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# Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands, Phase II (SECSIP II)





*Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands (SECSIP)*

# PROGRESS REPORT

## July 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2017

### PROJECT INFORMATION

**Project ID: 0010550**

**Duration: July 2017 – 30 June 2020**

**UNDP Strategic Plan Component: Democratic Governance**

**Estimated Total Project Budget: USD \$ 5,860,986 (financial gap USD \$ 3,300,000)**

**July- December 2017 Work Plan (revised): USD \$ 719,800.00**

**Implementing Partner: Solomon Islands Electoral Commission**

**(SIEC) Chief Technical Advisor: Olga Rábade**

### DONOR PARTNERS



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**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

<b>A/CEO</b>	Acting Chief Electoral Officer
<b>AGC</b>	Attorney General’s Chambers
<b>AROs</b>	Area Registration Officers
<b>AWP</b>	Annual Work Plan
<b>BVR</b>	Biometric Voter Registration
<b>CAT</b>	O/SIEC Communication and Awareness Team
<b>CD</b>	Capacity Development
<b>CDA</b>	Capacity Development Assessment
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Electoral Officer
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>DFAT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
<b>EMB</b>	Electoral Management Body
<b>ESSP</b>	Electoral Systems Strengthening Project
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>ICT SU</b>	Information and Communication Technology Support Unit
<b>LPAC</b>	Local Project Appraisal Committee
<b>MASI</b>	Media Association of Solomon Islands
<b>MERHD</b>	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
<b>MWA</b>	Matangi Women’s Association
<b>MWYCF</b>	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NVAS</b>	National Voter Awareness Strategy
<b>OPPC</b>	Office of the Political Parties Commission
<b>ORPP</b>	Office of the Registrar of the Political Parties
<b>O/SIEC</b>	Office of the Solomon Islands Election Commission
<b>PMO</b>	Minister of Prime Minister and Cabinet
<b>PPC</b>	Political Parties Commission
<b>RO</b>	Registration officer
<b>SECSIP</b>	Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands
<b>SIEC</b>	Solomon Islands Election Commission
<b>TAC</b>	Technical Advisory Committee
<b>ToT</b>	Training of Trainers
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>VTT</b>	Village Technology Trust



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### **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Upon signature of the Project Document, *Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands Project Phase II (SECSIP II)* commenced its implementation on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017 with a 3 year duration expected to end on 30 June 2020, during which the project will support the electoral authorities of Solomon Islands in the lead-up to the next general election expected to be held in early 2019 and also including the post-election activities.

A project closure and inception workshop was held on 8 September 2017. During this session the project management presented a summary of the results achieved and the findings and recommendations of the independent evaluation conducted at the end of SECSIP I as well as the on-going response actions to improve project implementation. This included the strengthening of the project structure with recruitment of Mr. Pisoth Ving in the capacity of Project Coordinator. The identified priorities for project support and the estimated budget for the initial six months were also proposed and discussed during this session attended by national and international stakeholders.

During the reporting period, a failure in the biometric voter registration (BVR) system led to a severe risk of loss of the voter registration database. It was fortuitous that SECSIP Senior BVR Expert was in-country at the time of the failure and was able to urgently conduct the successful recovery of the data and adopt immediate actions for risk mitigation. His findings and recommendations included the replacement of obsolete equipment, identification of priority features of the software to be upgraded and the proposal of a course of action to train core staff to have the appropriate technical skills to operate and maintain a BVR system. The project also supported SIEC in its collaboration with the MPGIS authorities by conducting the update of the electoral roll for Choiseul and Western Province, initially scheduled to be held at the end of 2017. Accordingly, the Electoral Commission launched on 4 December 2017 the campaign for the update of the electoral roll in the referred provinces. SECSIP identified, engaged and deployed under a very strict timeline three consultants with solid experience in electoral biometric voter registration (BVR), who had been previously working with UNDP elections in Nepal, to provide BVR help desk services and data management and consolidation.

With respect to the preparation for the upcoming electoral events, it is noteworthy to mention that on 30 November the High Court of Solomon Islands ruled in favour of the petition lodged by former Prime Minister Gordon Darcy Lilo against Mr. Jimson Tanangada with respect to Gizo-Kolombangara seat. Pursuant to Section 52 of the Constitution there is no appeal to the decision of the High Court on the determination of whether the person has been validly elected triggering a by-election to elect a member of parliament to represent





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this constituency. Taking into consideration the referred Court Decision and the upcoming provincial election in Western Province for which an update of the roll was at that time being conducted, the SIEC elaborated a proposal recommending MPGIS the possibility of conducting simultaneously the by-election and the provincial election for Western Province. No decision was adopted by the relevant authorities on this issue during the reporting period.

SIEC, SECSIP and UNDP were saddened by the unexpected passing away of the Acting Chief Electoral Officer Mr. Alphonsus Pero occurred on December 3rd 2017. The untimely death of Alphonsus Pero again highlighted the urgency for the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer to lead the SIEC in the preparation and implementation of the upcoming electoral events. This was also acknowledged by national and international stakeholders attending the Project Board meeting session held on 11 December 2017. During this meeting, a joint presentation on the on-going preparation for the upcoming electoral events was facilitated by the SIEC Head of Operations and SECSIP CTA and projected draft 2018 budget was discussed. The on-going strengthening of the project team coordination and the benefit of the renovated office space area will certainly contribute to project delivery and efficiency.



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## Part A –Narrative Report

### **1. Purpose and project outputs.**

SECSIP II commenced its operations on 1 July 2017 with a duration period extending to 30 June 2020. The new Project Document for SECSIP Phase II was drafted in May 2017 and endorsed by a Local Pre-Appraisal Committee (LPAC) on 22 June.

UNDP electoral assistance is provided throughout the entire electoral cycle (pre-election; elections/polling and post-election) and designed to support SIEC in its core mandate, conducting inclusive and credible electoral processes. SECSIP, funded by the European Union and the Government of Australia focuses on the five components: capacity development, voter registration, electoral reform, civic engagement/voter awareness and women’s political participation/gender mainstreaming.

