



Media trainings prepare journalists in the Solomon Islands for the upcoming electoral events

Oct 10, 2017



High turnout during one of the eight Election Media trainings held in Honiara for the Media Association of Solomon Islands (MASI) members

During the months of August and September, the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC), in partnership with the Media Association of the Solomon Islands (MASI) and with support of the UNDP's Strengthening the Electoral Cycle Project (SECSIP), have continued their collaboration and organized **two one-week trainings on Media and Elections for the reporters from the provinces and free-lance professionals** based in Gizo Island, Western Province and in Auki,

Malaita Province. SECSIP is funded by the European Union, the government of Australia and UNDP.

These provincial trainings are building on the eight successful Media & Election training sessions for journalists, held in Honiara every Saturday during the months of April and May. Each session was attended by more than 40 media professionals. This activity intends to provide the essential tools to **equip journalists and media professionals with the knowledge and skills** required to perform their role contributing to a peaceful, transparent and credible election process.

The provincial trainings were the first-ever to be conducted in the provinces and were overwhelmingly welcomed by province-based reporters and freelancers. The participants expressed deep appreciation to SIEC, MASI and SECSIP, including the donors, for extending the trainings to the provinces. "We've always been overlooked. Media trainings in the past only occur in Honiara, but we feel we are the focal points of contact when it comes to election to ensure a country-wide coverage of the processes," says a senior Solomon Islands Broadcasting Cooperation reporter based in Gizo, Adrian Sina.

In Gizo, a total of 12 reporters and freelancers, including two public relations officers and a female police officer representing community policing, attended the weeklong training. The participants come from various locations and islands within the province, from Munda to Vona Vona Lagoon. Mr Sina says the topics were very relevant and has prepared them well for the election period coverage.

The training was also organized in another province, Malaita, which attracted eight reporters and freelancers, representing various media organisations that are based in various regions of the province. Malaita training participants echoed the same sentiments, stating that some of them have worked without proper trainings or even refresher trainings for very long.





Some of the reporters and Freelancers took part in the Auki, Malaita Election Media Training

An active Solomon Islands Broadcasting Cooperation stringer, John Andrew Kiri, stated that during his 15-year service as a stringer with the national broadcaster, he has never seen any media trainings conducted in the province. "When I heard that this training is coming, I was very excited because I was like a person who always goes to his food garden without a machete," Mr Kiri says.

Other participants said that they want to see more trainings conducted in the provinces because media organisations based in Honiara depend on their services every day. "Media organisations based in Honiara will hugely depend on the service of these provincial reporters during the Election period therefore, the trainings were a boost to preparation of media personnel throughout the Solomon Islands", Solomon Star Auki newsroom supervisor Wilson Saeni said. "The trainings will definitely have a positive impact in the upcoming election period", Mr Saeni added.

MASI also welcomed the initiative to take the Election Media trainings to the provinces because of the increasing number of the province-based reporters and freelancers. It is expected that a

strengthened collaboration between SIEC and the media will enhance the media coverage of next political processes.

Since 2013, UNDP Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands Project (SECSIP) has contributed to the inclusiveness and integrity of the electoral process. The project supported the successful introduction of a new comprehensive biometric voter registration system which resulted in more inclusive and reliable voter rolls and continues to provide assistance in terms of its updating and sustainability. The project also supports the review of the electoral legal framework with a view to promote the strengthening of the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC) and assist to the fulfilment of its mandate. It also strengthens the capacity of the SIEC to advocate for women's political participation and supports the national authorities and civil society organizations in raising awareness of the population regarding voting and civic engagement. SECSIP is generously funded by the European Union, the government of Australia and UNDP.



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