SECSIP

Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands

2012-2015

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

2014

December 2014

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Executive Summary

The year 2014 saw the implementation of the first ever biometric voter registration and the national elections which by some observer groups were called the best the country has had since its impendence. While there were some problems in the conduct of polling and counting, It is fair to say that SECSIP has contributed to that success story by providing technical assistance in Voter Registration, Election operations, Results Management, Public Outreach and Media and training. If one consults the election observer reports of 2010 one can find that those were areas of concern especially the inflated voter's roll which through the new biometric methodology was cleared of 160.000 "ghost" Voters. Trough thorough training of all categories of field election staff election day operations and counting were considerable better than 2010 however it must be said that a number of returning officers have ignored the procedures and administered polling and counting by procedures they have used in the past. A strategic approach was applied to voter information and education around polling and counting. The strategy around elections was more successful than the one used around Voter Registration; presuming due to the fact that election procedures are much better known among the people as BVR procedures were but also due to the efforts of the SIEC and SECSIP to pre-test materials and provide the largest ever needs based voter education effort in the Solomon islands, the results of which can be seen in the very low number of invalid (mismarked) votes and a very high turnout of almost 90%.

In general it is fair to state that it was a successful year for SIEC and SECSIP but while a feeling of accomplishment prevails one must not turn a blind eye on the shortcomings and obstacles which are still numerous. Election malpractices especially coercion through large scale vote buying and possibly intimidation of nonconformists which deliver whole villages to one candidate without noticeable opposition are huge obstacles to the idea of a secret vote, freedom of expression and democratic participation. The obstacles for women to run for office and even more so to succeed in an election are countless and deeply rooted in the political culture of the country. It even seems difficult for women based on the above mentioned practices of coercion and intimidation to freely express their will at the ballot box.

Electoral-Legal and constitutional reforms are ripe for the Solomon Islands however apart from the welcome PPI bill which found a powerful sponsor in the former PM nothing notable had happened in the past year.

SECSIP and SIEC are fully aware of the challenges ahead and shall use the momentum of a good election and the new government to build strategic partnership for change and tackle the shortcomings.

Results per Output

Output	Result	Challenges	Recommendation	Possible Activities
Output 1: Sustainable voter registration system created to strengthen the inclusiveness and integrity of the electoral cycle	New Voter's roll is more accurate than the prior one (cleared of 160.000 entries) Around 1000 Solomon islanders enabled by training to use the new computerized Biometric system Public and political class i welcomed the innovation and the clean list (SECSIP TRAC survey. Media reports)	no strategy plan for sustainable use of BVR by SIEC and other SIG entities High operational and maintenance costs which have to be met by SIG	financial and technical ability of SIEC and SIG to maintain and operate BVR has to be assessed Government has to provide a strategy to use biometrics for e.g. civil registration and/or ID cards Ownership of data and data protection have to be clarified and coded Methodology (continuous or periodical) has to be clarified (legal and operational)	Consultant to analyze and recommend options for sustainable biometric voter registration in the Solomon islands (including required capacities, technology, storage and maintenance requirements, and finances) Report to inform law and decision makers Pilot testing of selected methodology Sustainable solution for SIEC data-center and storage facilities planned
Output 2: More efficient and effective	Training of all categories of SIEC staff in	Dependency on MoHA in all administrative and	A new legal framework brings about legal/institutional	Lessons learned sessions

administrative procedures designed and implemented for the Solomon Islands Election Commission to fulfill its mandate	voter registration and elections (see numbers in the training section of the report) enabled personnel to implement registration, polling and counting efficiently and according to the legal and procedural framework	financial aspects negatively affects the efficiency and professionalization of the SIEC	changes which will positively influence leadership and professionalism in the SI election administration	1. Internal SIEC (with RO's, ARO's and PO's)
				2. Stakeholders (parties candidates voter's, media, women, CSO)
		Recruitment of temporary staff has to become merit based	Stronger regulatory framework for polling and counting compelling RO and PO to follow procedure	3. Review of procedures and training methodology
	Curricula Procedures and Manuals for the entire election cycle produced	Some RO and PO not following procedures (counting, polling)	Procedures need to be constantly reviewed and updated	4. Review of recruitment policies with the aim to get "the best for the job"
	Large number of persons trained		Ministry of Home Affairs role has to be limited through legal and institutional reform	Institutional assessment which provides information to establish a better functioning, independent, well financed, properly staffed and managed election commission
	Database of election workers established (who can be used in the future)			
	Capacity of SIEC middle management to develop and organize training programs enhanced			

	Polling and counting was done generally spoken ok, Observer reports positive.				
Output 3: National authorities and local networks have better capacity to train and educate the population on voter awareness and civic engagement	Election awareness better than VR awareness due to better approach and strategy Positive feedback from electorate in provinces (see report in CVE and media section	Insufficient understanding and knowledge of the mechanisms of democratic governance, SIEC and SIG leadership have no sense of the importance of CVE (total donor reliance)	Strategic partnerships (national and international) and multi-institutional approach required. SIG buy in and commitment required (MOUs, strategic and financial planning with partners)	5. 6. 7. 8.	Research of the impact of 2014 strategy (in the field) to inform a baseline for the coming years Development of a long term multi-institutional CVE plan Advocate financing of the implementation of plan with SIG and donors Grass roots basic democracy and governance information sessions
	Strategic innovative approaches to voter education and media usage in election administration developed and used Capacity development within SIEC's Voter Education and Communications department very positive	Proper penetration of Solomon islands with face to face programs is resource intensive. Entrenched habits like vote buying and coercion extremely difficult to tackle in the prevailing political culture and poor governance			

	Very small number of invalid votes (0.63%)				
	A turnout of 90% of registered voters				
Output 4: Electoral and legal reform supported to contribute to a stronger electoral commission and representative democracy	No work done under this output as agreed with the project board in the beginning of 2014	No political will for electoral reform prior to elections

Reform law as drafted by SECSIP consultant got stuck in (MOHA, etc.) | Election law reform

Voter registration

Election commission (model, mandate, financing, oversight, CEO, speaker, chairman, members, out of constituency voting. Out of country voting, closing time, marking of ballot stubs, Electoral system, Election disputes, Local elections | 9. | Public consultations workshops in the provinces on electoral law and constitutional reform based on the reform draft of 2013 developed by SECSIP, SIEC and ESSP) |
				10.	Support of legal reform advocacy through Media, CSO and the UNDP Parliamentary project
				11.	Provide (if requested) expertise on a new electoral system for the SI
Women political participation	One woman elected	Extremely limited (if any) impact of project activities on the prevailing situation.	Strategic partnerships (national and international) and multi-institutional approach required. SIG buy in and commitment required (MOUs, strategic and financial planning with partners)	1.	Regional Women and elections conference to be held in Honiara
				2.	TSM bill prepared

				3.	Advocacy plan drafted		
				4.	Gender mainstreaming in SIEC implemented		
				5.	TSM lobbying		
Project management	Despite late start project has delivered good results	late recruitment of some advisors	6.	Better coordination between SECSIP and ESSP would improve delivery of results and project-client relationship	9.	Coordinated planning of AWP between ESSP, SECSIP and SIEC	
		building of relationships with SIEC and ESSP consumed some time			10.		
			7.	Review and update of the SIEC strategic plan			
		Limited Ownership of national stakeholders	8.	SIG input and commitment on especially on cross cutting issues like CVE, women, civic education, legal reform required			

Part A – NARRATIVE REPORT

1. Purpose

The project's main focus is to support the electoral cycle in the Solomon Islands between 2012 and 2015, taking into account support to national elections in 2014. A principle focus is to assist in the development of a sustainable, cost effective and inclusive voter registration system to ensure the integrity of the 2014 vote. The project has four key outputs which assist the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission in the timely and effective implementation of its five year operational plan including capacity development initiatives, civic education development and outreach, fostering women's political participation and legal and electoral reform. The project also aims to develop synergies and partnership with a range of national

partners to ensure that the broader enabling environment is also supported in having elections contribute to broader democratic development.

2.   Resources

Financial Resources

Programme Budget. The total donor contribution is USD   8.396.956

Table 1. Total contributions by the funding partners in USD

Donor	Amount	Funding Modality
EU	4.103.178	
Australia	3.793.788	
UNDP	500.000	
TOTAL	**8.396.956**	

Project Human Resources

Project Staff (fixed term)	Designation	Start Date-End Date
Rudolf Elbling	CTA (AUT)	4/9/2013
Marianne Oru	Project Assistant (SI)	1/7/2013
Ben McNair	Civic and Voter Education , Media advisor (AUS)	15/7/2013
John Raymond	Driver/Logistics (SI)	1/11/2013
Sotere Tuaveku	Procurement officer (SI)	1/2/2014
Consultants (temporary)		
Ross Attrill	HR/Training Expert (AUS)	25/10/2013-5/3/2013 (3 trips)
Navanita Bhattacharya	Gender Advisor (IND)	
Muhammad Ali	VR and Elections operations expert (PAK)	17/11/2013-30/06/2014

Funding Mechanism

The project is funded through cost-sharing contributions. The Election Basket Fund (EBF) was activated upon the signing of the project document between the Ministry of Home Affairs and UNDP. The EBF consolidates all donor contributions for supporting the UNDP project. The purpose of the EBF is that pooled funds are available for the implementation of project activities without specific ear-marking by the donors. The EBF is managed by the PMU. Annual work plans will be reviewed and approved by the Project Board.

1.   Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements

Management Arrangements

The project is coordinated by the Chief Technical Adviser (arrived September 2 2013) who is supported by a project management unit (1 project assistant, 1 project driver/logistics assistant)

In the reporting period, 3 Short-term international experts were recruited (see staffing table).

Board meetings 2014

The project board, chaired by the election commission chairman is supposed to be the oversight and decision-making body however it has to be mentioned that due to poor attendance by the SIG partners (PS MoHA and CEO) the body has not performed its key function.

The 3 meetings held were mainly information sharing meetings between the present participants (donors, SECSIP, ESSP, Chairman of the SIEC) in which the SECSIP CTA briefed the participants on progress of the project and the election commission, a responsibility which formally is vested in the Chief Electoral Officer. The continuous absence of the latter was criticized by the donors as a lack of ownership and interest of the Government partner.

It might be worthwhile to consider to move the chairmanship to the Chief Electoral officer who is the person in charge of project implementation on the side of the SIG and in a better position to respond to the donors and SIG partners than the Commission's Chairman who is rather removed from the daily operations in the OSIEC.

In any case it would be advantageous to look into options to increase the sense of ownership and participation in the project's decision making body.

Monitoring and evaluation

SECSIP has drafted an M&E plan in coordination with the UNDP Sub office which is currently reviewed in UNDP Fiji. On the invitation of Australia, a meeting with an M&E expert was held with ESSP, SIEC and SECSIP in December 2013 to develop a strategy which creates common indicators and targets for the projects plus SIEC. A follow up meeting was planned for early 2014.

2.   Results

Output 1: Sustainable voter registration system created to strengthen the inclusiveness and integrity of the electoral cycle

Output.1.1: Preparations for voter registration exercise completed

Target: Preparations for roll out of the Voter Registration Exercise completed

Progress 100%

Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC) has completed voter registration process across the country. SIEC was legally mandated to develop a new list of electors for the 2014 National General Elections. One of the major reasons for the development of new correct voters' list was to avoid multiple registrations. Having very high number of registrants in the voters' list, suspicions were raised by the public as well as the international community on the electoral process of 2010. To address this SIEC conducted voter registration process and rendered the old voter register obsolete to;

1.   Determine the correct size and distribution for the electorate for the planning purposes;

2.   Produce a current, comprehensive and accurate register of eligible voters;

3.   Prevent or minimize as much as possible multiple registrations;

4.   Ensure that voters' name are included on the register for the constituency that they are eligible to vote for.

In order to address the multiple registrations during voter registration of 2014, SIEC decided to use biometric technology. For this purpose 350 biometric kits were procured to register approximately 340,000[1] eligible voters across the country in ten (10) provinces. 951 Voter Registration Centers were established and 278 registration teams were recruited and trained to conduct voter registration exercise to register eligible voters. To be cost effective and overcome the logistical challenges voter registration process was conducted in five (5) phases over a 40 days registration period.

This was a very large scale operation ever conducted in Solomon Islands in its very complex logistical environment. However, the results of this exercise were positive and objective of the Biometric Voter Registration was achieved. Using biometric voter registration methodology, SIEC was able to identify and remove 5,760 (2 %) registrants on the basis of multiple registrations.

Another main objective of the 2014 voter registration operations was to correctly determine the size and distribution of the electorate for electoral planning. As mentioned above, voter's roll of 2010 contained 448,188 registered voters, which were believe to be much higher than actual voting population. Non-availability of correct statistics on actual number eligible voters also posed a challenge for the 2014 voter registration operational planning.

However, for the planning purposes it was estimated that approximately 340,000 eligible voters are in the country. This estimate was calculated based on 2009/10 voter registration as well as 2010 Voter's turnout on Election Day. With the completion of voter registration process it is encouraging that approximately 85% of estimated voters took part in the new voter registration process. Given below are some of the statistics of 2014 Voter Registration, as per the Final List of Electors.

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1 Due to unavailability of correct data on voting population estimated figures varies between different various organizations including methodology for calculating estimates.

Table 1: Registered Voters by Province

Province Code	Province	Registered Voters
01	Central Province	15,547
02	Choiseul	13,824
03	Guadalcanal	42,639
04	Isabel	16,326
05	Honiara City Council	29,734
06	Makira Ulawa	21,192
07	Malaita	87,225
08	Rennell and Bellona	2,765
09	Temotu	12,762
10	Western Province	45,548
	Total Registered Voters:	287,562

Figure 1: Registered Voters by Province
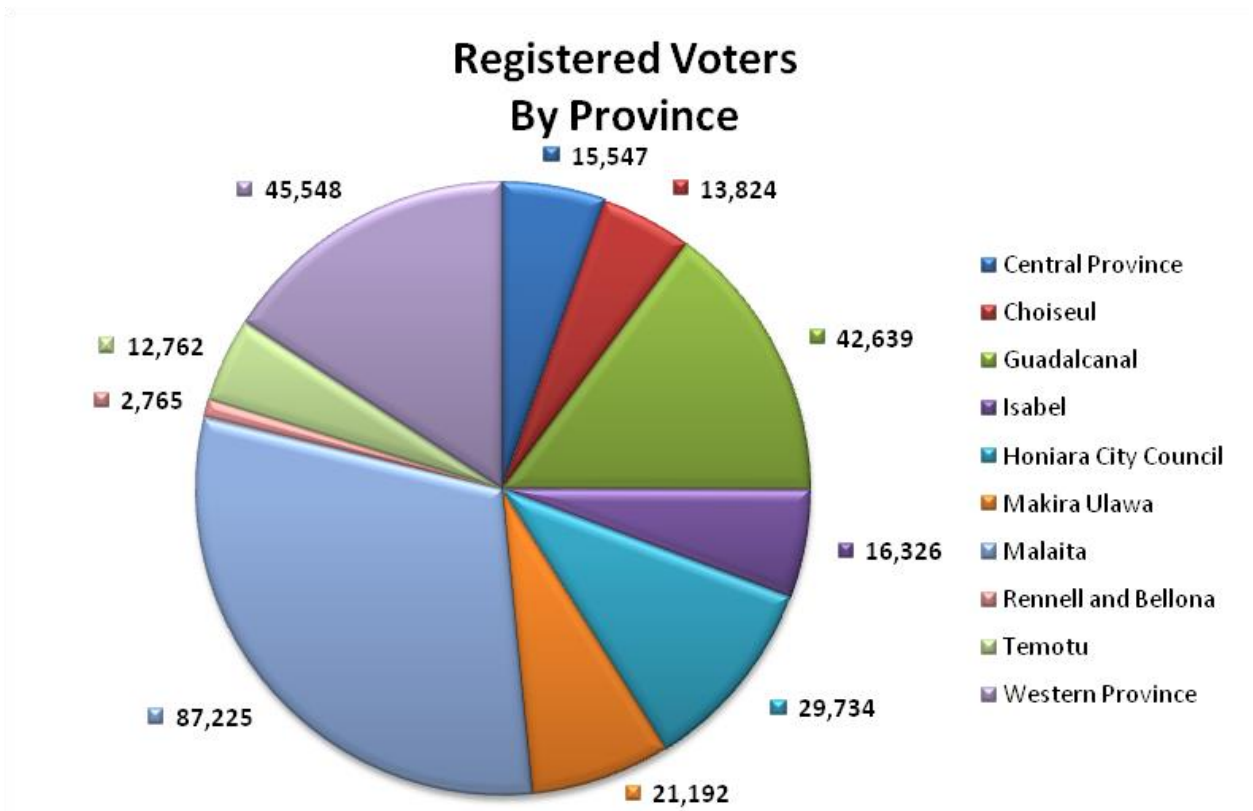
Table 2: Percentage of total registered voters by province

Province Code	Province	Percentage of Voters
01	Central Province	5.4%
02	Choiseul	4.8%
03	Guadalcanal	14.8%
04	Isabel	5.7%
05	Honiara City Council	10.3%
06	Makira Ulawa	7.4%
07	Malaita	30.3%
08	Rennell and Bellona	1.0%
09	Temotu	4.4%
10	Western Province	15.8%

Table 3: Total registered voters by number of registration and percentage.