With a view to support SIEC and contribute to the implementation of its mandate, SECSIP has developed synergies and strategic partnerships with a range of national stakeholders including government and civil society entities to contribute to an enabling environment for credible and inclusive elections. The overarching objective is to strengthen the link between the electoral cycle and other key governance processes and institutions, and contribute to social cohesion and the development of a pluralistic society.

### **2. Resources**

#### **Financial Resources Programme Budget.**

The total committed funds since the commencement of the project are USD 869,600 (EU USD\$ 492,000<sup>1</sup>; Australia USD \$ 277,600; UNDP USD \$ 100,000). Below table shows yearly expenditure during the period July-December 2017 in USD \$.

Donor	2017 (1 July-31 December)
EU	396,200
DFAT	193,100
UNDP	130,500
Total	719,800

<sup>1</sup> EUR 1,376,254.98 committed and disbursed during last quarter of 2017



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### Project Human Resources

Project Staff name	Post	Designation Start Date-End date
Olga Rábade	CTA	(SPA) 5/10/2015
Hyemin Yeo	Project Assistant	(SI) 04/05/2017
Deborah Kole	Gender Officer	(SI) 27/4/2016
John Raymond	Driver/Logistics	(SI) 1/11/2013
Crystal Saelea	Procurement officer	(SI) 1/12/2014

### **Consultants (temporary)**

Carlos Valenzuela	UN Consultant Elections Expert	(COL) 07/31/2017-01/9/2017
Chahine Hamila	BVR Software Expert	(TUN/CAN) 01/10/2017- 31/12/2017 (20 days Honiara/ 20 days homebased)
Sue Nelson	Monitoring and Evaluation Expert	
George Dennis	NOVUS Ltd. Managing Director	January 2017 and November 2017
Lily Chekana	National Media Assistant	(SI) 130 working days (September 2016- November 2017)
Ednal Palmer	Media Expert	100 working days (July to November)



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2017)

Shristi Shrestha	ICT Help Desk	(Nepal) 100 working days from December 1 2017 to April 3 2018
Sanjay Kumar Shah	ICT Help Desk	(Nepal) 100 working days from December 1 2017 to April 3 2018
Pradip Maharjan	Data	(Nepal) 100 working days from December 1 2017 to April 3 2018

### **3. Project Management**

#### *Project Board*

A meeting of SECSIP Project Board was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2017. In addition to Board members Hon. Ajilon Nasiu Chairperson of the Commission, Permanent Secretary of MOHA Mr. George Palua and UNDP Country Office Manager Ms. Azusa Kubota, attendants included the Ambassador of the European Union Leonidas Tezapsidis, SIEC Commissioner Taeasi Sanga, representative of the Australian High Commission (Michael Hassett Deputy High Commissioner, Alexandra Little Second Secretary, Narelle Hallion Second Secretary), members of ESSP (Phil Whelan and Walter Rigamoto), UNDP Effective Governance Team Leader Jane Waetara, SIEC Head of Operations Freddie Bosoboe, SIEC Finance Officer Ruben Rongomea, CTA SECSIP Project Olga Rábade, and SECSIP staff (Pisoth Ving SECSIP Project Coordinator, Deborah Kole SECSIP Gender and Elections Officer, Pradip Maharjan SECSIP BVR Consultant – Data-centre support). SECSIP CTA presented the results of SECSIP Phase II, including its ongoing activity and upcoming activity plan and tentative draft budget for 2018. Additionally, SECSIP CTA highlighted the importance to work jointly with all partners and stakeholders in order to achieve the 2018 objectives. Closing remarks were provided by SIEC Commissioner Taeasi Sanga and UNDP Country Manager, who acknowledged attendees' continuous support to SECSIP as well as their excellent partnerships with both national and international stakeholders.

#### *Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)*

No TAC meetings were held during the reporting period.

#### Other meetings

##### *SECSIP Phase II inception workshop and SECSIP Phase I closure.*

On 8 September, UNDP SECSIP II Chief Technical Adviser conducted a workshop on the inception of SECSIP II and closure of SECSIP I. Topics discussed included the overview of





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SECSIP I, including key results achieved and expenditure summary; findings and recommendations from the evaluation of SECSIP I, and proposed AWP for SECSIP II from July to December 2017, including upcoming activities such as establishment of a graduate programme. Attendees included Hon. Ajilon Nasiu Speaker of Parliament and Chairperson of the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission, George Palua Permanent Secretary Ministry of Home Affairs, Azusa Kubota UNDP Country Manager, representatives of the Solomon Islands Government, SECSIP II donor representatives (EU and Australian High Commission), SIEC Head of Operations, ESSP advisers and SECSIP II staff members.



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### 5. Results

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

##### Analysis of the existing biometric voter registration system

The week of October 16, 2017, the BVR server had a failure and could not be switched on. This was not the first crash of the server, which was previously sent to Fiji to be repaired. Therefore, this was a strong indication that the server was no longer reliable and needed to be immediately replaced. While working on the recovery of this server, and ensuring backup solutions were in place to avoid any major loss of BVR data, some limitations in the BVR system were confirmed including:

- **No audit or traceability records on user actions.** Fraudulent use of the BVR system would go undetected (e.g. deleting voter records). It is strongly recommended that the BVR system be enhanced to include accountability and additional security features in future updates.
- **Records with limited history and lifecycles.** The current system does not distinguish any action beyond simple deletions and edits, and only keeps a limited history of those changes. -For example migrations, removals for complaints or deaths. Availability of these documentary records can positively contribute to dispute resolution and facilitate record management.
- Two fingerprints collected per voter. Multiple registrations by use of the remaining eight fingers are possible. Such scenario would have a negative impact on the credibility of the BVR.
- **De-duplication conducted abroad.** The lack of computational power in the current single server makes it difficult to conduct the de-duplication of the registry within an acceptable period of time. An upgrade of the software to leverage computer clusters would provide sufficient power to de-duplicate within a reasonable timeframe and facilitate the implementation of SIEC's mandate.
- **Manual data transfers.** At present data from each BVR kit must be extracted manually, copied in a physical support device (external drive) and subsequently transferred to the main server. This generates significant logistical and financial costs and delays. Online transfer of data would simplify the process and reduce costs.
- **Use of developer grade scripts.** These scripts are required for carrying out many basic BVR actions including copying voter data, undertaking de-duplication or generating voter lists. This puts an unnecessary burden in terms of technical requirements on the SIEC, in an environment where IT skills are scarce. A general simplification of the BVR system through intuitive user interfaces will significantly



