffective. These include the ability of the PM to appoint ministers from outside the parliament at his/her own discretion. This has often increased the gap between the executive and the parliament, as ministers feel more accountable to the PM than to the parliament (Shoesmith 2008). The constitutional power accorded to cabinet, which allows it to issue a decree independent of the parliament (see Shoesmith 2008), also provides a disproportionate power to the executive in relation to the parliament. This, in the end, forces the parliament to almost always adopt a subservient role to the executive. In turn, this has severely curtailed the ability of the parliament to scrutinize the conduct of the executive.

Training in the Kingdom of Tonga Parliament

Results from this research have shown that most Tongan MPs (seven out of eleven) perceive training programs provided to them as too ineffective to enhance their performance and that of their parliament. As in the case of Timor-Leste, this result is somewhat paradoxical because the Tongan parliament comprises highly educated MPs (an average of a bachelor degree per MP),[2] who serve longer terms in parliament (an average of two terms per MP), compared with the other three case parliaments. This implies that many Tongan MPs have both the required parliamentary experience and educational qualifications needed for the smooth transfer of KSAs during training sessions (Hirsch and Wagner 1993). Results from Tonga reported previously tell a different story, however. Tongan MPs provided several reasons that explain this paradox.

As in other case parliaments, Tongan MPs cited the poor manner in which training programs are designed and delivered as one of the main factors that makes them less effective. They particularly pointed to the fact that training sessions were too short and irregular to be effective and content too universal to be relevant to Tonga's cultural and constitutional context. They further indicated that training programs were too general to accommodate MPs with differing academic backgrounds and parliamentary experience, and delivery techniques were too pedagogical to transfer relevant KSAs smoothly. Once again, just like their counterparts elsewhere, Tongan MPs overwhelmingly recommended the use of a comprehensive TNA to adequately address the concerns they raised.

The issue of the inability of parliamentary staff to provide adequate technical support to MPs resurfaced in the Tongan parliament. More

[2] Only slightly less the case than in the Timor-Leste parliament.

concentration on training of parliamentary staff was suggested by MPs as the best way to address the situation. As argued previously in this article, the reason is because parliamentary staff can potentially enhance the performance of MPs and hence that of their parliament when they are equipped with specialized KSAs.

Unique to Tonga is the fact that the failure of training to have a significant and positive impact on the performance of MPs and parliament is directly linked to its constitution. The constitutional arrangement provides the king and the nobility with a major political advantage over the parliament and the rest of the population. This political advantage derives from the guarantee in the constitution that the nobility has a minimum of nine MPs in parliament and that the Speaker is always a noble MP (Fonua 2009). Since the king of Tonga has a direct influence on who among the nobles become MPs and can dismiss them at will (Hills 1991), he indirectly controls the parliamentary agenda. As a result, regardless of the KSAs that noble MPs possess, they are almost always inclined to act in a manner that protects the interests of the king. This can negatively affect the effectiveness of the parliament to adequately scrutinize the government. It follows that, unless constitutional reforms are implemented that can reduce the powers of the king in relation to the appointment of noble MPs and the way they are elected, the effectiveness of the parliament may never be improved by legislative-strengthening programs.

Training in the Republic of Vanuatu Parliament

In a same manner as other case parliaments, Vanuatu MPs overwhelmingly (twelve out of 15) felt that training programs had failed to significantly and positively enhance their performance and that of their parliament. Vanuatu MPs similarly laid the principal blame for this squarely on the poor manner in which programs are designed and delivered. They specifically point to the fact that these programs are too general to be effective, training sessions too irregular to have a significant impact, and delivery techniques too didactic to allow for smooth transfer of KSAs. Once again, the need for a comprehensive TNA to be conducted prior to designing and delivering programs was highlighted by MPs as a possible solution to this problem.

Also, in a similar manner to Timorese MPs, parliamentarians in Vanuatu blamed, in part, language barriers as one reason behind the failure of training. According to them, the constant use of English during training sessions was unwise as Vanuatu is a bilingual country (Anglo-French), meaning that some of the MPs cannot understand English nearly as well as they understand French. In fact, even MPs from English-speaking regions pointed out that they would prefer training to be in the local pidgin, Bislama, because they also had not fully mastered the English language. It is not surprising, then, that the majority of MPs recommended that training materials be translated into Bislama and only trainers who can speak Bislama be allowed to train them. This, they said, was

necessary for future programs to have a greater impact on the effectiveness of parliament.