Province Code	Province	Registered Voters	Percentage of Voters
07	Malaita	87,225	30.3%
10	Western Province	45,548	15.8%
03	Guadalcanal	42,639	14.8%
05	Honiara City Council	29,734	10.3%
06	Makira Ulawa	21,192	7.4%
04	Isabel	16,326	5.7%
01	Central Province	15,547	5.4%
02	Choiseul	13,824	4.8%
09	Temotu	12,762	4.4%
08	Rennell and Bellona	2,765	1.0%
	Total Registered Voters:	287,562	

Table 4: Registered voters by gender and province.

Province Code	Province		Female	Male	Registered Voters
01	Central Province		7,483	8,064	15,547
02	Choiseul		6,728	7,096	13,824
03	Guadalcanal		20,803	21,836	42,639
04	Isabel		7,859	8,467	16,326
05	Honiara City Council		13,595	16,139	29,734
06	Makira Ulawa		10,111	11,081	21,192
07	Malaita		43,229	43,996	87,225
08	Rennell and Bellona		1,356	1,409	2,765
09	Temotu		6,569	6,193	12,762
10	Western Province		21,325	24,223	45,548
		Total Registered Voters:	139,058	148,504	287,562

Figure 2: Registered voters by gender and province.
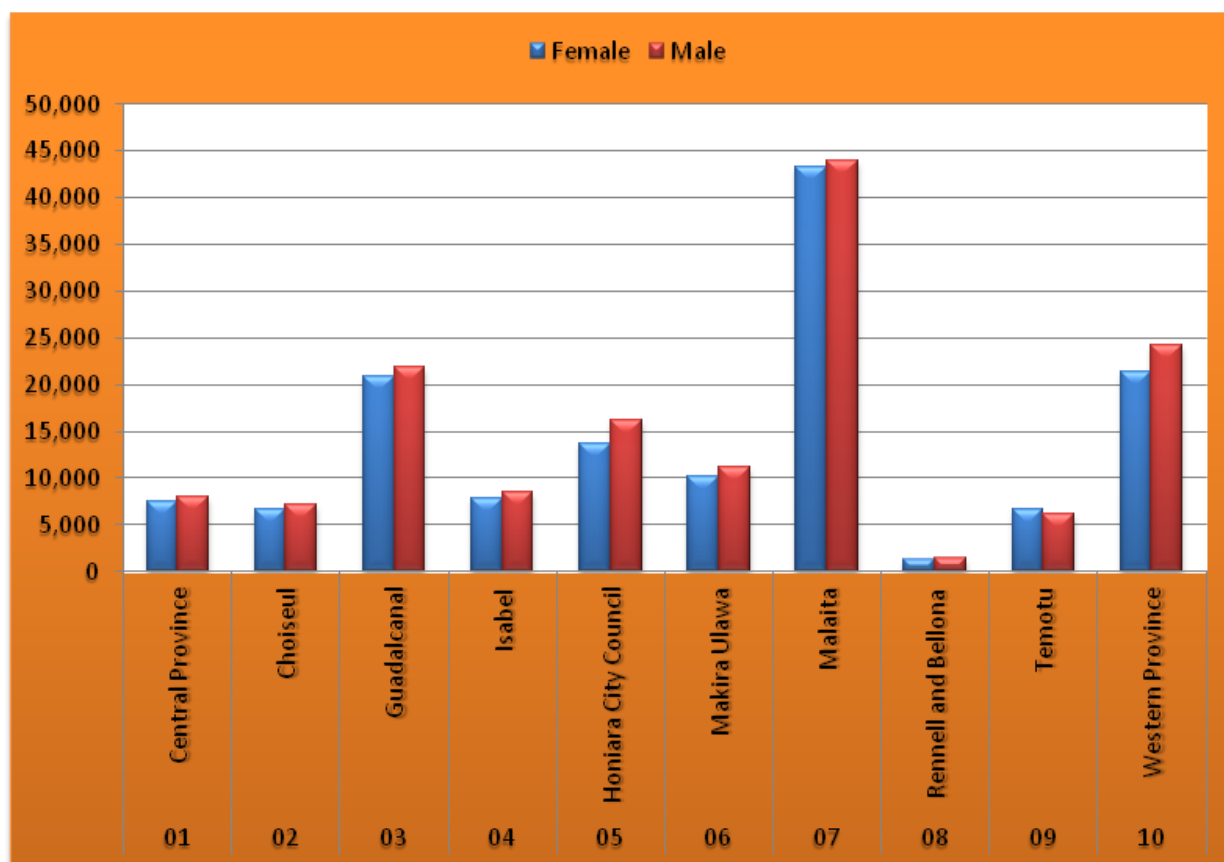
Table 5: Percentage of registered voters by gender in each province respectively

Province Code	Province	Female	Male
01	Central Province	48.1%	51.9%
02	Choiseul	48.7%	51.3%
03	Guadalcanal	48.8%	51.2%
04	Isabel	48.1%	51.9%
05	Honiara City Council	45.7%	54.3%
06	Makira Ulawa	47.7%	52.3%
07	Malaita	49.6%	50.4%
08	Rennell and Bellona	49.0%	51.0%
09	Temotu	51.5%	48.5%
10	Western Province	46.8%	53.2%
	National:	48.4%	51.6%

Figure 3: Percentage of registered voters by gender

Female Male

Series1
Male
148,504
51.6%

Series1
Female
139,058
48.4%
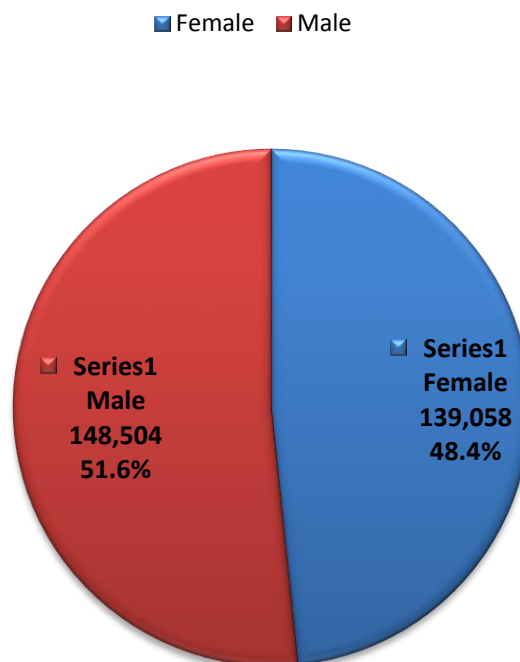
Table 6: Registered Voters by their Age Group.

Age Group	Registered Voters
18-22	46,164
23-27	40,652
28-32	43,259
33-37	34,771
38-42	32,398
43-47	24,630
48-52	19,392
53-57	14,793
58-62	11,052
63-68	9,472
68+	10,979
Grand Total:	**287,562**

Figure 4: Registered voters by their age group.
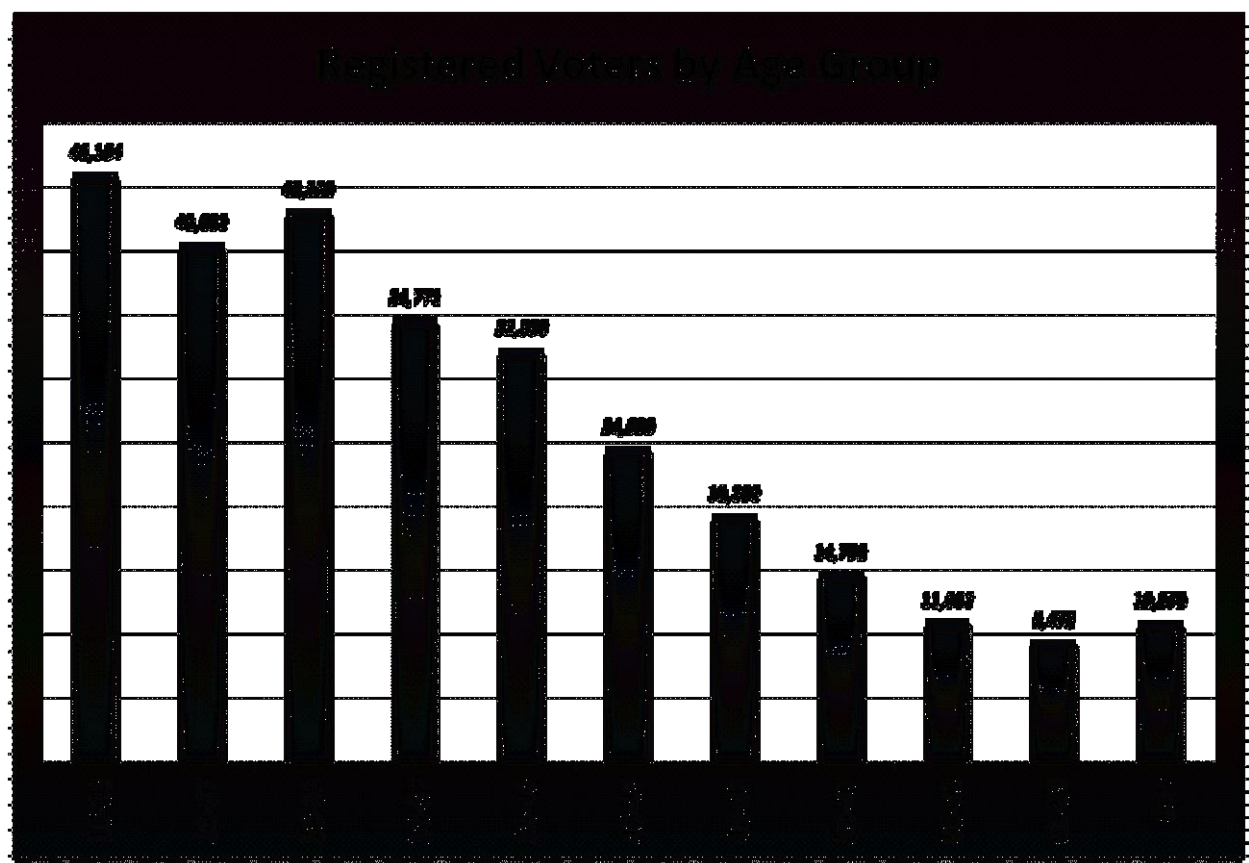
Table 7: Registered Voters by their Age Group and Gender.

Age Group	Female	Male	Total
18-22	22,221	23,943	46,164
23-27	19,653	20,999	40,652
28-32	21,214	22,045	43,259
33-37	16,929	17,842	34,771
38-42	15,929	16,469	32,398
43-47	11,910	12,720	24,630
48-52	9,488	9,904	19,392
53-57	7,013	7,780	14,793
58-62	5,348	5,704	11,052
63-68	4,639	4,833	9,472
68+	4,714	6,265	10,979
Grand Total	139,058	148,504	287,562

Table 8: Percentage of registered voters by their Age Group and Gender.

Age Group	Female	Male
18-22	48.1%	51.9%
23-27	48.3%	51.7%
28-32	49.0%	51.0%
33-37	48.7%	51.3%
38-42	49.2%	50.8%
43-47	48.4%	51.6%
48-52	48.9%	51.1%
53-57	47.4%	52.6%
58-62	48.4%	51.6%
63-68	49.0%	51.0%
68+	42.9%	57.1%

Figure 5: Registered voters by their age group and gender.

Figure 6: Registered voters by their age group and gender.