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- lower the threshold of skills and training requirements, which will facilitate the national autonomy of BVR implementers.
- **Fingerprints stored in jpeg format.** This is not the standard format; jpeg is a loose compression where data is progressively lost when it is used therefore decreasing the quality of fingerprint images and the reliability of de-duplication. It is recommended to assess the quality and move to a standard and/or lossless format for fingerprint images if necessary in future updates.

During this in-country mission, SECSIP Senior Expert explored potential collaboration with ICT SU to enhance resilience and human and technical capacities of SIEC for an effective operation of the BVR system. Accordingly, two meetings were held with the ICT SU office on the 12th and the 26th of October. Despite initial interest from both parties on a collaborative plan, it was decided that final approval had to be considered at senior government level.

On the 23rd of October, a meeting on progress made by the BVR expert to secure BVR data was conducted at the office of the PS MOHA. In addition to the PS, the meeting was attended by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Home Affairs (PS MOHA), SIEC Acting Chief Electoral Officer, ESSP Strategic Operations Adviser, UNDP Country Manager, and SECSIP CTA. A debriefing session on progress made and recommended action was conducted prior to the departure of the expert. During this meeting, three urgent actions to advance BVR sustainability were raised, including the ongoing replacement and upgrading of BVR equipment, with redundant backup and disaster recovery capabilities; BVR software upgrading to reduce potential costs and risks; and a program to train a first pool of national graduates on elections and technology through a formal mid-term curriculum, contributing to the delivery of output 2.

Upon departure of former SIEC ICT Senior officer, actions were taken to immediately respond to the absence of human resources and capacities in the day-to-day maintenance of BVR equipment and software. This involved the engagement of three (3) Nepalese BVR consultants in December to support the BVR updating process in Choiseul and Western Province and the management of the data centre.

#### SIEC BVR update campaign

SIEC organized an opening session to inform of the launching of the update of the electoral roll for the provinces of Choiseul and Western Province was held on 26 October with a total of 30 participants including representatives from various media organizations. This session was broadcasted live to encourage public engagement and participation. SECSIP national media consultant provided support in the organization and presentation of this activity.



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SIEC commenced the delivery of registration kits in October, with twelve (12) kits reaching the Western Province to carry out registration of voters in nine (9) constituencies, and four (4) kits deployed to Choiseul for the registration exercise in three (3) constituencies.

SECSIP supported the provincial update by recruiting three consultants with expertise in electoral biometric voter registration system. In December, two of the BVR consultants engaged by SECSIP were deployed to Choiseul and Western Province (for two weeks) to provide helpdesk services and address software and hardware issues. These consultants contributed to enhance BVR data entry skills of the Area Registration Officers (AROs) employed by SIEC in the two provinces.

Following the closure of the BVR update process in Western and Choiseul, SIEC conducted the retrieval of all the registration kits. The existing data was completely and successfully extracted on 28 December 2017 and stored in the main server. This was followed by a manual verification process of registration forms to verify/rectify information including deletions and/or accidental edits. Upon completion of this process, the provisional voter lists will be displayed by SECSIP opening the period of exhibition and challenges to lodge claims and omissions.

Further to the previously referred technical advice provided by the BVR consultants, SECSIP at the request of SIEC engaged the former SIEC IT Officer on a part time basis. The deliverables of this consultant included support to the status review of hardware and software, assist with training for data entry officials, support entry of information, omissions and objections and production of final lists.

### Progress made against

- *Extent to which SIEC developed a sustainable voter's roll and relevant sustainable mechanisms*
  - Implementation of immediate risk mitigating actions to secure the BVR data
  - In-depth technical analysis of the existing BVR system conducted leading to the identification of upgrades to enhance the integrity of the system.
  - Enhanced technical capacities to conduct the provincial update of the voters' roll operations supported by three BVR technicians which included transfer of basic data entry skills to Assistant Registration Officers.
  - Enhanced capabilities due to SECSIP procurement of BVR equipment as per SIEC approved specifications

### Follow-up actions

#### Ongoing:

BVR equipment expected to be received during the first quarter of 2018

Facilitation of training on registration data entry and treatment expected to be facilitated in March by SECSIP BVR consultants



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### **OUTPUT 2: More efficient and effective administrative procedures designed and implemented for the Solomon Islands Election Commission to fulfill its mandate**

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

#### Graduate Programme

During phase I, an institutional capacity assessment commissioned by UNDP SECSIP in 2016 illustrated that a structure relying on one-person units poses the institution in a situation of vulnerability due to the impact of the loss of one or more staff. In this context, SECSIP phase II proposed to launch a graduate programme as a temporary mechanism expected to contribute to the enhancement of capacities and sustainability of the partner organisations<sup>12</sup>. The expected outcome of this programme is to attain a group of highly qualified staff in key areas identified by UNDP SECSIP partner organizations to be considered for direct engagement by the national authorities under the civil service structure. To this end, several consultations were conducted resulting in a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which was presented in a meeting with representatives from the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC), the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties Commission (ORPP), and the Ministry of Public Service on 27 October 2017. The feedback from this meeting was instrumental for the revision of the draft MoU which was subsequently recirculated amongst relevant stakeholders.