Moreover, as was the case in its Melanesian counterpart, PNG, the effectiveness of Vanuatu's parliament is also severely affected by political instability. Party indiscipline (constant crossing the floor by MPs) coupled with the chronic Anglo-French divide—a legacy of the colonial era in Vanuatu (Morgan 2001)—has meant that the parliament spends a disproportionally large amount of time in forming and breaking governments. The ability of the parliament to function effectively is consequently paralyzed because the preoccupation with communication and government formation prevents it from performing other roles, namely legislating and representing constituents. The divide has also affected the functioning of parliamentary committees, which theoretically aids the scrutiny function of parliaments. According to most MPs, the committee system in their parliament is nonexistent.

The issue of the lack of technical support from parliamentary staff explained in the other case parliaments also resurfaced in relation to the Vanuatu parliament. This, according to Vanuatu MPs, has prevented them from functioning effectively. It is not surprising, then, that they overwhelmingly recommended that their staff be exposed to more training than they currently receive.

Finally, as was the case with their Melanesian counterparts in PNG, Vanuatu MPs identify the management of CDF as one of their main roles. This means that CDF management is accepted as being a formal role of MPs in this society (Morgan 2004). It follows, therefore, that future training design, particularly in Melanesian parliaments, should seek to reflect this reality by covering project management aspects of KSAs.

Summary of Findings

It is important to stress once again that the evidence gathered in each of the countries included in our sample suggests that legislative-strengthening programs are widely believed by the primary parliamentary stakeholders—MPs and clerks—to have failed to enhance legislatures' effectiveness and performance. This calls for a further discussion on the general reasons as to why this is currently the case.

Analysis of the responses gathered in the course of our fieldwork reveals that there are two reasons why stakeholders believe that legislative-strengthening and capacity-building programs have failed to boost legislative performance. The first is that the programs were not always very good, were inadequately designed and delivered, and were criticized for employing unsuccessful modules and materials from failed programs that should instead have been discarded. In short, the programs were found to be inadequately tailored, as they were not customized to country-specific needs. The findings clearly show that the lack of comprehensive TNA prior to offering training programs was the main reason for this problem.

Indeed, if conducted comprehensively prior to designing and delivering of these programs, TNA would identify all salient features (such as the issue of language barrier in the cases of Timor-Leste and Vanuatu, as well as the urgent need for CDF training in Melanesian parliaments) that ought to be considered for a particular training program to be appealing and effective (Hossain 2004). This is possible because a comprehensive TNA can help to bring out the main areas that a particular legislative capacity program should focus on. The suggestion is that a TNA is ultimately an indispensable tool in formulating legislative capacity-building exercises as it provides training program designers with a roadmap that can enable them to limit their model development to those areas that need the most attention, something that can have a significant bearing on the effectiveness of the training model in question.

TNA is also intended to identify cultural and constitutional frameworks, including decrees and resolutions that provide the legal framework within which MPs and the parliaments in general operate. In this case, a TNA should point out how MPs can perform their roles without overstepping the legal framework governing a particular country. The point is absolutely crucial, particularly in the Pacific region, because "traditional" and "modern" systems of governance have been allowed to coexist in the constitutions of most of Pacific countries. It is therefore expected that individuals designing and delivering legislative capacity building to Pacific parliaments will familiarize themselves with the constitutions of individual Pacific countries, as well as the standing orders, rules, and procedures of their parliaments, including local cultural issues, to ensure that these programs are country specific and therefore likely to be more effective.

The second reason as to why the capacity-building programs failed to boost the effectiveness and performance of sampled Pacific parliaments is explained by the need for greater technical support, proper institutionalization of political parties, and proper democratization of the political system, as is the case particularly in Tonga. This is because some of traditional, premodern institutions prevent the political system from functioning in a substantively democratic fashion. This is crucial as such issues cannot be adequately solved by legislative capacity-building programs.

Findings from this article strongly suggest that the existing legislative capacity-building exercises have not been potent enough to enhance legislative effectiveness in the Pacific region. This conclusion should force IOs to reconsider their strategy. The question that they should address is how one can ensure that legislatures are offered legislative capacity-building exercises that are specific and relevant to their local needs.

Conclusions

The international community has increasingly appreciated the central role parliaments play in improving governance, curbing corruption, and improving

the quality of democracy, as well as enhancing economic growth and development. It follows from this eventuality that several IOs have embarked on promoting legislative capacity-building programs in countries around the world including those in the Pacific region.

However, we note in this article that the legislative capacity-building activities have so far meant different things to various IOs. As a result, regardless of the fact that there is universal agreement surrounding the need to conduct legislative-strengthening programs with a view to improving parliamentary performance, the plurality of legislative capacity-building initiatives has necessitated that genuine efforts by IOs have tackled different legislative weaknesses using different methodologies. This leads to significantly different and, in the case of the Pacific parliaments sampled in this article, disappointing legislative outcomes.