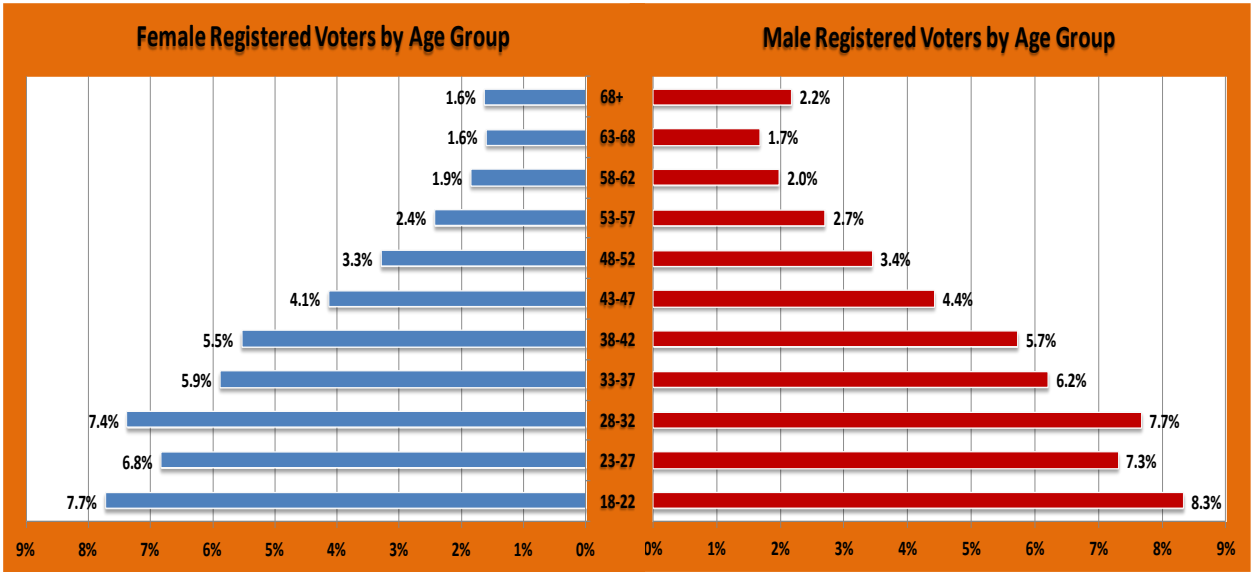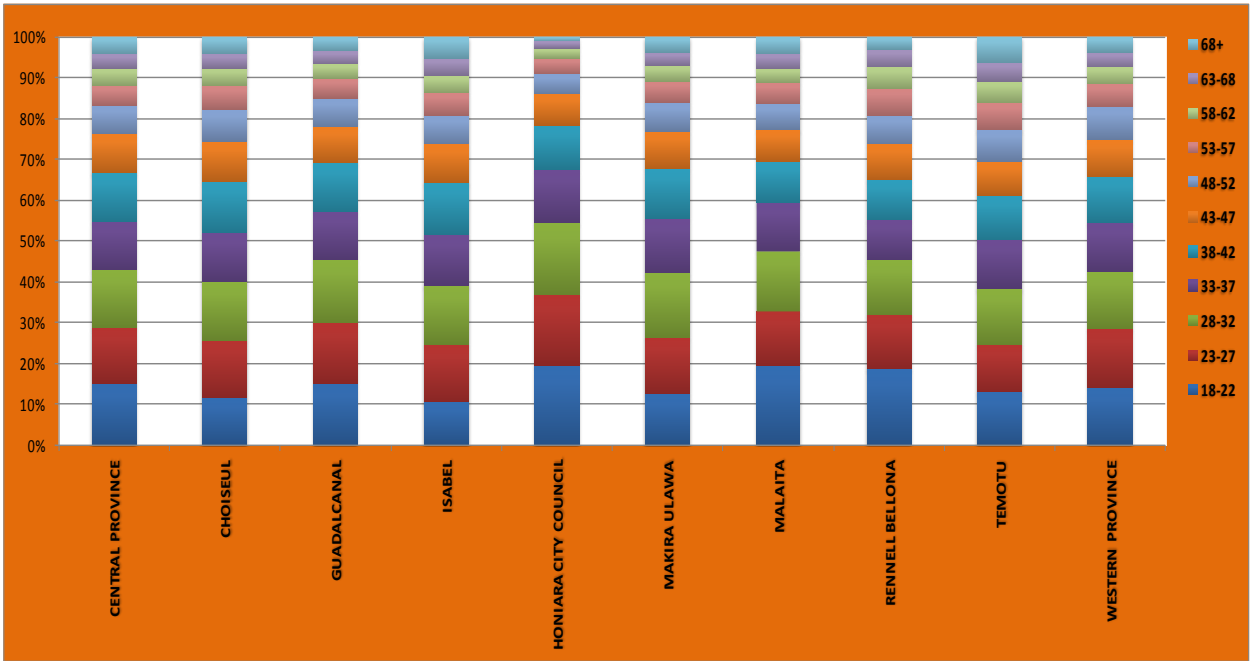|	Female		Male
68+	1.6%		2.2%
63-68	1.6%		1.7%
58-62	1.9%		2.0%
53-57	2.4%		2.7%
48-52	3.3%		3.4%
43-47	4.1%		4.4%
38-42	5.5%		5.7%
33-37	5.9%		6.2%
28-32	7.4%		7.7%
23-27	6.8%		7.3%
18-22	7.7%		8.3%
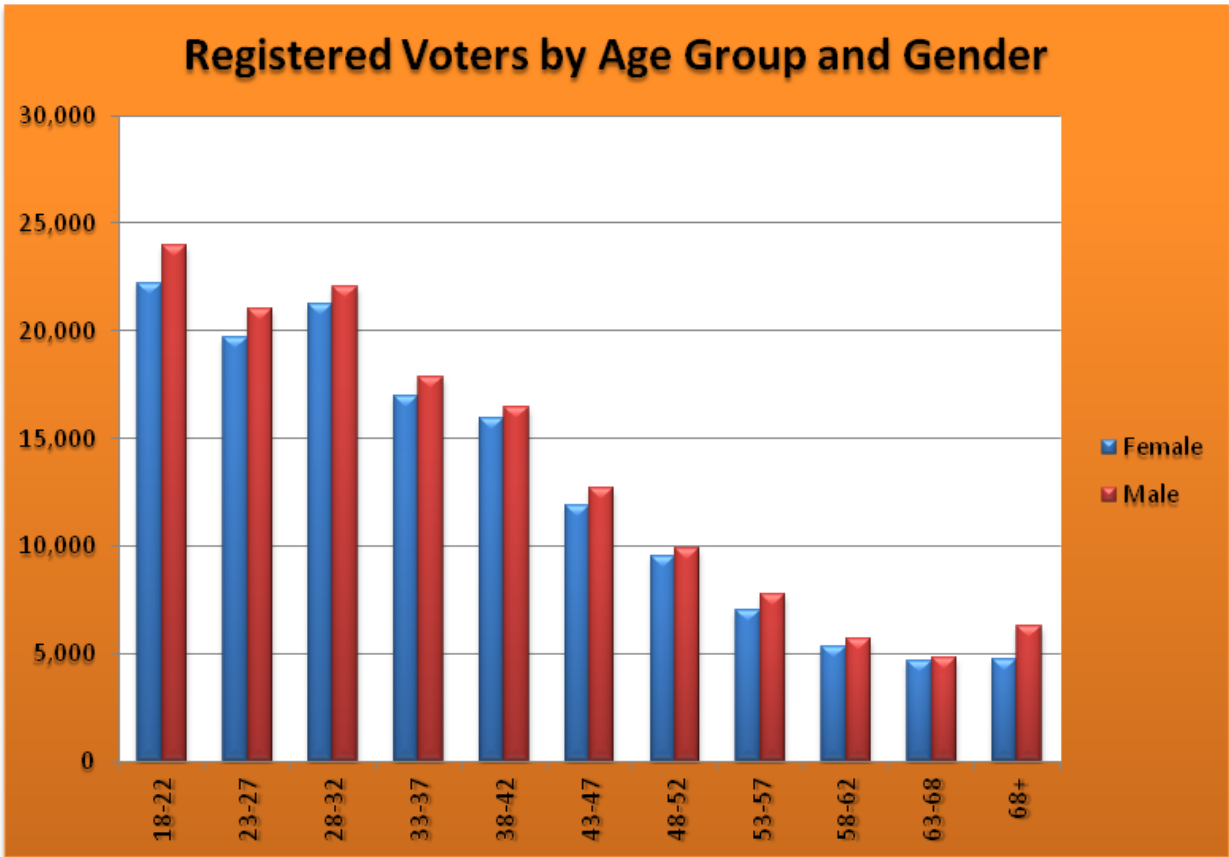
Figure 7: Registered voters by their age group in respective province.

Comparison of voter registration 2010 and 2014

With the completion of Voter Registration of 2014 it is important to compare the number of registrations with 2010 voter's roll. Since 2010 voter's roll believed to have high number of multiple registrations, this comparison can also be helpful in identifying areas where tendency of multiple registrations is higher and would require more attention for future operational planning. Below is a comparison between voter registration of 2010 and 2014 by province.

Table 9: Registered Voters in 2010 and 2014 by province.

Province Code	Province	Registered Voters 2010	Registered Voters 2014
01	CENTRAL PROVINCE	17,760	15,547
02	CHOISEUL	15,788	13,824
03	GUADALCANAL	57,873	42,639
04	ISABEL	16,945	16,326
05	HONIARA CITY COUNCIL	110,572	29,734
06	MAKIRA ULAWA	24,072	21,192
07	MALAITA	131,614	87,225
08	RENNELL BELLONA	3,386	2,765
09	TEMOTU	15,062	12,762
10	WESTERN PROVINCE	55,116	45,548
	National Total:	448,188	287,562

With this comparison above it is evident that registered voters in 2010 voter's roll were much higher in each than the registered voters in 2014 or in actual. But particularly, registration figures in Honiara City Council and Malaita provinces are very high as compared other provinces. Reason for this very high difference is due to the fact that;

1.   During voter registration of 2014, SIEC allowed out of constituency voter registration, for people working and living in Honiara to register in Honiara for their home constituency in other provinces. This facility was not available earlier and therefore possibly eligible voters registered in Honiara instead of traveling to their home constituencies.

2.   Higher number of multiple registrants in these areas in particular.

This comparison does seem consistent with the cases of multiple registrations identified during 2014 voter registration (details are given below in the document). However, this

comparison does not rule out the importance of a detailed comparison or voter registration audit to establish accuracy and outreach of 2014 voter register.

Multiple registrations

One of the major reasons for rendering the 2010 List of Electors obsolete was the very high number multiple registration and no mechanism to identify and remove those multiple registrations. With the use of Biometric Voter Registration, SIEC was able to identify 5,290 cases of multiple registrations based on finger prints analysis and human verification method. It is very small number compared to number of registered and actual voters in 2010 voter register. One obvious reason for this lower number of attempts of multiple registrants was the Biometric Voter Registration System itself. Use of this technology deterred citizens to register multiple times due to the fear of getting caught with photos.

Below is the number of registrants by province who attempted to register multiple times;

Table 10: Identified cases of multiple registrants by province2.

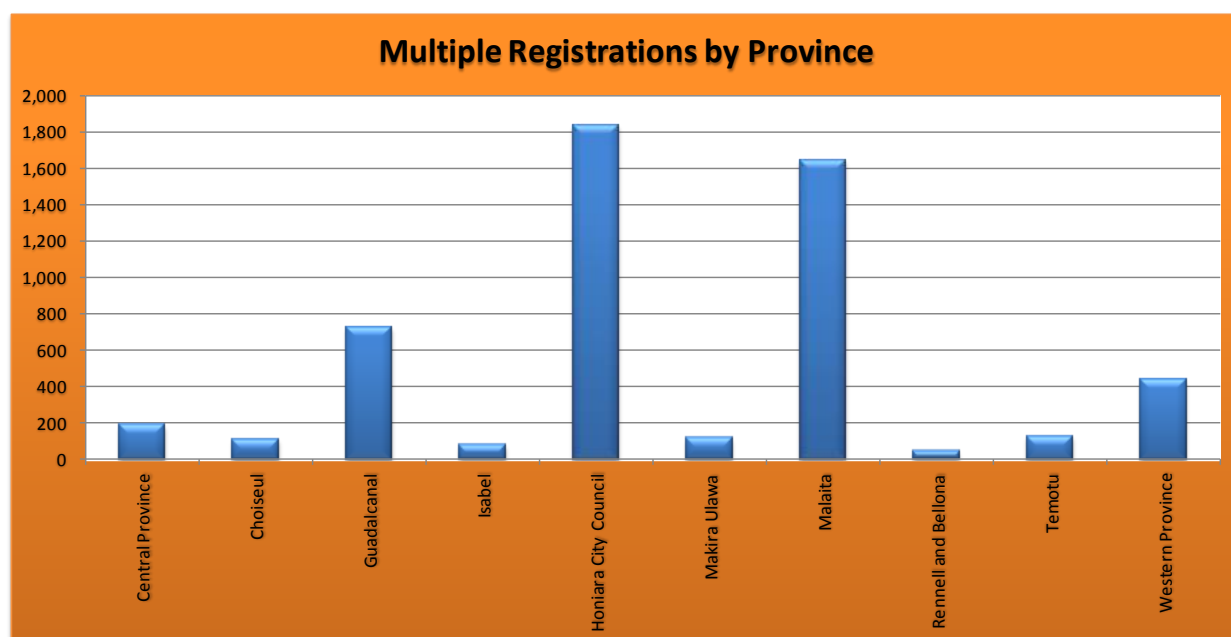| Province Code	Province	Multiple Registrants
01	Central Province	191
02	Choiseul	107
03	Guadalcanal	721
04	Isabel	77
05	Honiara City Council	1,834
06	Makira Ulawa	114
07	Malaita	1,644
08	Rennell and Bellona	42
09	Temotu	127
10	Western Province	433
	National	5,290

Table 10: Percentage of Identified cases of multiple registrants by province.

Province Code	Province	Multiple Registrants

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2 Only first (valid) instance of the registration is shown, other (multiple) instances associated with these registrations which were removed are not shown here.

01	Central Province	3.6%
02	Choiseul	2.0%
03	Guadalcanal	13.6%
04	Isabel	1.5%
05	Honiara City Council	34.7%
06	Makira Ulawa	2.2%
07	Malaita	31.1%
08	Rennell and Bellona	0.8%
09	Temotu	2.4%
10	Western Province	8.2%

Figure 8: Identified cases of multiple registrants by province.

As shown above, in two provinces (Honiara City Council and Malaita) attempts to register more than once were considerably higher than other provinces. Guadalcanal and Western Province also had higher number of cases of multiple registrations. Total number of registrants who attempted to register more than once is less than 2% of the total registered voters during 2014 voter registration. However, to keep the number lower or reduce this number further in the future, SIEC needs to develop a more comprehensive mechanism not only in terms of technical methodology and public awareness but also in terms legislation as well to discourage registrants to attempt multiple registrations.

It is important to mention here that in general cases of multiple registrations during fresh voter registration exercise are much lower than when voter's roll is updated to add eligible voters either through continuous or periodic update method. Unless there is clear methodology is adopted to add eligible voters and to remove deceased voters to existing voter's roll during next voter registration, there is high probability of increase in the number of multiple registrations.

Moreover, during 2014 Voter Registration exercise, there was no mechanism to facilitate registrants in case if they registered at wrong place and later wanted to go and register at the place they actually wanted to register and vote. Therefore, It is highly recommended that the SIEC conducts a close analysis of cases that were identified as multiple registrants to isolate cases from intentional to un-intentional multiple registrations. It is important for future Voter Registration operations to have better public awareness and operational planning.

voter's list preparation and public inspection

In order to ensure accuracy of the voter's list, Solomon Islands electoral framework binds SIEC to publish the provisional voter's roll for public inspection. Primary objective of this process known as "Exhibition Process" is to publish the provisional list and invite eligible citizens to review the list and file Omission and/or Objections, so that every registered Solomon Islander,

who applied for registration, is correctly placed on the List of Electors. It also provided an opportunity for stakeholders to have chance to raise their concerns on the List before it is used for the 2014 General Elections.

This process was conducted in three phases, namely Public Inspection period, Omissions and Objections period and Public Inquiry. Provisional List of Electors was published for public inspection at over 950 voter registration centers across the country. Provisional list was placed at registration centers for seven (7) days for public inspection.

Voters who could not find their names on the list or had objection to any other voter on the list were allowed to file Omissions and/or Objection during Omissions and Objections period. Omissions and Objection period was held immediately after the Publication of provisional list for the period 21 days across the country at four (4) locations in each constituency. Claims and Objections were reviewed during the Public Inquiry process which took place for 28 days across the country after the publication of list of claims and objections by the Registration Officers. Public inquiry process was held at the same four (4) locations in a constituency where claims and objections were lodged.

In total there were 2,018 (0.7%) Claims and 2,725 (0.9%) Objections were lodged by the eligible citizens across the country. These figures by province are given below;

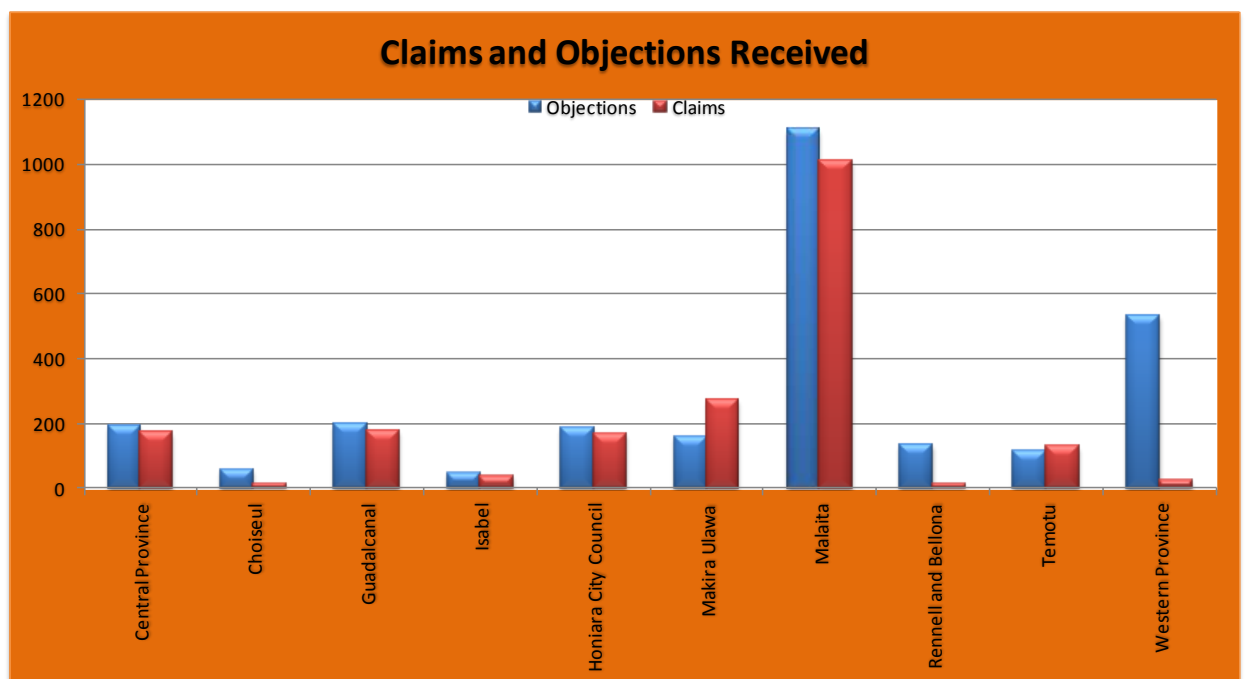Table 11: Number of Claims and Objections lodged in each province.