#### Website Training

The presentation of the redeveloped SIEC website was conducted by NOVUS LTD in November. The new site incorporates sections on voting, biometric registration, elections and up-to-date relevant electoral activity (See picture below). For ease of use and successful management of the upgraded website<sup>3</sup> by SIEC staff, a training attended by SIEC, ESSP and SECSIP officials was held from the 28 to 30 November 2017, covering topics included in the user manual, such as new features of the site and the available tools to add contents to manage the site (e.g navigation of Joomla site and administrator, inserting text, images, videos and audio, and uploading documents). It is expected that the revamped website will contribute to disseminate electoral related information, and serve as a tool to enhance voter awareness and institutional communication in the lead to the upcoming electoral events.

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<sup>1</sup> Main SECSIP beneficiaries are the Office of SIEC and the Office of the Registrar of the Political Parties Commission. Other offices/institutions may also benefit of this programme upon agreement of the technical committee.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.siec.gov.sb/2017>

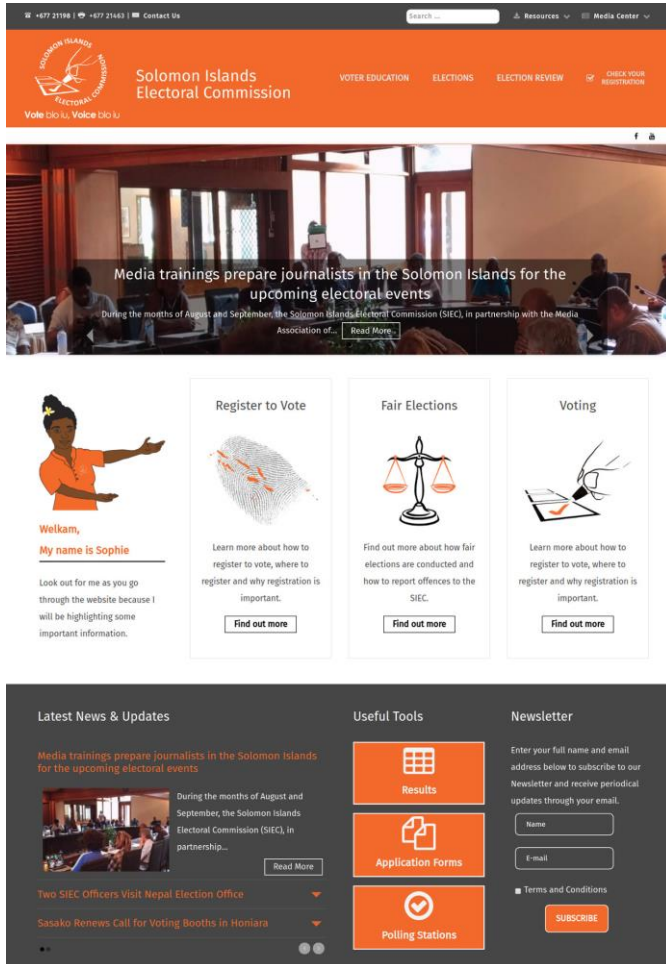




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SIEC revamped website home-page



The construction of SIEC website has been supported by UNDP SECSIP (Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands Project).

UNDP SECSIP is funded by the Government of Australia and the European Union.



### Support actions on BVR data entry skills

SIEC BVR update commenced in December 2017 in Choiseul and Western Province. Two of the three Nepalese BVR experts were deployed to these provinces to provide helpdesk services and address software and hardware issues for a period of two weeks. During this time, Area Registration Officers (AROs) (12 in Western Province and 16 in Choiseul) benefited from support by the BVR experts to enhance their BVR data entry skills.

### Strengthening of SIEC procedures and electoral capacities

UNDP SECSIP Senior Elections Expert Carlos Valenzuela conducted an assessment of electoral procedures training programs and manuals. The assessment involved an extensive review of





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the training manuals and trainer notes, observer reports, and gathering of feedback from SIEC officials and current and former advisors, in particular those directly responsible for the 2014 training efforts, as well as discussions with former returning officers (ROs) who became “trainers” themselves.

The final assessment presents a list of recommendations on ways to enhance more effective procedures for the training of staff in preparation for the upcoming general election. This will enable SIEC to achieve a higher level of consistency and alignment of its operational electoral procedures (registration, nomination of candidates, electoral campaign, polling and counting) and to promote a more professional performance of the field staff.

A foundation course (8 modules) targeting electoral managers was designed by UNDP Senior Electoral Adviser Carlos Valenzuela. The course addresses electoral topics including the electoral administration, the Solomon Islands and elections, major operational phases and tasks of the electoral process (voter registration, electoral operational planning, and polling, counting, tabulation and announcement of results), and issues affecting the political credibility of the elections and the electoral administration. It is expected that this course may broaden the pool of potential staff, in particular women and youth, to serve as supporting electoral staff and enable them to acquire the necessary skills to be engaged for future general elections. Given the strict introductory nature of the modules discussions with stakeholders indicated that consideration may be given to expand the potential audience of this foundation course to a wider target audience including, for example, electoral observers, political parties and media to enhance their understanding of the nature and intricacies of electoral administration. The possibility to facilitate this course as a joint action with other actors including bilateral electoral assistance programmes could also be considered.

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

#### Expansion of SECSIP office at O/SIEC premises

In order to provide a more professional and conducive work environment and to enhance operational project delivery as well as to better comply with UNDP security requirements, SECSIP project management submitted to the approval of Acting Chief Electoral Officer a proposal for the extension of the project room. As a result of the renovation works, the office area can now accommodate a larger number of staff. Additional work in bathrooms, doors and windows was also carried out during this period contributing to the upgrade of SIEC’s working conditions, physical infrastructure and general security.