What this important observation suggests is that legislative effectiveness is not necessarily a function of random legislative capacity-building exercises. Indeed, the empirical evidence offered here shows that legislative-strengthening programs in the Pacific region have mostly failed to significantly enhance legislative effectiveness and performance as hoped for by various IOs. This implies that if not well-designed and tailor-made for country-specific needs, capacity-building initiatives do not make much difference as far as enhancing parliamentary performance is concerned. To maximize value for the money spent, IOs need to allocate considerable resources to conducting comprehensive TNAs prior to rolling out legislative capacity-building programs.

We finally recommend that individual governments/parliaments in the Pacific region should demonstrate the political will to invest significantly more in ensuring that their parliaments have greater technical support, that their political parties are more institutionalized, and that proper democratization of political systems is in place to create an environment where effective democratic parliaments can thrive. This is particularly important because, left unattended, such issues can prevent the proper functioning of parliament—particularly those in the Pacific region that are characterized by very brief parliamentary careers due to high turnover of MPs—which averages 50 percent in each election (Connell 2006; Henderson 2003, Morgan 2004; Reilly 2006). Governments and parliaments (including MPs) need to address these issues as they cannot adequately be dealt with by legislative-strengthening programs such as training. Pacific governments and political authorities need to fulfill their responsibility in supplying the political will to create a conducive atmosphere for parliaments to function effectively if parliamentary performance and all that comes with it are to be realized in the region.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

A. Personal Details

1. Name of interviewee, title, and employer organisation:

B. General

2. Rank the following roles of Parliament in your order of importance:
   Representation . . . .
   Legislation . . . .
   Deliberation . . . .
   Scrutiny . . . .
   Budget setting . . . .
   Making and breaking governments . . . .
   Redress of grievances . . . .
3. What in your opinion are the roles and responsibilities of a parliamentarian in today's society?
4. What aspects of the parliamentarian role are new members usually least prepared for at the time of entering parliament?
5. Could mentoring by a more experienced parliamentarian improve the performance of parliamentarians? If so, in what ways?

C. Needs and Skills

6. What are the skills parliamentarians need/require to perform effectively in their role?
7. What skills from parliamentarians' prior experience tend to be relevant to their new role?
8. What skills do you think parliamentarians need to enhance in order to progress in their parliamentary careers?
9. Based on your experience and observations, what skills do you believe are required at different levels of a parliamentary career (for example: committee member, committee chairperson, Speaker/President of Chamber, parliamentary secretary minister/secretary of state, etc.)?
10. How would the skills acquired as a parliamentarian be relevant in future work roles outside of parliament?
11. What are these skills and how do you anticipate each could be relevant?

D. Training Needs Analysis

12. Were training needs assessed prior to developing the content of the training? Please circle as appropriate:
    Yes—please answer questions 13 to 16
    No—please answer question 17
13. If yes to question 12, what processes were used to assess participants' training needs?
14. If yes to question 12, what were these training needs?
15. If yes to question 12, how did the training needs analysis inform the content of the training modules?
16. If yes to question 12, were experienced parliamentarians consulted regarding their needs as new parliamentarians?

17. If no to question 12, how was the content of the training determined?

E. Motivations and Incentives

18. What is your opinion of making training for parliamentarians compulsory?

F. Trainer Networks

19. Have you or your organization (Chamber) liaised, networked, collaborated or otherwise worked with other organizations in the development or provision of training for parliamentarians? If so, please provide details.
20. Have you directly organized and/or provided training for parliamentarians? Please circle as appropriate:
    Yes No
    If yes, please also respond to all *Schedule A* questions below.
    SCHEDULE A
    Note: These questions are to be addressed **only** to those interviewees **who (or whose Chambers) have organized and/or delivered formal training** for parliamentarians.

G. Extent of Training

21. Please estimate the total number of training days (hours) offered by your organization (Chamber) to parliamentarians in the last 12 months.
22. Please estimate the total number of training days (hours) offered by your organization (Chamber) to parliamentarians in the last 5 years.
23. Could you please indicate what training content and types your organisation has offered to parliamentarians?
24. (For Secretaries-General only) Did you collaborate with other training providers? If so, what other training providers did you work with, and what was the extent and content of your collaboration?

H. Evaluation

25. Is the training evaluated?
    Yes—go to questions 26 and 27
    No—go to question 28
26. If yes to question 25, what processes are used to evaluate the training?
27. If yes to question 25, how is this evaluation information used to inform future training?
28. If no to question 25, why isn't the program evaluated?
29. What aspects of the training program(s) worked well and why did they work well?
30. What aspects of the training program(s) could be improved and how could they be improved on?
31. Overall how would you describe the effectiveness of the training program(s) in improving the following:
    - Individual performance of MPs
    - Overall, parliamentary performance
32. Do you have any other comment apart from the questions asked?

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