Province Code	Province	Claims Filed	Objections Filed
01	Central Province	172	193
02	Choiseul	15	59
03	Guadalcanal	177	197
04	Isabel	36	46
05	Honiara City Council	166	185
06	Makira Ulawa	272	156
07	Malaita	1,013	1,107
08	Rennell and Bellona	14	136
09	Temotu	129	113
10	Western Province	24	533
	National Total:	2,018	2,725

Table 12: Percentage of Claims and Objections lodged in each province.

Province Code	Province	Claims Filed	Objections Filed
01	Central Province	8.5%	7.1%

02	Choiseul		0.7%	2.2%
03	Guadalcanal		8.8%	7.2%
04	Isabel		1.8%	1.7%
05	Honiara City Council		8.2%	6.8%
06	Makira Ulawa		13.5%	5.7%
07	Malaita		50.2%	40.6%
08	Rennell and Bellona		0.7%	5.0%
09	Temotu		6.4%	4.1%
10	Western Province		1.2%	19.6%

Figure 9: Number of Objections and Claims received in each province.

Once the Claims and Objections process was complete, all the Claims and Objections were reviewed by the Revising Officers in each constituency during the Public Inquiry process. Upon completion of the Public Inquiry process, out of 2,018 Claims filed only 1,853 were approved, similarly, out of 2,725 Objections filed only 1,741 objections were accepted.

Table 13: Number of Claims approved in each province.

Province Code	Province	Claims Approved
01	Central Province	172

02	Choiseul	6
03	Guadalcanal	119
04	Isabel	35
05	Honiara City Council	131
06	Makira Ulawa	243
07	Malaita	995
08	Rennell and Bellona	13
09	Temotu	118
10	Western Province	21
	National Total:	**1,853**

Table 14: Number of Objections approved in each province.

Province Code	Province	Objections Approved
01	Central Province	114
02	Choiseul	35
03	Guadalcanal	145
04	Isabel	41
05	Honiara City Council	85
06	Makira Ulawa	154
07	Malaita	834
08	Rennell and Bellona	85
09	Temotu	80
10	Western Province	168
	National Total:	**1,741**

As shown above the number of Claims and Objections received by the SIEC was less than 1% of the provisionally registered voters. Among these highest number of Claims (50%) and Objections (41%) were from Malaita province only.

It is quite common that the participation and the interest of the citizens in Public Inspection process is seen much lower in other parts of the world where similar voter registration methodologies are in practice. However, less than 1% of Claims and Objections are very low number comparatively.

This is because of two major reasons which need to be taken into considerations in future voter registration operations. These are as follows;

publication of lists

During the voter registration process in order to facilitate the eligible citizens SIEC established Out of Constituency Voter Registration Centers in Honiara. This decision allowed a large number of eligible voters who work and live in Honiara to register for their constituencies in the constituencies where they resident and intend to vote. However, this facility was not extended during Exhibition of list process. Provisional Lists were published in respective polling stations/areas only where eligible voters in Honiara registered for at Out of Constituency Voter Registration Center. In order for eligible voters to inspect the list it was required that they must travel to their area where they registered for, which was not practical at all, in a country where means of travel not only very expensive but also very limited.

Claims & Objections Mechanism

Secondly, though the provisional lists were published at each registration center, however, Claims and Objections could not be lodged at the same registration center by the public. Eligible citizens were required to wait for the Claims and Objections process to commence and were required to travel to only four (4) locations in the constituency. This was not very public friendly process, because of long travel distances in most cases between villages and Claims and Objections locations.

Additionally, lists were posted at the registration center without any assistance or guidance for the eligible who may have wanted to participate in the process if there was assistance available.

allocation of voters to polling station

Upon completion of the Public Inquiry process and retrieval of decisions made by the revising officers, SIEC HQ Data Center updated the voter's roll accordingly. Once the voter's roll was updated, the returning officers were instructed to identify polling stations by amalgamating villages into one polling station. As per the current legal framework voters in a locality (village) are allocated to a polling station by the respective Returning Officer (RO) in each constituency.

It is important to indicate here that after the identification of registration centers was complete, Registration Officers identified in total 951 Registration Centers. However, once the voter's roll finalized out of 951 Voter Registration Centers only 866 Registration Centers were able to register voters, leaving 85 Registration Centers without any registration. This is very high number (9%) of registration center which were initially estimated to have registered voters and there is need to analyze this. However, this does indicate that the methodology and mechanism to identify and establish registration centers needs to reviewed. In addition, set of regulations and guiding procedures must be developed for RO's for such process. For example, to establish a registration center few criterias can be established and regulations are adopted by the SIEC to assist Registration Officer i.e. Number of minimum eligible voters (estimated), distance minimum/maximum distance from two registration centers, etc.

Secondly, there were 105 (12%) polling stations which were allocated more than 550 voters. This caused some of the polling stations to extend closing time as well as to adopt various

procedures in order to process voters in time, which could have been avoided. Following measures can be implemented in the future to avoid such situations;

1.   If the due to legal constraints only returning officers can allocate voters to establish polling station, then SIEC can assist ROs by regulating this process. SIEC must develop regulations/guidelines for ROs by setting a standard maximum number (can be between 500 - 600) of registered voters for a polling station.

2.   Similarly, the Final List of Electors is sorted and printed in a manner which is easy for polling staff and a voter to find their names more efficiently.

With the completion of voting process with a turnout of 90%, it is very encouraging that the accuracy rate of voter's roll is higher. However, with the 9% registration centers did not register any voter and less than 1% of Claims and Objections received, it is highly recommended that a detailed comprehensive voter's roll audit must be done to ensure high quality of voter's roll.

Output 2:   Output 2: More efficient and effective administrative procedures designed and implemented for the Solomon Islands Election Commission to fulfil its mandate

Output 2.1 Output 2.1: Enhanced capacity of the SIEC to manage an electoral cycle

Target: All SIEC staffers involved in the election cycle trained

Progress: 100%

In 2014 the Solomon Islands embarked on its first Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) process. At the end of the VRC process, the data collected went off shore for a period of about a month in order to identify duplicate registrations and any other discrepancies in the list. This resulted in a provisional list which was exhibited to allow voters to check their details for correctness and to allow for challenges to the list to be made. This then required the recruitment and training of Exhibition and Challenges Officers charged with exhibiting the list and recording errors and challenges.

After the provisional lists were exhibited and errors and challenges recorded, there followed a period of review and revision, during which time, Revising Officers and Assistant Revising

Officers investigated the recorded errors and challenges and facilitated the amending of the voters' list based on the outcome of these investigations.

Once the BVR process was successfully completed, the SIEC then moved into "election mode" and numerous training and briefing events were planned. Training packages and manuals were developed for Election Managers, Returning Officers, Presiding Officers. Polling Assistants and Counting Staff. As well as these important training events, several briefing packages and associated Handbooks and Codes of Conduct were developed for numerous stakeholder groups including Intending Candidates, National and International Observers, members of the Solomon Islands Media and members of the Solomon Island Police Force.

To facilitate the above, UNDP's Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands Project (SECSIP) funded a training and capacity building advisor to mentor and work with the SIEC training coordinator in order to develop curriculum and training materials such as manuals and conduct all training sessions.

Methodology

The methodology used in the development and implementation of the Revising Officer training in the BVR process and National Election training had two elements as it central focus:

1. Developing the capacity of the SIEC to develop and implement all its own training

2. Ensuring that all curriculum and supporting materials were developed in such a way that they were user-friendly, extremely detailed in both approach and content and well documented for use and modification in line with any future electoral reforms.

1. Mentoring and Building Capacity of SIEC Training Team

The SIEC training coordinator, is an extremely talented and committed person who is proficient at organising the logistics of training workshops and who has a natural flare and authority when conducting training. SIEC Training officer made it clear that she felt she lacked a little confidence when it came to developing curriculum and conducting training for older and more senior participants. It was here that I focussed my mentoring and capacity building efforts.

Initially, we worked together to develop the broad framework of the training workshops. I then took the framework and developed it into detailed training notes, using the BRIDGE curriculum as a template. SIEC Training officer would then edit and comment on the drafts

and we would complete the notes together. While I was doing this, SIEC Training officer would draft the manuals for each group to be trained and I would then edit her drafts. As we moved into the development of training notes for the National Election, SIEC Training officer took more of a role in the writing of notes. When we began the process of developing the training notes for Presiding Officers and Polling Assistants, we agreed that it was time for SIEC Training officer to take the key writing role and that I become the editor. The result of this was that a coherent and user-friendly set of training notes were produced, leading me to believe that SIEC Training officer is now capable of managing and producing all elements of future training events.

This approach has definitely enabled SIEC Training officer to take ownership of the approach and the content and has given her a deeper understanding of curriculum development methodology and the subject matter of each workshop.

In conducting each workshop, the methodology used entailed both SIEC Training officer and SECSIP advisor dividing up the training load by giving me more of the face-to-face contact training in the first day and for her to increase her face-to-face contact over each successive day. I have used this approach on numerous occasions and, with the right balance of face-to-face contact and the necessary constructive support, it invariably builds the confidence and skills of the counterpart and leads to him/her taking ownership of the entire program. This was certainly the case with SIEC Training officer. Indeed, SIEC Training officer's progress during the BVR and National Elections trainings and briefings was remarkable.

Apart from SIEC Training officer, every effort was made to include key members of the SIEC team in presentations during each workshop that focussed on their area of responsibility. It was important that each of the workshops was opened by the CEO and the Permanent Secretary in order to highlight the importance and the historic nature of the task at hand. It also gave each of the teams within the SIEC a sense of everyone having the same goal by having them come to speak to the participants in each workshop about the aspects of the BVR and National Election processes they were responsible for. This also served to give the workshops more credibility as each topic area was covered by the "experts". And by inviting the team members of areas such as Public Awareness, Operations and Finance and Budgeting it also helped to raise the profile, and therefore the perceived importance of the role, of training in the success of the BVR and National Election processes. And on a basic logistical level, many voices for short periods helped maintain the engagement and energy of trainees.

2.   Developing Curriculum

In developing the curriculum for each field work cohort, it was decided that the format of all training notes should have a consistency of style and language. All training notes were divided into three columns:

1.   A column naming the activity and giving timings

2.   A column giving step-by-step instructions for each activity

3.   A column describing all the resources used in that particular activity

An example of this is Annex 3 – Presiding Officers' and Polling Assistants' Training Notes.

This curriculum writing methodology was adapted from BRIDGE Facilitators' notes as it is one that SIEC Training officer is very at home with as she successfully completed a BRIDGE Train the Facilitator Workshop in Niue in February 2013.

It was also decided that the curriculum would be as hands on and activity based as possible. This would help to maintain the concentration levels and engagement of the participants. It would also enable them to practice and explore the technical aspects of their respective roles; allowing them to make their mistakes in the training and not in the field.

The participant satisfaction evaluations in all workshops continued to indicate that this methodology had the desired effect.

4.   Developing Support Materials

It was decided that two principal training support materials were needed:

1.   A clear, well-illustrated and user friendly Manual – These were provided in the suite of training and briefing materials forwarded to the Solomon Islands UNDP office in February 2014 and again in Late 2014

2.   Double sided table, step-by-step placemats (one specific to each field work cohort) that could be placed on the tables of field staff and referred to quickly and easily – especially in the first few days of field work (Annex 4)

The SECSIP training officer developed the first draft of all manuals and did an excellent job. A number of key SIEC staff and advisors were then asked to supply comment and based on this a number of very serviceable manuals were developed for all of the training workshops. The level of detail and breadth of information differed in the manual for each work group, with the intention being to provide enough information to allow officers to do their jobs without burdening them with information that wasn't relevant to their work.

Manuals and "step-by-step placemats" were used in each workshop and feedback was sought by the end users as to their clarity and relevance. Based on this, a final draft was developed and has been provided to all temporary SIEC filed staff across the country.

3.   Evaluation

All training and briefing events for Revising Officers in the BVR process and for all elements of the Nation Election have been conducted. Each of these used participant satisfaction evaluation sheets (Annex 1) which measured satisfaction with both content and presentation and which also sought to identify areas of confusion that could then be presented in alternative ways.

The participant satisfaction evaluations completed during the Returning Officer training indicated that ROs both understood and enjoyed the training, but the "proof of the pudding" was in the quality of the training run for Presiding Officers and Polling Assistants and for their Counting Teams and how these cohorts used that training in the Polling Stations and Counting Centers.

It was therefore recommended that an Australian Civilian Corp Officer in each Province attend as many Polling Officer and Counting Officer trainings as possible in order to assess:

1.   The level of success of the training of the ROs as trainers

2.   How well the training notes are used

3.   The use of manuals and other resource materials

4.   The level of engagement of the trainees

The tools used to assess the above included:

1.   Detailed notes taken by each ACC Officer and added to the Weekly Report Template forwarded weekly to the SIEC Headquarters by each EM. (Annex 2)

2.   A participant satisfaction evaluation sheet to be completed by each trainee

All ROs across the country were instructed to ensure that all of their trainees complete the participant satisfaction evaluation sheet and that they return them to the National Training Coordinator as soon as possible after the training.

It was also recommended that all these evaluations will be collated at SIEC national Headquarters and findings presented at an internal "Lessons Learned" exercise at the completion of National Election process.

Initial feedback from observers and members of the SIEC team (including the ACC officers) who attended both Polling and Counting indicated that people in general felt that the temporary elections staff were the best trained that voters could remember. Of course, there

were small numbers of temporary staff who were not trained as well as others and there were those that chose, for their own reasons, to ignore some aspects of their training. But in the main the training appears to have had a profoundly positive impact.

Revising Officer Training

On 5-8 August 2014, a four-day training in Honiara was offered to the 50 Revising Officers (RVOs), one from each constituency across the nation. These officers are senior public servants. Wherever possible, they had not been involved in the previous Registration activities. The reason for this being that they would have to adjudicate on these early processes and this could lead to a potential conflict of interest. As with previous trainees, the BVR process was new to them and there was therefore a great deal that they had to learn. The agenda provided them with opportunities to, explore all aspect of their role including:

3. The setting up and function of the Public Inquiry Centres

4. The recruitment and training of their Assistant Revising Officers (ARVOs)

5. Development of work plans and budgets

6. Exploration and use of the process of Revising the Provisional List based on Omission and Objection forms received

7. Exploration of the materials needed for carrying out their duties as revision Officers

8. Being trained as trainers in preparation for training their ARVOs

Most importantly, the RVOs were introduced to their version of the new draft Biometric Voter Registration Public Inquiry Manual. They were given the opportunity to examine each section in detail and to work in groups to provide feedback on its clarity and relevance to their contexts. This not only made the manual a stronger and more useful document, it also gave the RVOs a sense of ownership for the manual which hopefully encouraged them to insist on its full implementation throughout the Public Inquiry process.

Of the 50, about 40 of the trainees appeared be competent and committed and worked conscientiously during the 4 day training. About 5 of the trainees either didn't attend at all or were missing for large portions of the training.

Overall, the daily evaluations and individual discussions with the RVOs at the conclusion of the training indicated that the hands on nature of the workshop, the introduction of the RVOs to all of the senior members of SIEC staff and the opportunity to have input in the design of the manual and work plan, gave the RVOs a sense of worth and belonging to a national team.

The level of engagement across the four days also indicated that the methodology and content of the program was stimulating and relevant.

Feedback from the trainees was universally positive and they were very thankful for their manuals which they considered to be comprehensive and user friendly. The quality of the training and manuals appears to have translated into effective and efficient work practices during the Public Inquiry period, with there being very few complaints about the process from the general public and the finalisation of the list being completed on time.