#### Support to the construction of SIEC data-centre



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As previously referred, SECSIP has supported the identification and procurement of BVR equipment in accordance with the specifications provided by SIEC Operations. The referred equipment is expected to arrive to Honiara in March 2018, needs to be installed in a location with the appropriate conditions in terms of electric infrastructure, refrigeration and accessibility protection. Accordingly, a business case proposing the extension of SIEC premises was presented during the debriefing session facilitated by Senior BVR Expert Chahine Hamila in November 2017. This was followed by the request from SIEC Senior Management dated 21 November 2017 seeking the support of SECSIP for the construction of the data-centre in SIEC compound. The business case was submitted to SECSIP Project Board meeting session held on 11 December 2017 noting the following considerations:

- 1- Enhanced security and accessibility of BVR equipment and data
- 2- Provision of appropriate conditions for the maintenance of essential voter registration equipment
- 3- Reduction of financial and logistical costs currently leasing premises for a data-centre
- 4- Enhanced logistics by locating these services in the main SIEC compound.
- 5- From a financial perspective, taking into consideration the rental, internet and utilities costs the estimated period of time for the payback of this construction (quoted in SBD \$ 300,000) would be two (2) months.
- 6- The Data-Centre will provide a multi-functional space that will be utilized not only to treat and consolidate BVR data but also as a conference room or for staff learning activities.

#### **OUTPUT 3: National authorities and local networks have better capacity to train and**

##### Progress made against

- *Enhanced capacity of SIEC to manage an electoral cycle through the following actions:*
  - Identification of issues to improve operational procedures and areas for the training of an expanded pool of electoral staff
  - Development of a draft MoU establishing the framework for a graduate programme.
  - Strengthened capacities of field staff involved in the provincial update of the electoral roll
  - Upgraded institutional website as a tool for voter awareness and institutional visibility.
  - Enhanced website management skills of all SIEC staff to increase voter awareness and institutional visibility.
  - Improved infrastructure for more efficient electoral mandate
  - Renovated and more secure office space
  - Presentation of business case and preparation of procurement action for the construction of data-centre

##### Follow-up actions

- Signature of the MOU on the graduate programme followed by the identification and engagement of candidates.
- Construction of data centre



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### educate the population on voter awareness and civic engagement

#### 3.1 Strategic ability of the SIEC to conduct and coordinate a Public Awareness campaign enhanced

##### Collaboration with MASI

As a follow up action building on the successful completion of the eight week election and media trainings held in Honiara during the months of April and May, two Media Trainings targeting provincial based media professionals and freelancers were held in Gizo and Auki (Western Province and Malaita). National Media consultant, Ednal Palmer, facilitated a one week training in Gizo from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 2017 participated by 12 provincial based media professionals (including 3 female). The Auki training was conducted from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, with participation from eight (8) media professionals based in Auki (see annex 1 on page 23 for participants' distribution by gender and represented media organization). These trainings were the first ever to be implemented in the provinces, enabling media professionals and freelancers based in provinces to benefit from this initiative. The training topics included Media & Democracy, Voter Registration and Reporting, Candidates Campaigning and Reporting, Election Day and Reporting, Parliament, Political Parties in the Solomon Islands, Political Parties Integrity Act and Office of the Political Parties Commission, and Electoral Reform. Based on information provided by media organisations in the Solomon Islands (lists of registered media professionals based in the provinces), the two provincial trainings reached 90% of media professionals representing four (4) different media organisations (see table 1), and predominantly involved in print and radio platforms, and online reporting at a smaller scale (see table 2).

Table 1. Disaggregated number of provincial media professionals per media organisation.

	Western Province	Malaita Province
<b>Solomon Star</b>	2	3
<b>Island Sun</b>	3	2
<b>SIBC</b>	7	2
<b>Solomon Fresh-beat Online</b>	0	1

Table 2. Disaggregated number of provincial media professionals per media platform.

	Western Province	Malaita Province
<b>Print</b>	5	5
<b>Radio</b>	7	2
<b>Online</b>	0	1



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Three additional SIEC/MASI Media Trainings were conducted in Honiara (Sat 21 Oct, Sat 28 Oct, Sat 4 Nov) covering modules on social media & election, the code of conduct, and the reform of the electoral legal framework. The final trainings had a successful turnover of 80, 53, and 46 participants per workshop. Based on the assessment forms, 90 % of participants considered that the trainings have increased their knowledge on their use of social media to promote election process and general voter awareness (see table 3). Annex 2 in page 24 provides participants’ final feedback.

*Table 3. Summary of feedback from participants of the Media & Elections training.*



A ceremony to present certificates to the participants of the 2017 media trainings was held on 30 October and was attended by 60 media professionals. A new round of trainings for 2018 is currently being jointly planned by SIEC and MASI officers.

Other voter awareness initiatives

SECSIP/SIEC National Voter Awareness Consultant, Lily Checkana conducted a pre-testing of posters activity for the campaign ‘your vote is valuable’ starting on November 2017. The pre-testing activity is intended to be conducted in all 7 provinces of the Solomon Islands, following a focus group format for 20 community members (10 female). In the case of Guadalcanal a total of 29 individuals (17 female) have been individually interviewed on the poster concepts (see annex 3 on page 25 for poster samples), targeting 6 villages (Barana in Central Guadalcanal, Aruligho in West Guadalcanal, Ghorabau in East Guadalcanal, Riffle Range in West Honira, Mbokona in Central Honira, and Baranaba in East Honiara). Feedback



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gathered indicated the need for readjustment of wording and illustrations in particular the one illustrating the parliament house. The pre-testing of posters intends to assess voter awareness materials to better suit the electorate and ensure larger voter participation and engagement.

In November SIEC supported by SECSIP commenced the broadcast of a fifteen-minute radio programme raising awareness on the update of the registration process. This programme is aired on Tuesdays and Fridays through the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation. This radio programme is expected to conclude in February. While the focus of the programme is on registration, it also announces other SIEC activities such as the essay and poster competition conveying election related information and activities to a wider audience.

#### **Output 3.2: Increased implementation of civic and voter education activities** **School election project**

##### SIEC/SECSIP School Elections Project

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2017, SIEC/SECSIP team conducted mock election exercises at Guguha CHS and Jejevo CH (Isabel Province) under the on-going school elections project. Similarly, from 30<sup>th</sup> October to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017, SECSIP travelled to East Guadalcanal in the Weather coast area to visit three (3) schools (Avuavu, Kopiu and Potau) to conduct mock election exercises. In total, it is estimated that 765 participants had the opportunity to participate in these school activities focusing on voter awareness.

