



Inter-Parliamentary Union Technical Cooperation Programme PROJECT PROFILE: FIJI



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Project details	
Title:	Technical assistance to the Parliament of Fiji in view of the entry into force of the new Constitution
Status:	Closed
Duration:	18 months (1998-1999)
Budget:	US\$ 47,000
Donor partner:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Background

The new Constitution of the Republic of the Fiji Islands was adopted on 25 July 1997 and entered into force on 25 July 1998. It introduced substantive institutional changes intended to enhance the governance framework of the country. This included changes in the composition of the parliament to ensure fairer representation of the people of Fiji in the country's legislative body as well as in the composition of the Cabinet, which should be a multi-party one reflecting fairly the parties represented in the parliament.

One of the main concerns addressed by the new constitution was the need to ensure that in participating in the work of the multi-party cabinet, the political parties, from the majority or in the opposition, are able to maintain their separate identities while not impeding the work of the cabinet; and more specifically for the opposition parties, to understand how they can participate in the cabinet and yet play an effective role as "watchdogs" of the executive.

At the request of the authorities of the Parliament of Fiji, the IPU implemented a project of assistance related to the entry into force of the new Constitution financed through the UNDP Programme on Governance for Sustainable Human Development in the Pacific Islands.

Areas of activity

The IPU provided assistance to the Parliament of Fiji in the following areas:

- Advisory services on working in multi-party parliaments by providing models of such governments from other countries;
- Thorough reform of the Standing Orders of both Houses of Parliament in order to reflect the changes brought about by the new Constitution.

Target beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of IPU assistance are first and foremost the members of the Parliament of Fiji and the parliamentary staff. A more representative parliament and cabinet will be beneficial to all the people of Fiji insofar as their interests will be better defended.



Results

The overall result of the project was expected to be a process that fosters consensus building as a recognized tool for achieving good governance and creating a more favorable environment for conducting of development activities. To this end, the following results were achieved:

- Increased effectiveness of the Fijian Parliament to carry out its functions.
- Better understanding by Fijian political party leaders of mechanisms for involvement of all major political forces in the decision-making process with a view to a more effective management of State affairs.
- Adoption of a revised and modernized version of the Standing Orders.

Experts providing advice to the project included:

- Mr. Paul East, Member of Parliament, New Zealand
- Sir Geoffrey Palmer, former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Professor of Constitutional Law
- Mr. Colin Eglin, Member of Parliament, South Africa
- Mr. David McGee, Clerk of the House of Representatives, New Zealand
- Mr. François Borel, Member of Parliament, Switzerland

Parliaments providing assistance to the project:

- House of Representatives, New Zealand