If there was an area that was of concern it was that on the last day, without warning, the Chief Electoral Officer asked if he could interrupt the Training of Trainers session to make some corrections to some of the information the RVOs had received in the first three days. He then proceeded to inform them that rather than recruit 2 ARVOs to each Inquiry Centre, they were only to recruit one ARVO for the whole constituency. This created great consternation amongst the trainees as they felt that one ARVO would not be enough for them to carry out their roles effectively. It was particularly worrying to them as:

1.   This would be the first time this process was to be implemented in the Solomon Islands

2.   They were disconcerted by the fact that for three days they had been told one thing and on the fourth were being told something quite different.

SIEC Training officer and I had taken every reasonable step to ensure that the information we put in the manual and in the training notes was up to date and correct in every detail. We had organized several meetings with senior SIEC staff to ensure that we were clear about all of the procedures and processes the RVOs were expected to use. And drafts of the manual and training notes were provided to the CEO to ensure that we could go to print with a manual that reflected the actual duties of the RVOs. The CEO's actions served to:

1.   Confuse the trainees

2.   Take from them the time we had allocated to train them as trainers

3.   Undermine the authority of the SIEC's training manager, and

4.   Potentially undermine the positive attitude we had worked so hard to create in the trainees

It is a measure of the satisfaction the trainees had in the quality of the training and materials provided and in the level of trust they had in us as trainers that more damage wasn't done during this intervention by the CEO. In future I would recommend that the SIEC make procedures absolutely clear to the training team before the training takes place in order to avoid such occurrences in the future.

It was also disappointing to see that only four of the 50 trainee RVOs were women.

National Election Trainings and Briefings

Electoral Manager Training

On 22-24 September 2014, a three day training at The Honiara Hotel was offered to all Election Managers (EMs) and their counterpart Provincial Accountants (20 trainees in total). On the first day, the EMs and Provincial Accountants were brought together in plenary in order to build a sense of team and common purpose and so that it could me made clear to them that they were expected to manage the staff and budget for the National Election in their respective Provinces.

From the second day, the Provincial Accountants were separated and attended financial and budgeting training conducted by the SIEC Finance Office and based on long standing Solomon Islands Government Finance Protocols. From this point, the EMs were given training specific to their roles. These officers are senior public servants and almost all of them have extensive experience in previous Election activities in the Solomon Islands. The agenda provided them with opportunities to be briefed on their planning and financial duties, on their roles as the manager of public awareness programs in their respective provinces, and, for the first time, to participate in Media relations and Gender sensitivity training.

As with the RMs before them, the EMs were introduced to a draft version of the new 2014 Election Manual. They were given the opportunity to examine each section in detail and to work in groups to provide feedback on its clarity and relevance to their contexts. This not only made the manual a stronger and more useful document, it also gave the EMs a sense of ownership for the manual which will hopefully encourage them to insist on its full implementation throughout the National Election process.

In the afternoon of the third day, the Provincial Accounts returned to work with their respective EMs to develop a detailed provincial election budget. All completed their budgets before returning to their provinces. This was of enormous assistance to the SIEC's chief finance officer and provided a very useful guide to the returning officers when they were developing their constituency budgets.

Overall, the daily evaluations and individual discussions with the EMs at the conclusion of the training indicated that the hands on nature of the workshop, the introduction of the EMs to all of the senior members of SIEC staff and the opportunity to have input in the design of the manual and work plans, gave the EMs a sense of worth and belonging to a national team. The

level of engagement across the three days also indicated that the methodology and content of the program was stimulating and relevant.

However, there was some concern among the trainees that appointment processes and the signing of contracts had not occurred prior to the training commencing. This had the potential to undermine the training as trainees were occasionally distracted, not knowing their terms of reference or rates of pay until they were well into their training program.

Again it was disappointing to note that there were <u>no women</u> in the Electoral Manager group and only 3 amongst the 10 Provincial Accountants. However, the UNDP Gender Advisor conducted an excellent session which culminated in the Electoral Managers agreeing to take action to ensure that more women were recruited at Assistant Returning Officer, Presiding Officer and Polling Assistant levels.

Returning Officer Training

A five day training was conducted in Honiara for 50 Returning Officers (one per constituency) 29 September to 3 October. There had been some concern about the quality of the work of a number of the Registration Officers during the BVR process, and it was pleasing to see that there were some 18 different officers in this training from the 50 who were trained in the Registration process. This led to a much more cohesive and hard working group of trainees for the Returning Officer training.

This training was a first for the Solomon Islands as, until this election, Returning Officers had been trained by their respective Electoral Managers at the Provincial capitals. This was problematic for a number of reasons. These include:

1. The Electoral Managers were, in the main, not experienced trainers and the quality of the training delivered varied significantly from Province to Province

2. There were no training notes written to support the Electoral Managers, so there was no national consistency of message in previous trainings.

3. There had never before been any "training of Trainers" for the Returning Officers who are expected to deliver training to hundreds of Polling Centre and Counting Centre Staff. This had led to often poor quality training delivered to those staff (if training was provided at all).

4. Until this training, there had been no opportunity for the Returning Officers to interact with key SIEC figures such as the CEO, HR Manager, Finance Officer etc. Bringing them to Honiara meant that they could be briefed by all these officers and they could ask questions of them as they arose.

5.   The Returning Officers had never before been afforded the opportunity to interact with each other as a "national team". This was particularly useful for new Returning Officers.

It appears that holding the mass training in Honiara has addressed many of the above issues. It remains to be seen, however, whether Presiding Officer training benefited from the strategies employed. This will become apparent in the post-election evaluations

Feedback from the trainees was universally positive. They were particularly happy with the training notes provided for Polling Centre and Counting Centre Staff training and the fact that they were given the opportunity to practice using these notes on day 5.

Again, an area of concern was that, without warning, the Chief Electoral Officer asked if he could interrupt to make some corrections to some of the information the ROs had received in the first two days. He then proceeded to inform them that, rather than recruit 2 AROs to each Constituency, they were only to recruit one ARO for the whole constituency. This again created great consternation amongst the trainees as they felt that one ARO would not be enough for them to carry out their roles effectively. It was particularly worrying to them as:

6.   The CEO had just added the rollout of a national Voter Awareness program to the ARO's list of duties and it now appeared that each RO had fewer AROs even though their workload had been increased substantially.

7.   They were again disconcerted by the fact that for two days they had been told one thing and now were being told something quite different.

There was again, great concern amongst the ROs that the appointment process and the signing of contracts had not occurred prior to the training commencing. This came very close to derailing the training on day two as trainees became angry that they still did not know their terms of reference or rates of pay and they commented that it was extremely unprofessional that this had occurred. However, they were able to make the distinction between the quality of the training they were getting and the lack of certainty in the appointment process and all said it was by far the best Returning Officer training they had ever received.

Again it was disappointing to note that there were only 4 women amongst the 50 Returning Officers. A discussion was held to convey the importance of recruiting more women to the process. The Returning Officers were sympathetic, but were concerned that a lengthy open application process would make their already very challenging jobs (to be carried out in a very short timeframe) all the more difficult.

Assistant Returning Officer Voter Awareness Training

On Friday 24 and Saturday 25 October, a one day Voter Awareness Training for Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) (approximately 80 across the country) was conducted at the Provincial level by SIEC HQ staff (one per Province) to prepare AROs for their Voter Awareness duties in each of their constituencies. For the first time, AROs were assigned the duty of conducting community based, face-to-face Voter Awareness programs where they would provide:

1. A one hour, scripted presentation (Annex 5)

2. A range of Voter Awareness materials including a Voter Awareness DVD, posters on voting process, electoral offenses and motivations for voting, wrist bands and flyers.

At this training AROs were:

1. introduced to the Voter Awareness material

2. asked to develop a Voter Awareness work plan and budget for the two weeks from 27 October to 14 November

3. introduced to the scripted presentation by the SIEC trainer

4. asked then to conduct the scripted presentation

5. given a set of Voter Awareness evaluation sheets (Annex 6) and instructed on how to complete them after every community presentation and to return them to the SIEC Voter Awareness team for analysis

This Training of Trainers was facilitated by the development of training notes for this event (Annex 7). These notes were developed by the Training team in consultation with the Voter Awareness team. A briefing session was then conducted by the SIEC training team for all of those about to go to the field to conduct the ARO Voter Awareness training. Each trainer was then deployed with all of the materials necessary for the ARO to carry out their duties effectively.

The participant evaluations for these training of trainer sessions were universally positive. All participants engaged and were very enthusiastic about moving to the field and beginning their presentations. In fact, their only two complaints were that:

1. They would have like their training session to be run over 2 days

2. They would have liked more materials as they felt there weren't enough to go around. (In response to this, a second print run of several of the materials was produced and dispatched to all Provinces)

It was again disappointing that, across the nation, there was only a handful of female AROs engaged to conduct this important new program.

Presiding Officer and Polling Assistant training

During their 5 day training, ROs were provided with Presiding Officer training notes (Annex 9) and given a day in which to practice using those notes. It was suggested to all ROs that they conduct the 2-Day Presiding Officer Training some time in the time frame 13 -16 November in order to allow their Polling Staff to return to their respective Polling Stations with all of the required materials in time to prepare for the opening of their Polling Stations at 7.00am on November 19 .

Each RO was also provided with a training kit that contained all of the resources necessary to conduct the training of their Polling Station staff, including Presiding Officer and Polling Assistant Manuals.

Across the country, approximately 2800 staff received this training and the accompanying manual.

Counting Centre Staff Training

ROs were provided also with Counting Officer training notes (Annex 11). It was suggested to all ROs that they conduct the 2 hour Counting Officer Training in the morning before Counting Centres Open in order to allow their staff to gain a clear understanding of the counting process they will soon engage in and to set clear expectations of the way in which they are to carry out their counting duties and responsibilities.

Each RO was again provided with a training kit that contained all of the resources necessary to conduct the training of their Counting Centre staff, including the 2014 Election Manual.

Across the country, approximately 300 Counting Centre staff received this training and the accompanying manuals

Briefing for Intending Candidates

On Wednesday, 15 October, a 2 hour briefing was offered by the SIEC to all intending candidates for the 2014 National Election. The briefing was advertised for several days in both national newspapers. It was also advertised on the SIEC radio spot. This was the first time such a briefing was conducted in the Solomon Islands, so the organisers had no real idea how many

would attend. So everyone was delighted to see approximately 250 attendees (including 12 women). The agenda was as follows:

Date: **Wednesday, 15 October 2014**

Time: **10am to 12 noon**

Agenda:

Time	Item
10.00am	Opening Prayer
10.05am	Welcome by Chief Electoral Officer – Polycarp Haununu
10.10am	The Candidates and Agents Handbook - An Introduction
10.30am	The Political Parties Integrity Commission – Parties and Nomination
11.00am	The Nomination Process
11.30am	Counting and Polling Agents
12.00noon	Close

A Candidates and Agents Handbook was developed and provided to all attendees.

On Thursday 16 October, a half day workshop for intending Female Candidates was conducted at the Heritage Park Hotel by the UNDP Gender Advisor and the Manager of the SIEC Training Unit. There were 24 attendees.

At the conclusion of both events, attendees commented positively about the information provided and the form in which was presented. All felt it was a very useful briefing and hoped that it will be offered at all subsequent electoral events in the Solomon Islands.

Briefing for Domestic and International Observers

A number of international organisations have taken up the invitation from the SIEC to international observer groups. All intending observer groups have been notified that the conditions of their accreditation as observers at the 2014 National Election are:

1.   their attendance at an SIEC briefing, and

2.   an undertaking by them to adhere to the SI Election Observers' Code of Conduct.

The Australian national University (ANU) deployed an advanced group of 15 Australian Observers in the week beginning 27 October. On Thursday 30 October, the 15 Australians and 60 Solomon Island nationals who will work on the ANU program were offered a 2 hour briefing which included an overview of the SI Electoral system and an exploration of the SI Observers' Code of Conduct. The attendees were all provided with copies of the SIEC Handbook for Election Observers.

On Friday, November 14 a group of 60 more international observers from a combination of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Pacific Forum, Diplomatic Missions and Donor Organisations attended a similar briefing bringing the number of accredited observers to 125.

Solomon Islands Police Force Briefings

A half day briefing was offered to key figures in the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) to discuss in some detail:

1.   the "special" nature of policing duties during electoral events

2.   Election Offences in the Solomon Islands

3.   The sorts of assistance the SIEC will need from the RSIPF in the lead up to and at the conclusion of the 2014 national election.

In order facilitate this, briefing notes were developed by the SIEC training team (Annex 11) The RSIPF decided, it would be of more use to them if they met regularly with senior officers in the SIEC (which was organised) and so they declined the offer of the briefing. However, they were very interested in the Security Guidelines Handbook (Annex 12) developed by the Training team and they were supplied with 100 copies.

Australian Civilian Corps Briefing

At a SIEC management meeting in September, a concern was raised that the EMs did not have the HR resources to oversee all the Electoral Process in their Provinces or to carry out all of their duties in the lead up to the National Election. A suggestion was made that the Australian Government may be open to funding the deployment of 10 Australian Civilian Corps (ACC) Officers (one per Province). The potential duties of these officers included:

1.   Assisting EMs with weekly reporting and the final election report

2.   Assisting with documenting the Provincial election budget

3.   Assisting EMs with the distribution and collection of election materials

4.   Acting as a contact point for international and domestic observers

5.   Observing and reporting on the Voter Awareness program conducted by ARO

6.   Observing and reporting on the training of Polling Station Staff

7.   Observing and reporting on the training of Counting Centre Staff

8.   Assisting in the Counting Centres

The CEO thought this a good idea and so the Australian Government was asked to provide these officers, which were then deployed in the week beginning 27 October.

In order to assist the ACC officer in carrying out these duties, a half day briefing as organised on the morning of 28 October. This briefing looked in detail at their duties and also made clear that, although these officers were employed by the ACC program, they would still be seen as part of the greater SIEC team and would therefore have a responsibility to report to SIEC headquarters. The notes for this briefing are in Annex 13.

Media Training and Briefings

In the months leading up to the election, the SIEC Media and training teams worked together to develop a series of workshops that enable members of the media in the Solomon Island to work with the SIEC to develop a Code of Conduct that they would adhere too for the duration of the campaign, voting and counting periods. This was completed successfully approximately 6 weeks before Election Day.

It was then decided by the SIEC that for members of the media to gain accreditation to report on electoral events, they must attend a 1 hour briefing conducted at their palace of work by members of the SIEC Media team and to sign the code of conduct. This accreditation briefing was attended by more than 50 members of the media and all were happy to sign the code of conduct.

Recommendations

Although the quality and breadth of training offered was greater than anything offered in the past in the Solomon Islands (approximately 4500 people attended training in the BVR and Election periods), there are still some issues that need to be addressed to ensure that all

future training workshops provide the highest possible training to participants. It is therefore recommend that:

1. **Recruitment and Appointment of temporary Electoral Staff.** In order for temporary staff to get the most from training, they must be appointed well in advance of the training so that they are not distracted by contractual issues during training. It would also be better for the overall credibility of these officers if they were recruited in a much more transparent way and if more women were appointed across all levels of the temporary staff. For this reason, for future electoral events, I recommend that:

    1. the SIEC have it as a matter of public policy that it is an equal opportunity employer and that it attempts to ensure gender balance across all levels of the organisation, from senior management to all temporary staff employed during registration and election events.

    2. all positions, both ongoing and temporary are advertised widely and that managers across the SIEC are encouraged to appoint women wherever possible. This will necessitate that all management cohorts be trained in selection criteria and how to use them transparently and fairly.

    3. terms or reference and contracts are organised well in advance of appointments and training so intending applicants can examine terms, conditions and rates of pay well before being asked to sign contracts and undertake training.

2. **Early Decisions on Policy and Procedure.** There has been a concerning trend during training that senior SIEC management is prone to making last minute, kneejerk changes to policy and procedure which do not reflect the information presented in manuals and training notes. This came very close to derailing both the Revising Officer and Returning Officer training. In future, all parties need to work harder to ensure that the information in the training materials will not change during training. This will require a fundamental change in the "communication culture" of the SIEC. Their needs to be training on effective communication and there needs to be more regular meetings of unit managers and a more coordinated approach to documenting decisions and sharing them with the staff as a whole.