During a trip to Renbel province from 12 to 19 November 2017, mock election activities were conducted at the schools of Niupani and Puia schools.

##### Awareness team visits to Renbel province

From the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2017, SECSIP Gender & Elections Officer Deborah Bora-Kole together with national consultant Lily Chekana visited Renbel province to assess the impact of the activities carried out by SECSIP grantee Village Technology Trust (VTT) with the Matangi Women's Group. This visit involved group discussions with 19 participants (18 female) of the filmmaking project by VTT (see output 5). The feedback gathered from the 19 participants highlighted that women have acquired camera skills, and story boards skills on how women take on leadership in traditional Bellona society, role playing skills enacting how women bring warring parties to peace, and a deep sense of eagerness and anticipation to see the final outcome of their work – video. However, it was also acknowledged the challenges in learning to handle cameras and filming skills which has resulted in the delay of the completion of this activity. The feedback gathered was discussed VTT officials who had taken action identifying a new camera instructor.



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### SIEC Training of Trainers (ToT) in Makira province

On 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2017, SIEC Communications Awareness team comprised of SIEC Senior Media Officer and UNDP SECSIP national consultant on voter awareness conducted a training for trainers with a view to enhance knowledge of citizens on the voting system and gain confidence in the electoral processes. The ToT was initially planned for twenty (20) trainers comprising participants from Makira and the remote island of Temotu. However, due to weather conditions, the flight from Temotu was cancelled and participants from this island were unable to attend on this occasion. The communications awareness team successfully conducted a 3-day training for ten trainers (5 female) selected amongst civil society and faith and religious groups from Makira province, which was well received by the attendees. The training was aimed at building the capacity of Civil Society Trainers to better understand and expand their knowledge on electoral procedures. The ToT also provided an excellent opportunity for the Electoral Commission to continue building its outreach capacity by establishing a network of potential partners for voter awareness actions in Makira province.

### Partnerships supported by SECSIP

SIACLC (Solomon Islands Association of Community Learning Centres) implemented a 3-day ToT targeting 8 participants in Nolan Pentecost Community Learning Centre in Maro'u village (Makira Ulawa Province) from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 2017. Additionally, extended awareness trainings were conducted in neighboring communities (Maro'u, Su'u wasi, Tawarodo, Suena village, Suena Community High School) from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of July. Participants totaled 167 community members (including 84 female). Topics covered included democratic principles, the electoral system, and the role and functions of Members of Parliament and the Government.

Tefila Marketing and Enterprise Development conducted a school visit to North Malaita (Afufu Community high school) on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October. Students from forms 4 to 6 participated in the voter awareness activity covering topics on democracy and governance, voters registration, election process, election penalties, polling day, role of parliament, and formation of government. 65 students (approximately 25 female) were able to participate in this activity.



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### Progress made against

- *Implementation of awareness activities in line with SIEC Awareness Strategy 2016-2019*
  - Enhanced knowledge and skills of media professionals, including provincial based, to cover electoral related topics
  - Effectiveness of awareness materials assessed through a poster pre-testing campaign
  - Increased electorates' awareness of voter related activities through launching of a radio programme on voter registration
  - Assessment on the impact of civil society partners through an M&E exercise
  - Strengthened community leaders' capacity to conduct voter awareness through delivery of a ToT
  - Increased awareness of 167 community members and 8 community trainers on electoral related topics in Makira Province, and 65 students from Afufu community high school in Malaita.

### Follow-up actions

- Continous SIEC/MASI collaboration on formative actions on media and elections. Consideration should be given to include other strategic actors such as ABC for future initiatives
- Continuation of radio programme on voter registration
- Finalisation of posters for campaign following feedback from interviewees

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

### Drafting of the Electoral Reform Bills

At the request of the Electoral Reform Task Force, UNDP SECSIP engaged Legal Adviser and Legislative Drafter Consultant Rupeni Nawaqakuta in September 2017 to review and complete the drafting of the Reform Bills<sup>4</sup>. This consultant had been previously identified and engaged by the European Union during an initial three months period during which the initial drafts were prepared. During the reporting period, Mr Nawaqakuta assisted in briefings and consultations on the Reform Bills and revised the draft bills in consideration to the feedback provided by the Government caucus. Debriefing sessions to the SIEC, the Prime minister, and the Minister of Home Affairs on the Electoral Bill and Constitutional (Electoral Reform) (Amendment) Bill were carried out in November. However, due to a motion of no confidence, the tabling of the bills in Parliament was postponed to early 2018. The Electoral

<sup>4</sup> Electoral Bill, Political Parties Integrity (Amendment) Bill, and Constitution (Consequential Amendment) Bill.



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Reform Task Force requested an extension of the IC contract to enable the legislative drafter to assist in the tabling process, cabinet approval, and enactment of the bills.

Some of the key aspects being introduced by the proposed legislation are as follows:

Constitutional bill- to relieve the Speaker from being appointed ex officio as the Chairperson of the SIEC and to increase the number of members of the Commission from 3 to 5 including at least 2 female members; introduction of the requisite that all candidates have to be registered as voters.

Electoral bill- definition of the scope of the mandate of the Electoral Commission and its executive branch, the Office of the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission and its functions; definition of the time period and scope of the electoral campaign; measures to enhance the secrecy of the vote including removal of the serial number and the provisions for additional means for voters to cast their votes namely postal vote and pre-poll for election officials and police officers as well as out of constituency voting; definition of the electoral campaign from the Governor General announcement of the date of the election until 24 hours prior to the polling as period of reflection. The bill also introduces the change of the FPTP system to the LPV proposing this be implemented in the election of the 12<sup>th</sup> parliament expected to be held in 2023.