3. **Provision of all relevant materials.** Although all trainees were provided with manuals and several other materials necessary for them to carry out their duties effectively, there were a number of vital materials (promised by several of the SIEC units) that had not arrived before the end of the training. In future, both the Training Unit and the rest of the SIEC must work to ensure that all materials are completed in time and printed in sufficient quantities to be provided during each training event. This will be in large part remedied through the implementation of recommendation 2

4. **Training of RVOs and ROs.** The bringing together of all RVOs and ROs for mass trainings in Honiara had a great deal of benefits mentioned in the description above. For that reason, it is my recommendation that, wherever possible, these two cohorts should also be brought together for their training as it means that:

1. The SIEC Office has more control over the quality of the training offered, and

2. It should result in consistency of implementation of electoral procedures across the Solomon Islands

5. **Evaluation.** A great deal of work has gone into developing evaluation protocols and tools for the training conducted thus far. However, this was not properly collated or analysed after the BVR process. It is therefore my recommendation that a team comprising of the SIEC Training Coordinator, the HR Manager and the Research Officer collate and document the qualitative and quantitative evaluation data captured during the Election Period to aid continuous improvement of the training offered by the SIEC to its temporary staff. It would also be worth considering involving key SIEC staff members in evaluation workshops in order for them to have a better understanding of the importance of evaluation and of the best techniques for collecting and analysing evaluative data.

6. **Consolidation of Lessons Learned.** A great deal of improvement in process and procedures has taken place during the BVR and Election processes. In the time after the election, a number of actions need to occur to ensure that SIEC staff build on their successes and improve in those areas that require it. In order to achieve this, I recommend the following:

1. Every effort be made to retain the key permanent staff who have worked through the registration and election process over the last few months. There are also some excellent staff who have been employed on short term contracts over the past 12 months. Every effort should be made to secure permanent positions for the best of these staff as they have been a wonderful asset to the SIEC and now have the sort of institution memory the SIEC needs to retain.

2. In the best interests the long term capacity of the SIEC, key staff members should be encouraged to participate in appropriate and relevant training, tertiary study and study programs that will aid them in improving their skills and knowledge.

   1. There are numerous public service commission programs offered in the region, particularly in Australia and New Zealand, which could be of great benefit to these staff.

2.   There are also university courses around the region that key staff should be encouraged to apply for.

3.   The Pacific Island Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators' (PIANZEA) network offers a work placement and mentoring program that could be of great benefit to SIEC officers. The strengths of this program are that Pacific Islanders with similar experiences support one another and don't rely solely on the "big players" in the region for support. The other strength of this program is that it is project based. In order to participate, Electoral Administrators from the region must enter a competitive application process where they are asked to develop a project on which their placement will be based and they must demonstrate clearly how that project will benefit their home organisation. All of this works to clarify expectations and puts the onus on the applicant to declare interest and develop a strategic vision for his/her role in the SIEC. It takes away the traditionally "passive" selection process used in work or study tours and bases selection squarely on the motivation and vision of the potential participants.

Output 2.2: Output 2.2: Improved infrastructure for more efficient electoral management

Target: SIEC HQ office renovation, IT equipment for 10 provincial offices

Output 2.3: Coordination, communication and planning ability of the SIEC strengthened

SECSIP Procurements to improve election administration

Output 2.2: Improved infrastructure for more efficient electoral management	Quantity	Donor	Amount in USD $
Ballot boxes	1821	EU	86,206.80
Ballot box lids with SIEC Stickers	2061	EU	
Voting Booths (cardboards)	1800	EU	17,657.00
Indelible inks	1800	DFAT	39,670.00
Polling stationery kits packed in plastic boxes - pens, markers, paper bags, staplers, etc	1200	EU	107,681.01
Polling stationery kits packed in cardboards - pens, markers, paper bags, staplers, etc	300		

	Quantity	Donor	Amount in USD $
Training stationery kits packed in cardboards	200		
Printing of Various Training Manuals and Handbooks:			
Election Managers Manuals	200	EU	2,434.00
Presiding Officers Manuals	2800	EU	16,154.00
Candidate HandBooks	600	EU	
Code of Conduct for Journalists Handbooks	100	EU	1,683.00
Code of Conduct for Observers Handbooks	50	EU	
Computers for the Results Management and Tallying at Datacentre:			
23" HP desktop for Datacentre	1		
HP notebooks/laptops for Datacentre	12	DFAT	23,689.57
Sony 43" LCD Screen for Datacentre	1		
Antiviruses for Datacentre	51		
Printing of Provisional Lists:			
VRCs Form C	45000		
Provinces Form C1	38000		
Notices of Objections Form E1	5000		
Form E1 of Product 4	25000	EU	105,801.11
Multiple Registration - Product 5	20000		
Form C1 for Revising Officers - Product 6	8000		
Form C1 for Revising Officers - Product 7	5000		
SIEC Website development		DFAT	5,404.00
Supply of toners for Provincial Elections Offices	120 Sets	DFAT	22,253.00
Printing of Various Elections Forms		EU	53,194.00
Helicopter Support for transportation of ballot boxes		DFAT	46,760.00
Output 3. National authorities and local networks have better capacity to train and educate the population on voter awarenessa and civic engagement	**Quantity**	**Donor**	**Amount in USD $**

Voter Registration Phase (additional materials procured for the extension period):			
Stickers	3500		
Brochures - BVR Specific	7500		
Brochures - FAQs on BVR Generic	7500	DFAT	5,825.73
Brochures - Publication of the Lists Specifics	7500		
Factsheets	1800		
Duplication of DVDs	2000	DFAT	7,746.00
Weekly radio programs with SIBC		DFAT	11,671.00
Publications with Solomon Star Paper		DFAT	2,305.00
Weekly radio programs with Power FM Radio station		DFAT	3,205.00
SMS text program with Bemobile Ltd		DFAT	25,338.00
Materials for Exhibition Phase:			
Posters - Combine	2000		
Posters - Voters check the list	2000		
Posters - Publication of Lists	2000		
Brochures - Omissions and Objections of the BVR	16000	EU	9,061.00
Brochures - Exhibition of the Provisional Lists	16000		
Brochures - Key Issues on the Provisional Lists of electors	16000		
Stickers - Register finis	2000		
Advert program with Solomon Star Ltd		EU	34,795.00
Weekly radio programs with SIBC		EU	7,612.00
SMS text message program with Solomon Telekom Ltd		DFAT	27,663.00
Graphics Designer		EU	6,859.00
SMS text message program with Bemobile Ltd		EU	50,000.00
Weekly radio programs with Power FM Radio Station		EU	1,349.00

Weekly radio programs with Wantok FM Radio Station		EU	1,456.00
Radio Spots production with Bigmaos Studio		EU	11,687.00
Materials for Nomination/Elections Phase:			
Weekly radio programs with SIBC		EU	7,865.00
Graphics Designer		EU	2,000.00
Film Developer		EU	2,213.00
Weekly radio programs with Paoa FM		EU	2,782.00
Radio spots production with Bigmaos Studio		EU	3,790.00
Printing of awareness t-shirts	200	EU	1,813.00
Printing of stickers	10000	EU	9,959.00
Printing of I am Voting Because posters	2000		
Printing of How to vote posters	1000		
Printing of Penalties Posters	1000	EU	48,352.00
Printing of Ballot Papers Posters	1000		
Printing of Elections Date posters	3000		
Printing of How to vote posters	1000		
Printing of brochures	50000	EU	24,038.00
Printing of wristbands	5000	EU	4,761.90
Duplication of DVDs	1500	EU	7,006.00

SIEC financed Website/Facebook

The SIEC website has been highly successful receiving 21,636 visits in the lead up to the election, 13,014 in the month of November alone. The most popular elements are detailed in the table below.

Page	Hits

List of Candidates	675
Nominations	674
2014 National General Election Results	519
Voting Locations	449
Omissions and Objections	397

Not surprisingly, the most successful section of the website were those that provided information that could not be immediately accessed elsewhere such as the list of candidates and list of voting locations. The use of the results page will be discussed in the post election support report.

The facebook page also proved popular, receiving more than 600 likes and posts regularly recording up to 1000 interactions. However, facebook still carries significant risks for SIEC. During the election period SIEC staff were attacked in various facebook forums after trying to explain various aspects of the electoral process. In the future it may be worthwhile for the SIEC to have a personal account that will allow it to repost material to facebook groups and provide information to threads in facebook groups.

Elections Results Management System

Solomon Island Electoral Commission with technical assistance from UND introduced a more robust Results Management System (RMS) for the General Elections 2014 to improve transparency and quality of the results tabulation process. RMS was used by the Returning Officer (RO) during the consolidation and tabulation of results at the Counting Centers in each province. RMS is comprised of a custom designed results management system software, computer, printer and related hardware to be used at the counting centers. It is important to indicate that RMS was to facilitate RO in preparation of results but was not meant to replace the existing paper based system. The general design of the process and RMS is set out below;
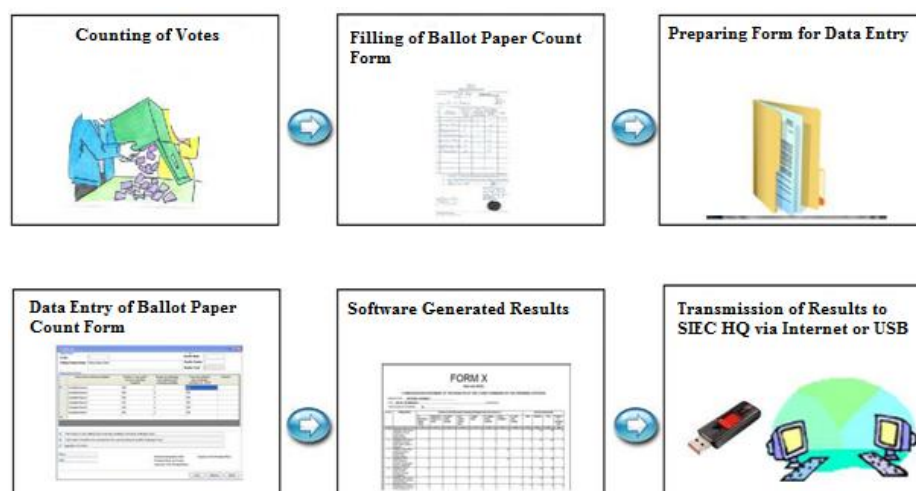
Objectives

Primary objective of the Results Management System was to facilitate the Returning Officer in consolidation and tabulation of results in a transparent, accurate and efficient manner. Following are some of the key objectives of the Results Management System;

1.   To automate the Tabulation of Results process.

2.   To provide transparency, accuracy and efficiency to the electoral process.

3.   To facilitate Returning Officer in consolidation and preparation of elections results with improved accuracy and efficiency.

4.   To enable SIEC to have accurate reports on voter's turnout and polling stations based election results.

5.   Most importantly to provide SIEC with an electronic record of the process for further improvements and reforms in the electoral process.

Improvements for future use

Though RMS was developed and implemented in a very short period of time, however, based on the results and feedback from the Australian Civilian Corps (ACC)/RO's it is evident that it was very useful and did achieve its primary objective. However, given below are few areas which need to be incorporated in future for more effective use;

6.   RMS must be included in election training sessions for EMs and ROs;

7.   EMs/ROs must be instructed to use RMS for the preparation of election results;

8.   In order for the timely transmission of electronic results, minimum internet infrastructure must be installed at all provinces; and

9.   Future improvement of RMS can also include RMS HQ version, which enables the SIEC HQ to automate the process of electronic results collection from provinces. In addition, provides a mechanism to quickly check the results before submission to Governor General.

Output 3: *National authorities and local networks have better capacity to train and educate the population on voter awareness and civic engagement*

Output 3.1: Strategic ability of the SIEC to conduct civic and voter education enhanced

Target: strategy developed, materials developed, produced and delivered, media campaign finalized (radio and SMS messages developed, airtime and SMS bulks messages procured, CVE partners selected and briefed, SIEC educators selected trained and deployed

Progress report on the provision of assistance to the SIEC Communications and Awareness Team during the Publication of the Final Voters List

Summary

The SIEC Communications and Awareness Team's (CAT) activities across this period have focused on publicizing the number of registered voters, highlighting the success of the new Biometric Voter Registration System and publicizing the Election Date. In general, the media coverage of the Final Voters list has been positive and there is broad acceptance of the BVR system.

Activities planned/implemented

Activities across this reporting period focused on two key areas:

1.   Implement the Communications Strategies for the publication of the Final Voters List and declaration of the Election

2.   Finalise design for election materials

1.   Media Coverage of the Final Voters List

Media coverage of the settlement of the Final Voters List has been positive and has reinforced key messages around out of constituency voter registration and the need for registered voters to check their polling station ahead of Election Day.

As we move towards the election, the Communications and Awareness Team (CAT) is receiving more questions from journalists. Many relate to cases where people have registered in an area where they do not live, and involve a level of dissatisfaction about that practice. Increasingly journalists are becoming more aware of the criteria for 'ordinary residence' as outlined by the High Court and are acting as gatekeepers to these kinds of stories, however more work needs to be done to enhance broad public understanding/acceptance of this concept.

2.   Know your Polling Station

It is critical that voters take steps to make sure they know which polling station to attend on Election Day. This is particularly the case in Honiara where large numbers of people will not be able to vote at the same location they used to register during the BVR period. In an effort to even out the number of voters assigned to each polling station, the data centre has moved large numbers of people from the place that they registered to a closer polling station, particularly in the Honiara constituencies. The difficulty is that the only way people can find out which polling station they are registered at is to check the Final Voters List when it is posted in the lead up to Election Day, or to use the 'Check Your Registration' application on the SIEC website.

The 'Check Your Registration' application has been used by in excess of 3500 people. A list of polling station was laid out by the CAT and was published in both major daily newspapers over four days. The SIEC radio program also encouraged registered voters to check their polling station ahead of time. While every effort has been made to communicate this message en masse, SIEC is still relying heavily on AROs to advise affected communities which polling station they have been allocated to.

3. Date Campaign

The second limb of the Communications Strategy for this phase simply aims to make sure that all registered voters know when the election will be held. This campaign comprised SMS messages, stickers radio programs and newspaper advertising.
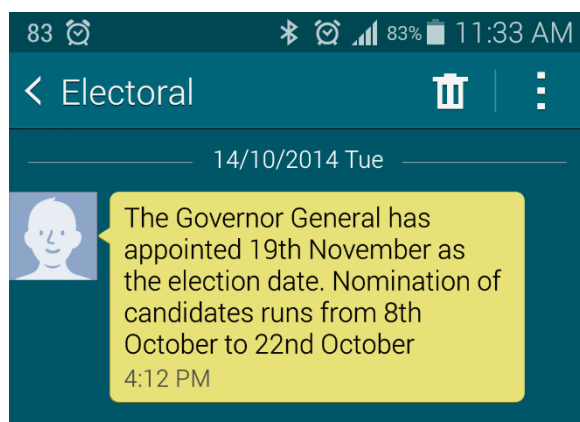
The stickers and print advertisements were designed so as to make people feel calm, confident and inspire a sense of national pride.

To that end, national colours were chosen as the background and a National flag motif features prominently in the design. The sticker also features the central character that has been developed to draw together the narrative across all campaigns in the pre-election period. As noted below, pre-testing results suggest that the designs achieved these aims.

1. Design of Election Materials

Election materials have been designed in line with the objectives and campaigns outlined in the Communications Strategy and in consultation with the contracted graphic designer Millicent Barty. The final designs address the two main pre-election campaigns. The 'How to Vote' poster and the 'Election Penalties' poster are relatively straightforward and explain what to do and what not to do on Election Day. The second campaign 'I am voting because…' encourages the audience to think about their own personal reasons for voting. This campaign was designed to address some of the barriers identified in the 'Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices' survey. Specifically the campaign subtly encourages voters, particularly women and young people, to make up their own minds about who to vote for. This campaign was drawn from more than 50 interviews conducted with ordinary voters across the country and represents a significant step forward for SIEC in its approach to behaviour change communication.

The cross cutting aim across all election materials was to make people feel calm, confident and included. The ultimate goal is that all citizens feel that the election will be peaceful, positive and is a process that they own. To this end colour schemes were selected that were likely to have a calming effect and appeal to a sense of national pride. A character was developed to symbolize the SIEC across all formats. The idea was to have a helpful, welcoming and friendly character that people would identify as the public face of the SIEC. Throughout all materials 'Helpful Sophia' as staff at the Commission dubbed her, appears with a reassuring smile, guiding the eye to important information.

2.   Pre-testing and revision of materials

Pretesting of election materials took place in Honiara and in Munda and Noro in Western Province between September 28 and September 30. Eighty surveys were conducted focusing on audience understanding of, and reaction to, the materials that were developed. Some key findings are highlighted below.

Product	Average level of understanding	Key Comments
How to Vote Poster	2.5	66% say the poster makes them want to vote
Election penalties Poster	1.9	60% Say this poster makes them want to obey the law. 52% because they are afraid of the penalties
		0% Say this poster makes them want to obey the law. 52% because they are afraid of the penal9es
I am Voting Because poster	2.74	86% Said they like this poster, can relate to it or think it is the 'right message"
How to Vote Video	2.74	
Vote Security video	2.34	

The table above shows that, across the board, there were high levels of understanding of the materials that were taken to pre-testing.

Some revisions were made in accordance with these findings, particularly to the 'Election Penalties' poster, which many found difficult to follow. Respondents found the candidates spending limits, personation, voting when not entitled and false answer offences particularly confusing

Posters were trailed in both English and in Solomon Islands Pijin. Interestingly levels of understanding of the Pijin version seemed to have an inverse relationship to the respondent's level of education. Respondents that were high proficient in English found the Pijin version confusing whereas respondents that were not able to read in English were often able to read pijin versions. This finding, which was also present in earlier audience research, may be attributable to growth in the use of mobile phone and texting services. It would certainly merit further research to inform future campaigns. As a result

of these finding materials were distributed in both English and Pijin.

2.3 Tracking Survey

A small tracking survey was conducted concurrently with the pretesting to gauge the penetration of SIEC Communications outputs during the Revision period.

Material	% Reached	Material	% Reached
None	32	Awareness	26
Text	60	Posters	24
Radio Program	12*	Website	2
Radio Spots	6*	Facebook	2
Print Ads	6	SIDT Drama	0

The table above shows that SMS messages are by far the most effective tool in communicating messages about the election. It should however be noted that it is highly likely that the results for the reach of the radio program and radio spots are unusually low due to technical problems SIBC is experiencing in Munda/Noro area.

Candidate Nomination Phases

Summary

The Communications and Awareness Team's (CAT) activities across this period were targeted towards two objectives:

1. Intending candidates are aware of the nomination period and what they need to do to nominate

2. Voters are aware of who has nominated to contest the election in their constituency

Broadly, the SIEC has been successful in achieving these objectives. Media coverage has been positive and accurate and advertising campaigns have been rolled out as planned. However, the team is increasing constrained, particularly in terms of capacity building, by staff being assigned to other tasks outside of the CAT's ambit.

Activities across this reporting period focused on three key areas:

3. Implement the Communications Strategy for the Nomination Period

4. Design and implement a distribution plan for election materials

5. Design and begin implementation the face to face voter awareness program in accordance with revised directives from the Chief Electoral Officer

1.1 Implementation of the Communications Strategy for the Candidate Nomination Period

The media and communications outputs have progressed as planned across this period and staff have shown increasing level's of ownership of the Communications Strategy and its outputs. This phase of the Communications Strategy had three main outputs; a text campaign, press conferences and publication of the final list of candidates as described below.

1.2 Text Campaign

Some thought was given to whether or not a text campaign was appropriate for the Nomination phase. In some ways, the nominations phase is the simplest campaign outlined in the Communications Strategy. However, while the messaging is simple, the the diffence in the target audiences presented a challenge. One set of key messages is limited to intending candidates while the other is important to all registered voters. To this end, we had to consider whether or not a text campaign was appropriate for such a narrow audience. The CAT formed the view that given the importance of intending candidates understanding the nominations process and given the limited communications channels we have to deliver these messages to people in remote parts of the country, a text campaign would be used to reinforce the work of the SIEC radio program. This was a significant step foir SIEC staff, showing a solid understanding of communications planning principles.

1.3 Press Conferences

Press conferences were held to mark the opening and close of nominations and were well attended by local media. Following the close of nominations a joint press conference was held with the Political Parties Integrity Commission. This press conference was highly successful in clarifying the functions of the PPIC for journalists and sent a strong message that the SIEC and the PPIC were working well together. While the Chief Electoral Officer was supportive of this initiative, he was unwilling to participate in the press conference. While this provided an opportunity for the Communications Officer, Philothea Ruheao to further hone her skills, the absence of the CEO in these situations continues to damage the SIEC brand.

1.4 Publication of the Final List of candidates

After close of nominations the CAT collated and laid out the Final List of Candidates for publication in major newspapers. This task was hampered by a number of late changes to the list of candidates. On two occasions the list had been finalised and was ready to be sent to the media, before being recalled for further changes. This was largely due to some confusion on the part of candidates and Returning Officers over the requirements of the Political Parties Integrity Act.

2.1 Distribution Plan

The CAT has experienced considerable delays to the delivery of all printed work which I have detailed in a memorandum to the CTA and copied to UNDP and do not propose to discuss further, suffice to say that in spite of these considerable obstacles the CAT has designed and executed a highly effective distribution plan for all printed materials.

The distribution of voter awareness materials involved using SIEC's existing networks, NGO and Civil Society partners, Churches, Provincial groups and public transport operators to ensure that these materials were available to as many people as possible. A table detailing the quantities that each partner organisation distributed is attached and more detailed data will be available when the CAT has received evaluation reports from the Assistant Returning Officers engaged in the Voter Education Program

1. **Face to face Voter Education**

Following a directive from the Chief Electoral Officer, the CAT's plan for face-to-face voter education was abandoned in favour of delivery by Assistant Returning Officers (AROs). While this is a sensible cost saving measure it has left both the CAT and the Training team with very little time to prepare and implement such a strategy. Training notes were developed for SIEC staff to use in 'Training of Trainers' sessions held for AROs in every Province. While the training has been conducted, the CAT is concerned that delays caused by the late delivery of voter awareness materials and the lack of HQ oversight of the program may mean that fewer voter education visits are conducted than we had anticipated.

Capacity Building

Staff are now able to design and implement a distribution plan that provides significant reach across the whole country. Through this process the SIEC has developed relationships with a range of NGOs and Civil Society Organisations that will form the basis for future collaboration on civic education.

It was particularly pleasing to see staff show a high level of understanding of communications planning principles in addressing the challenges that were presented by this phase of the electoral cycle.

Lessons Learned

The most significant challenge over this period has been delays to delivery of printing work. While significant delays were also experienced in receiving the materials for the Revision period (when printing work was contracted off shore) the delays in delivery of the current contracts have had a much more detrimental effect on the achievement of the CAT's objectives. As noted above, despite efforts to the contrary, printing work was contracted to 'middle men' who were simply sub-contracted this work off shore. The result was that materials were not been delivered in line with specifications, almost all materials were not delivered on agreed timelines and this negatively impacted the Voter Education Program as well as programs planned by our CSO partners. In the future all printing work should be conducted by locally based firms that have the capacity to print locally.

The other challenge encountered over this phase was the revisions to the candidates list. It is possible that the revisions were substantially a function of candidates misunderstanding what was required of them under the Political Parties Integrity Act as the changes mainly related to party symbols. As a result the list of candidates was provided to media organisations bit had to be recalled for further alterations. It may be worthwhile in future to delay the publication until all of the outstanding issues have been clarified. However, by the same token, it appears that the distribution of the lists was an important source in identifying errors. Ideally, this list would be more thoroughly checked before being laid out by the CAT.

Distribution of Awareness materials

Output	Polling Kits	AROs	Y@W	Police	NCW	TSI	SICA	Passenger Boats	Total
How to Vote Poster	1000	2,500	500		500	200	200	100	5,000
Election penalties Poster	1000	2,500	500						4,000
How to Vote Poster (Canvas)	867								867
How to Vote Poster (Canvas)	867								867
I am Voting Because poster		2,500	500		500	500	250	250	5,000
How to Vote Flyer	20,000	20,000	1000	5000	1000	1000	1000		50,000
Election Date Poster	1000								1,000
Date Sticker		5,000	500	500	100	100	100	200	5,000
DVD		1,200	50	50	50	50		50	1,500
Wristbands		2,500	500	500		500			5,000
Total Materials									78,434

2. **Capacity Development**

Radio production and media management remain the focus of capacity building work within the CAT. During the first audience research visit in June, staff received some training in design of audience research surveys. On the second audience research visit staff were entirely responsible for survey design and logistics. Some additional assistance was provided in data entry and analysis. SIEC staff are now able to conduct a complete pre-testing process from start to finish.

3. **Lessons Learned**

The CAT continues to experience difficulties in making members of the Senior Management Team available to the media for interview. While significant work has been done to improve processes for preparing for media interviews and attempts have been made to build the Chief Electoral Officers interview skills, the Chief remains reluctant to participate in interviews and press conferences. While more junior members of staff are becoming increasingly confident media performers, the fact that the Chief appears so infrequently in the media is undermining the credibility of the organisation and constraining the growth of the SIEC's relationship with the media.

Pre-polling phase.

Summary

The SIEC Communications and Awareness Team's (CAT) activities across this period have focussed on the roll out of activities prescribed in the Communications Strategy. Media coverage has been very positive and generally highly accurate, reports suggest that the Voter Education Program is working well and the SIEC website is receiving high traffic volumes.

Activities planned/implemented

Activities across this reporting period focused on:

6.   Implementation of the Communications Strategy for the Election

7.   Implementation of the face to face Voter Education Program

8.   Provision of Media accreditation training for journalists

9.   Establishment and implementation of the Voter Information Kiosk

10.   Management of the SIEC website

1.1 Implementation of the Communications Strategy

The SIEC Communications Strategy for the pre-poll phase has three key objectives

1.   All registered voters know where to go on Election Day, what to do and what not to do at the polling station

2.   All registered voters are aware of the new systems and security features that they will encounter at the polling station and feel comfortable that their vote will be kept secret

3.   Registered voters feel free to vote for whichever candidate they choose.

While the Voter Education Program has addressed all three of these objectives, they have also been a focus for the SIEC Radio Program and press releases.

Weekly press conferences were held throughout the campaign period though, as has been noted in previous reports, more junior members of staff rather than the Chief Electoral Officer conducted these press conferences, which is regrettable.

Media coverage was very positive and the volume of media inquiries declined slightly, substantially because as Election Day drew closer, journalists were more interested in the candidates and political parties than the work of SIEC.

2.1 Implementation of face-to-face voter education

As noted in the previous report, a decision was made very late in the process to abandon the CAT's Voter Education Strategy in favour of a program of Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) conduct Voter Education Visits. A training program for AROs was successfully completed in mid-October. Through a 'Training of Trainers' model implemented by SIEC staff.

The Voter Education Visits took place between October 27 and November 9. While the CAT is still waiting for evaluation forms, the anecdotal feedback is that this project has been a success. Australian Civilian Corps officers have attended the visits in a number of provinces and are confident that these programs are reaching a large number of communities. It is however unclear if any Voter Education Visits have been conducted in Guadalcanal Province. Initially there was a dispute between the Guadalcanal Election Manager and HQ over the transfer of funds to support the project. The CAT was told that this issue had been resolved but it has not been possible to contact the EM and no evaluation forms have been submitted. Efforts to determine whether or not any awareness was conducted in Guadalcanal are ongoing.

3.1 Media accreditation Training

As a part of the Media Code of Conduct review process that was conducted in June and July, Media Organisations, the Media Association of Solomon Islands and the SIEC agreed that all journalists would be required to complete an Accreditation Training session in order to be accredited to access SIEC sites on Election Day.

Fifty-six Journalists were accredited to cover the election, having completed the 2 hour workshop. Of these, only one journalist encountered problems with accessing an SIEC. It appears that this occurred because the Presiding Officer in question believed the journalist to be biased towards a particular candidate. Efforts were made to discuss the matter with the Presiding Officer on Election Day but were unsuccessful. Overall it appears that journalists complied the Code of Conduct and SIEC Officers provided them with access and information as directed during training.

Beyond the management of reporters during the election, the long term benefits of this approach are considerable. By working alongside the media organisation the CAT has taken great strides in repairing the SIEC's relationship with journalists. What once was an adversarial and combative relationship is now more collegiate, discouraging journalists from publishing incorrect, in accurate or poorly researched stories.

4.1 Voter information Centre

A key plank of the SIEC Communications Strategy was the establishment of a Voter Education Centre/ Media Centre. The plan outlined that the Centre would primarily be a space where voters could check their polling station, receive information about what to do on Election Day and ask any questions they may have. After Election Day the space would be used as a media centre. The Information Centre was planned to open immediately after declaration. The difficulty with this plan was that it was not possible to enter into a tenancy agreement until the election date had been officially declared

A space was identified at the Hyundai Mall however, no formal contract was entered into with the Mall's manager for the reasons described above. As a result, the space was let to another tenant and no other space was available. Finding an alternative location proved extremely difficult. After a number of false starts a small space was secured on the ground floor of the Honiara City Council Building. Unfortunately, by the time this space had been secured it was only able to open for the week before the election.

Despite these challenges, more than 500 people visited the 'Voter information Kiosk' in the week leading up to the election. Overwhelmingly, visitors wanted to check their polling station, many had lost or sold their ID card and many were multiple registrants so were reasonably difficult to locate on the list.

While only open for a short time the Voter Information Kiosk played an important role, but in future should be open for a much longer period.

Capacity building

While staff capacity to manage proactive and reactive communications continues to increase, some opportunities for further capacity development have not been possible due to the demands put on members of the CAT. In particular, Communications Assistant Jimmy Isu has been increasingly called upon to run errands for Senior Management and drive other members of staff around town in the absence of the SIEC driver. This has meant that Jimmy simply has not had time available to continue learning how to manage the SIEC website and facebook page. Both of these tools have reached a large number of people and it is unfortunate that to date there has not been sufficient time available to build these skills. I have been updating the website and the facebook page and there is a significant risk that at the competition of the project, SIEC will not have sufficient capacity to continue to maintain these important tools.

Lessons Learned

Clearly there were some significant issues with the establishment of the Voter Information Centre. With the benefit of hindsight, a formal agreement should have been entered into was soon as a suitable location had been identified. That said, the Voter Information Kiosk played a very important role once it was opened and this initiative should be strongly considered as a part of the Communications Strategy for the 2018 National General Election.

The demand for polling station checks, both at the Voter Information Kiosk and on the website was significant and reports suggest that despite the large number of checks that were performed, many voters, particularly in Honiara, had trouble finding their polling station. There are some compelling reasons for the SIEC to reallocate polling stations after settlement of the final list, however, a more comprehensive strategy needs to be put in place before 2018 to make sure that all registered voters know where to go on Election Day. Given that the Returning Officers are primarily responsible for these reallocations, future Returning Officer Manuals should make it clear that the RO has a responsibility to inform affected communities and the CAT of changes to polling stations.

Progress report on the provision of assistance to the SIEC Communications and Awareness Team during the post election phase.

Summary

Work in this period has focused on supporting the SIEC Communications and Awareness Team in providing results and other information to the media. While considerable work was done to establish procedures for the reporting of results, last minute policy changes negatively impacted upon the media's ability to report results and accordingly reduced the impact of the SIEC Communications strategy.

Activities planned/implemented

Activities across this reporting period focused on:

1. Implementation of the Communications Strategy for the results phase
2. Planning for long term voter education strategies
3. Reporting, evaluation and handover

1. Implementation of the Communications Strategy

The SIEC Communications Strategy for the post election phase centred on.