Political Parties Bill – one key feature is the proposed merger of the PPC with the SIEC awaiting the decision on the relevant Cabinet paper.

### UNDP Pacific Regional Dialogue on Political Parties

UNDP Pacific Office organized this Dialogue in Nadi, Fiji from 19 to 20 September 2017, with participation from representatives of all Pacific Island Countries. UNDP SECSIP supported the attendance and participation of staff of the Political Parties and Integrity Commission, Chairman of the Electoral Commission, and representatives of four political parties.

Overall, the regional dialogue provided an avenue for the exchange of information about political party best practices within Asia Pacific, and enabled participants to share country experiences in the development and challenges of respective political party systems within the region. In the case of Solomon Islands, it is expected that the dialogue will strengthen the institutional capacity of political parties to positively contribute to long-term effective and sustainable political party systems with a view to increase voters' confidence and enhance democratic practices in the country.



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### Progress made against

- *The extent to which SIEC and PPC have made contributions in connection with the reform*
  - The Electoral Reform Task Force has been effectively supported in its role as an advisory body for the electoral and political reform. In particular, through the on-going technical support for the drafting of the bills
  - Enhanced knowledge of PPC, SIEC, and representatives of 4 political parties on strengthening the institutional capacity of political parties to positively contribute to long-term effective multi-party systems.

### Follow-up actions

- Support throughout the process of tabling and enactment of 3 Reform Bills.

## **OUTPUT 5: Capacity of the SIEC to promote gender mainstreaming**

### **Output 5.1: Enhanced ability of women to act as community leaders and representatives Poster and Essay competition**

#### Secondary School Poster and Essay Competition

The School Poster and Essay competition was officially launched at the provincial chamber in BUALA, the provincial capital of Isabel province on 13 October 2017. The initiative to launch the competition in Isabel was proposed by SECSIP Gender and Elections Officer in view of the planned actions for the school election project and monitoring activities to be held in this province and the need to strengthen networks and enhance outreach in Isabel. Accordingly, during this visit the team conducted awareness sessions for the promotion of the competition, along with mock election exercises (see output 3), at Guguha CHS and Jejevo CH.

From 30 October to 1 November, awareness-raising activities were also conducted in East Guadalcanal in the Weather coast area. Four (4) schools (Avuavu Provincial Secondary, Makaruka, Kopiu and Potau Community High School) which were visited to promote the Poster and Essay Competition and conduct mock elections with students and teachers. An estimate of 765 participants from these schools had the opportunity to participate in activities on voter awareness and women's political participation.

From the 12 to 19 November, two (2) Community High schools and one (1) Provincial secondary school located in Henua and New Place in Rennell Island and Angaiho in Bellona, were also visited.





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Additionally, information and materials were sent to all 250 secondary schools in the country across the 10 provinces including Honiara town.

In view of the end-of-year school holiday and the challenges notified by some schools for the timely reception of materials, and at the request of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD), the deadline for the essay competition was extended to Wednesday 28 February 2018. This extension was notified through a formal announcement to all Education Authorities (EAs) and also announced in SIEC's radio program broadcasted twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays. Additionally, SIEC website link providing information on this competition has also been sent to schools and CSOs to communicate to students and teachers the additional time to place their submissions.

### Partnerships with CSOs supported by SECSIP

Village Technology Trust commenced implementation of the project to promote equal participation of Bellonese Women in Solomon Islands Leadership and Politics. This project included a 3-day long workshop (14-18 August) targeting 18 community members (15 female and 3 male) of the Matangi Women's Association (MWA) for the exploration and discussions on collective knowledge of women's leadership, and to identify cultural and other barriers for women to be successfully elected to political leadership positions. Day one of the workshop focused on community discussions on women's leadership, while day two and three focused on filmmaking, story drafting and the use of cameras to take short clips. The final video will comprise stories, suggested and prioritized by the participants, on supporting girls' education, aspiration of female students (documentary of a school), and traditional gender roles. The final product is expected to be shared on the Internet to reach a greater audience and create social media discussions and exchanges.

#### Progress made against

- *Increased capacity of communities to promote women's political participation*
  - Outreach to secondary schools through the school election project and the Secondary School Poster and Essay Competition, school awareness activities, and distribution of information materials to 250 secondary schools across all provinces
  - Strengthened community leaders' capacity to conduct discussions on women's leadership through filmmaking.

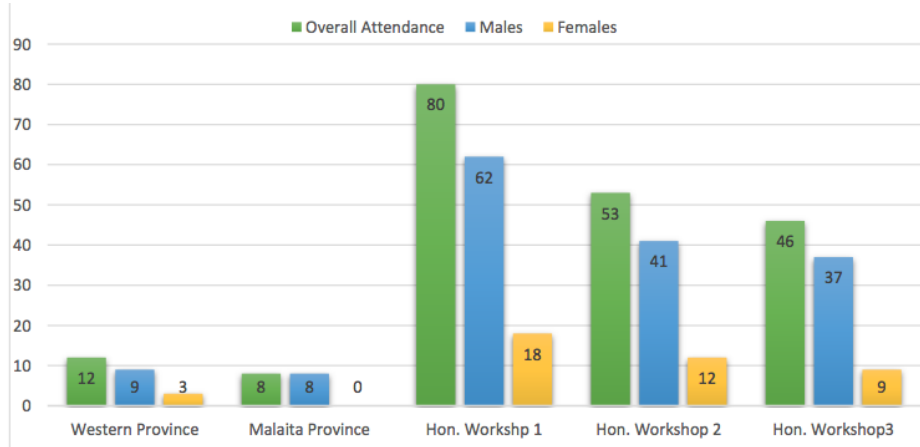
#### Follow-up actions

- Conducting of research on people's perspectives on women's leadership and political participation
- Completion of the 2017 essay competition

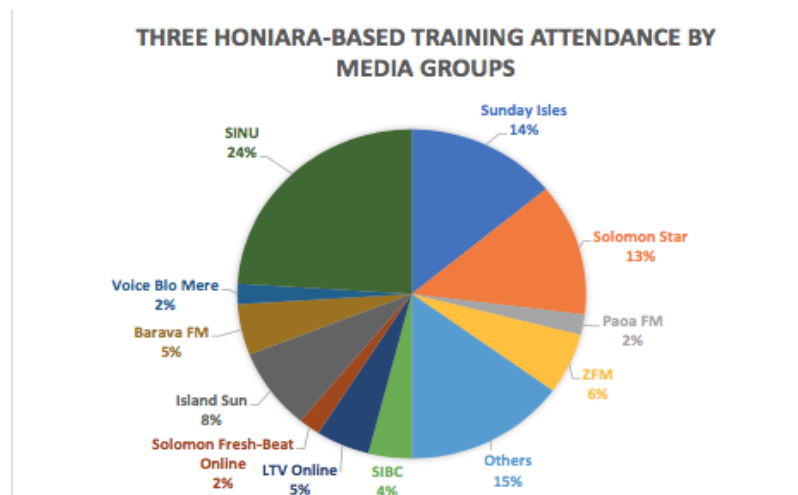
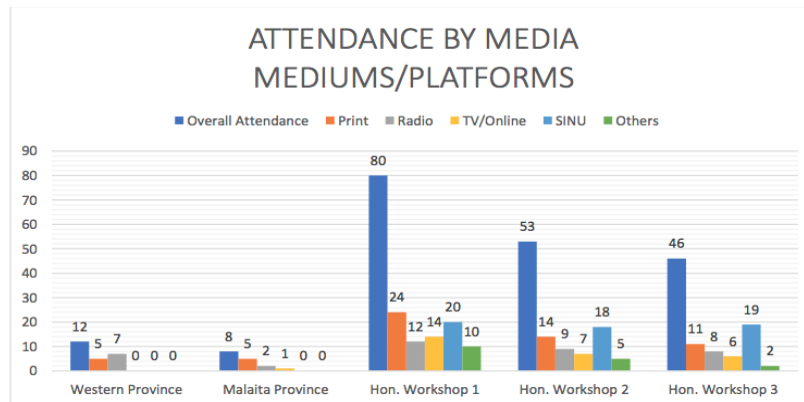
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### Annex 1. Media and Elections Training

#### Participants' distribution by gender



#### Participants' distribution by represented media group.



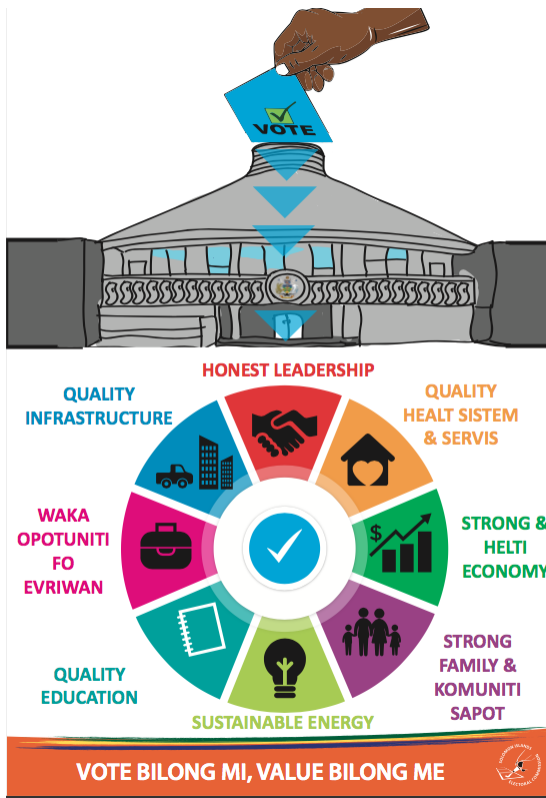
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Annex 2. Table summarizing feedback from media training participants.

Topics	Comments
<b>Media &amp; Democracy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very useful training for those of us in the provinces</li> <li>- I have never seen a media code of conduct, thanks to this training for bringing it.</li> <li>- What MASI stands for has been made very clear now</li> <li>- Would be good for MASI to talk to provincial based freelancers and deal with their problems.</li> </ul>
<b>Voter Registration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As a provincial base reporter, I feel this topic is very important because the election is coming up. Thank for learning a lot from you.</li> <li>- I have learned many new things and feel it broaden my knowledge and understanding of voter registration.</li> <li>- Thank you SIEC and MASI for bringing this training to the province</li> <li>-</li> <li>- Well done. Learn many new things today.</li> </ul>
<b>Candidates &amp; Campaigning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I am now clear on this issue.</li> <li>- This topic gives me confidence to report in the coming election.</li> <li>- Learn some of the most important tips on election reporting especially on campaigning.</li> <li>- Very informative training</li> </ul>
<b>Election Day</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learn many new things and how to prepare for the election day</li> <li>- Training useful for planning purposes.</li> <li>- Gives me a lot of understanding</li> </ul>
<b>Parliament</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This topic is very interesting, learn many new things.</li> <li>- Well presented</li> </ul>
<b>Political Parties in the SI</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very complicated topic that needs expert to present but good presentation and discussion today</li> <li>- Thanks for bringing this topic, interesting</li> <li>- I took a lot out</li> </ul>
<b>Political parties Integrity Act &amp; PPC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impressive topic, thanks for the handouts</li> <li>- Training gives me a lot of insight and understanding on this law</li> </ul>
<b>Electoral Reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This topic needs more updates on progresses, but great learning</li> <li>- Great discussion.</li> <li>- Thanks for letting us know of the propose changes.</li> <li>- Thanks for these trainings, very useful to us</li> </ul>
<b>Social Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very relevant topic, thanks for organizing this</li> <li>- Social Media is a big topic, and needs more time, but learn many new things today.</li> <li>- Best topic, keep it coming.</li> <li>- Thank you for organizing this training, I learn a lot</li> </ul>

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Annex 3. Poster Samples



(Parliament poster)



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