1. The prompt publication of results in line with the procedure agreed with the Governor General's Office
2. The provision of prompt and comprehensive responses to issues that may occur during counting
3. Maximising the positive coverage of the conduct of the election

1.1 Publication of results

Prior to the election, considerable work had been done to negotiate arrangements for the publication of results. During the Code of Conduct consultation process, journalists had expressed their concern that they were likely to come into conflict with the Governor General's Office if they reported results as they were declared by Returning Officers at counting stations. This was a cause of conflict in 2010 and was the source of considerable ill will towards the SIEC whom journalists felt had abandoned them.

Advice was sought from the Attorney General and a memorandum was drafted to be sent to the Governor General, summarising the Attorney General's advice and asking for further input.

In brief, the proposed arrangement was that journalists would report the winner of each seat as soon as they are declared by the Returning Officer in each constituency, the Governor General would then make public the full 'official' results, including the number of votes that each candidate attracted.

Two things remain unclear about the next steps in this process. The Chief Electoral Officer signed the memorandum more than a month before the Election but it appears not to have been sent until just a few days before. There has not been any real discussion as to why the memorandum was not sent. As a result, when the memorandum was finally sent, the Governor General's Personal Secretary that is responsible for legal matters was on leave. It seems highly unlikely that this memorandum was every read by the Governor General and it is clear that the Personal Secretary that dealt with the matter was not inclined to approach the issue from a strictly legal perspective

Early on November 20 the Governor General's Office called the National Broadcaster and the SIEC and said that if reporters in the field continued to report on results before they had formally been announced that the Governor General would cease to announce the results entirely.

This had an immediate chilling effect on the quality of the coverage of the election. The SIBC's coverage, which had been excellent, was immediately paralysed. Reporters, confused and annoyed that the proposed arrangements were not in force, resorted to simply reporting on the number of ballot boxes that had been counted.

These issues were compounded by significant delays within SIEC systems. The Governor General, quite properly, would only announce a result once the SIEC had formally notified him. The Commission would, quite properly, only notify the Governor General once it had received all official paperwork. The issue was that Returning Officers would often announce the result at the counting centre and then wait some hours before faxing through the official paperwork.

Ultimately a deal was reached between SIBC the Media Association of Solomon Islands and the Governor General's Personal Secretary that if the delay between the announcement at the counting centre and the Governor General's official announcement ran longer than two hours, then the result would be reported. This created the difficult, and frankly embarrassing situation whereby every media organisation was reporting results for some seats that the Commission would still not confirm because it had not received the official paperwork.

In short, this issue must be resolved before 2018. The goodwill and trust that the CAT built with the Solomon Islands media was significantly undermined by this incident. There is nothing whatsoever in law that would prevent journalists from publishing results as soon as the Returning Officer announces them. The arrangement that prevailed simply removes the Commission from the results process, which makes it impossible for the CAT to influence the nature of coverage in any way.

1.2 Reactive Communications

Luckily there was little to do by way of reactive communications across this period. The election took place peacefully and without major incident.

Some questions were fielded about voters having trouble finding polling stations, the extension of voting hours in Noro polling stations and the attempted theft of a ballot box. The stolen ballot box was well handled by Police and SIEC staff and accordingly did not present significant problems for the CAT. While the other two stories involved organisational failures, the sheer volume of election stories that were been written at the time meant that these negative stories were pushed off the front pages.

1.3 Making the most out of the positive stories.

The election was a great success. It was conducted in a peaceful and orderly fashion, voter turnout was extremely high and the number of rejected ballots was at an all time low. The final section of the Communication Strategy emphasised the need for the SIEC to capitalize on these positive stories. To that end, a number of press releases were drafted to provide facts and figure that pointed to the success of the election. Providing regional comparisons in terms of voter registration and turnout was particularly effective.

It was also important during this period for the SIEC to reassure the public that their vote would be kept secret. We knew from our audience research that there was a widespread view that candidates will be able to find out who a voter cast his/her ballot for. The SIEC made sure that the new secrecy measures were a focus of messaging across this period. While a good deal of work went in to this message, more needs to be done between now and 2018 to try to displace the view that the vote is not truly secret. From the CAT's perspective, that message would be easier to clearly articulate if there was a more complex system of coding ballot papers to ensure that the ballot paper could not be matched to the ballot stub/counterfoil.

2. Planning for long term voter education strategies

With SECSIP set to continue through until 2017, there are considerable opportunities to capitalise on the gains made over the past 12 months.

The most important next step is conducting a detailed tracking survey to assess the effectiveness of the campaigns that have been implemented across this cycle. A very significant investment was made in voter awareness campaigns in the lead up to this election and it is essential that the SIEC forms a detailed picture of the effectiveness of its campaigns.

Secondly, significant work needs to be done in reducing the burden of voter education on the SIEC. While the SIEC will always have a role in explaining the registration and voting processes, it would be ideal if other bodies, ideally civil society organisations, could take over messaging that addresses the reasons people have for voting.

The results of this election would suggest that there were high levels of involvement in the voting process and there was a very low level of rejected ballots, however anecdotal evidence and the SIEC's audience research shows that that large numbers of people do not feel free to vote for whomever they choose. Civil Society Organisations should spearhead any long-term voter education that seeks to address this issue. To that end it is proposed that the SIEC will play a role in establishing a coalition of civil society organisations that will take the lead in voter education between now and 2018.

Finally, there is significant enthusiasm from SIEC to develop a voter education curriculum for secondary school students. Currently, voter education takes place in standard six and a broader civic education program takes place in secondary school. We propose to work with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development to improve the quality of voter education that is offered and have it scheduled for a more useful time in students schooling.

3.1 Reporting and Evaluation

Despite some frustrating challenges, the implementation of the SIEC's Communications Strategies appears to have been highly successful. A full evaluation will be available upon completion of the Tracking Survey in early 2015.

Lessons Learned

As noted above it is essential that the issue of media reporting results is revisited and clarified before the 2018 National General Election. The SIEC's relationship with the media and the media's coverage of the election will not show significant improvement until this issue is resolved. In the first instance, the legal position on this matter needs to be resolved between the SIEC the Media Association of

Solomon Islands, the Attorney General and the Governor General. Once there is broad agreement on this issue a set of procedures should again be agreed with the media. Ultimately it will be up to Senior Management of SIEC to take this matter on with some conviction if the Governor General or his officers again resile from any agreement that is reached.

Output 4: ***Output 4: Electoral and legal reform supported to contribute to a stronger electoral commission and representative democracy***

Output 4.1: Strengthened legal capacity of the SIEC

Target: electoral reform supported

SECSIP has not recruited a legal advisor in the reporting period however a review of the current legislation and a draft of former ESSP consultant Dr. Finn were reviewed by election expert Victoria Stewart Jolley in cooperation with the CEO, CTA and the ESSP team. The review was performed on the request of PS Fakari and the CEO who both saw a window of opportunity to amend the electoral legislation in the last quarter of 2013. The draft amended law is currently under review of the election commissioners; however it seems unlikely that further action is taken until after the election.

1.   Partnerships and inter-agency collaboration

While SECSIP was integrated in the reality of the Donors, SIEC and ESSP without major problems the Solomon Islands internal inter-institutional collaboration and communication is weak which creates a risk for the election process. Despite big efforts of mainly ESSP over the years a lack of will and vision on behalf of OSIEC prevents the collaborative approach necessary to organise a well-managed and therefore credible and transparent electoral process. Meetings with important governmental stakeholders like RSIP, ministries are ad-hoc and create little results. IMEOC in which creation ESSP has invested much time and effort in is so far not functional.

While collaboration with governmental bodies (from the view of an international advisor) is insufficient it is a positive development that SIEC has built relationships with some non-state actors like women groups, faith based groups, youth and others in order to collaboratively work towards the information and education about of the public.

Regardless of an evident lack of will (or understanding of the benefits of cooperation) SECSIP and ESSP have to work with the SIEC leadership to engage in strategic communication and partnership building with national and international elections stakeholders.

2.   Cross-cutting Issues

1.   <u>Gender mainstreaming and women participation in political processes (Output 5 EU)</u>

Terms of Reference

The Gender Adviser joined the team on September 17, 2014 on a 45 days contract. Her TOR had the following deliverables:

1.   Gender equality is taken into consideration when designing and implementing training programs for electoral staff

2.   Gender equality is taken into consideration when designing and implementing public outreach and voter information programs

3.   Gender equality is taken into consideration in the HR policies and recruitment practices of the institution

4.   Mainstreaming gender within the EMB's policies and departmental programs, including Election procedures, safety, voter information campaigns, external relations and outreach programs, training and reporting and analysis of data.

Analysis of current environment

The Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC) has the fundamental responsibility of proactively engaging women and men in all stages of the electoral process. This necessitates an understanding and analysis of the different needs, competencies and skills of women and men in the country. This necessitates proactive actions by the SIEC to make the electoral process inclusive and free of gender based stereotypes and discrimination.

In reality, the Gender Adviser found that prior to her joining, little or no actions were taken to proactively make the electoral process inclusive and fair for both women and men, especially in the recruiting of elections management personnel.

Most of the training manuals for the different categories of people were already developed. All handbooks for the media and observers were already developed.

This left the Gender Adviser little room to negotiate for gender inclusions.

Given the strong patriarchal context in Solomon Islands, the realities of women's lives are marred with stereotypes, discrimination and prejudices, thereby severely restricting their proactive engagement in all stages of the electoral process.

Elections management: In the 2010 general elections women made up only 35% of polling staff compared to 65% men and 13.68% presiding officers as compared to 86.38% for men. 3 In fact, one of the recommendations of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Election Observers was that *the SIEC actively consider ways to increase the participation of women as polling and counting officials.*

In the 2014 general elections, there was not any significant change in these figures:

Position	Female	Male
Election Manager	0	10
Returning Officer	5	45
Assistant Returning Officer	3	79
Presiding Officer and Polling Assistant	262	512

No data available from Malaita, Choiseul, Renbel, several constituencies from Guadalcanal, few constituencies from Western and from East, West and Ulawa in Makira

The table above indicates that in the 2014 National General Elections, the elections management had overwhelming 70.52% males and only 29.47% females. Amongst the temporary staff category, most women were hired as Polling Assistants rather than Presiding Officers.

When senior SIEC staff, Election Managers and Returning Officers were asked for reasons for not hiring more women in elections management, and in significant roles, the responses ranged from lack of experience to married women disallowed by their husbands. Several senior elections staff said that *"its a man's job!"* One Returning Officer from Temotu province said that some of the positions necessitated travel to areas, which were dangerous due to the terrain and were *"only suitable for men in good physical shape."*

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3 PIFS Elections Observers Report: Solomon Islands 2010

In many provinces the overwhelming factor affecting employment of married women was that men would not allow their wives to be away from home for the 3 days required to staff the polling stations. In some cases in Temotu and Isabel provinces, the ROs were successful in posting married women close to where they lived.

Reports from the provinces indicated that initiatives in bridging the gender gap were made in places where the Election Manager (EM) or Returning Officer (RO) took personal interest based on their own commitment in having more women on board. In Isabel province, 60 of 69 polling stations had at least one woman on staff. There the EM and his team of ROs made changes to their employment of Presiding Officers (POs) and Polling Assistants (PAs) to ensure greater gender balance directly as a result of the training they received in Honiara. One RO in Isabel reported that two of the places that did not have women staff were because they are considered *'security hotspots'*.

Perspectives of people on the low level of women's participation in politics and elections management in Solomon Islands:

1.   Culturally politics has been men's business

2.   Politics is about corruption and drinking and women do not involve them selves in such activities.

3.   Politics is all about lies and women do not like to lie

4.   The husbands of women would not let their wives go into politics

5.   People would not vote for women as they think women are

Training and Voter's education: On reviewing materials and discussing with the Media and Civic awareness team, it was agreed that there were opportunities to proactively reach out to the more excluded and marginalised groups of voters – disabled women and men, battered and deserted women and those voting for the first time. For instance, the "how-to-vote" poster will now have a female presiding officer instead of a male. Such a visual, it is hoped, will encourage people to see women as active agents in democracy capable of playing important roles.

The Gender Adviser facilitated a one-day training of all AROs in Western. A special session on women's participation was included in the training.

The Gender Adviser also facilitated one day trainings of 50 women and men each in Munda (which included rural women and men from the islands in Western) and in Honiara (which included women and men from many places in Guadalcanal. The purpose of these trainings was to reach out largely to marginalised rural groups of women and provide them a non-judgemental space to understand the electoral process and their role in it. Most of the women and few of the men carried out awareness in their respective villages. Unfortunately, given the lack of time, there was little space to include any monitoring of the awareness the participants did in their villages and wards.

The Gender Adviser also facilitated a half-day training on gender sensitive reporting with journalists from the print and broadcast media in Honiara. The feedback from all participants was very positive, with all saying such trainings should be on going and a more comprehensive package to train the media on gender sensitive reporting should be developed.

The Gender Adviser also undertook the following activities in October and November:

> A member of the Commonwealth Observer Group, Jessica Nkuuhe, observed there are still big challenges for women and attitudes she encountered show equality is a long way off. *"One polling official told me, we don't allow women here to lead they are supposed be in the home and the kitchen".*

1. Reviewed and made specific inclusions on gender equality in the Elections Managers and Returning officers Manual, including making proactive efforts to recruit and train women as polling staff. However, as said earlier, the manual was almost already finalised and ready for print so the space available to have comprehensive and simple inclusions on the "why" and "how" of having more women in elections management was unfortunately not possible.

2. Reviewed and made specific inclusions in the Code of Conduct to be signed by all temporary elections management staff. However, the SIEC did not have any monitoring and accountability mechanism to check if all staff signed, understood and followed. There were no mechanisms to know if staff violated the code of conduct and if reported no mechanism to hold them accountable.

3. Developed, in consultation with the Deputy Commissioner, a recruitment policy for temporary staff that actively seeks to recruit more women in elections management. There was, however, no commitment demonstrated to implement this policy by SIEC.

4. Facilitated a session with Election Managers on the necessity of making the electoral process free of any forms of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes for all eligible voters; and the necessity of having more women in elections management. The Chief Election Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner (Corporate Affairs), in that training underlined the necessity of making the

recruitment of AROs and other polling staff transparent and stated their commitment of having more women on board. The same message would be underlined during the Returning Officers training.

5. Discussed with and made recommendations to DFAT to have more women members in the team from Australian Civilian Corps (ACC). Given that all the 10 Election Managers are male and the ACC team would be working alongside each of the EM, it will be beneficial to have competent women supervising and mentoring them.

6. Met with various stakeholders, including National Council for Women, UN Women and Voice Blo meri to discuss their role in encouraging more women to not only vote free from fear or favour but to also participate in elections management. These organisations will mobilise their provincial networks and have them work alongside the Ems and ROs in having more women recruited as polling staff.

7. Organised and co-facilitated a half day session with all women candidates in Honiara. The forum was meant to be a safe space for the candidates to express their concerns, get answers, ventilate and feel more confident to contest the elections in an extremely patriarchal context.

8. Abbreviations and Acronyms

ARO: Assistant Registration Officer

AVRO: Assistant Revising Officer

AWP: Annual Work Plan

BVR: Biometric Voter Registration

CBO: Community Based Organisation

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

CEO: Chief Electoral Officer

CVE: Civic and Voter Education

ESI: Elections Support International (vendor of BVR kits)

ESSP: Election Strengthening and Support Project (Australia funded)

EU: European Union

EUD: European Union Delegation

ICTSU: ICT Support Unit (SIG)

HQ: Head Quarter

MOHA: Ministry of Home Affairs

OSIEC: Office of the Solomon Islands Election Commission

RM: Registration Manager

RO: Registration Officer

RVO: Revising Officer

SECSIP: Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in Solomon Islands project

SIG: Solomon Islands Government

SIBC: Solomon Islands Broadcasting Cooperation

SIEC: Solomon Islands Election Commission

PS: Permanent Secretary

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

VR: Voter Registration

VRC: Voter Registration Centre