

### III. Community Governance Assessments

Community governance assessments<sup>26</sup> attempted to ascertain the extent to which people in Pacific islands grassroots communities understood both traditional and modern (national) governance institutions and processes, and how both systems impacted them and their communities. A total of 20 communities in four countries (Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu) participated in the study. A number of participatory tools and procedures were used to guide research and analysis in case study communities. The assessments also created opportunities for the communities to participate and learn from the process of information gathering. The community governance assessments complemented the ADB-conducted assessments of public sector governance. An understanding of grassroots community perspectives on governance was intended to enable better targeting of ADB assistance toward the relevant groups and the relevant areas for improvement.

Key findings of the community assessments confirm that

- (i) traditional custom and values have a strong impact on the conduct of the electoral system and national governance;
- (ii) at the grassroots level, while there is little understanding of the national governance systems and processes, communities have strong expectations that the national and lower levels of government will provide basic public services; and
- (iii) a decline of knowledge of community values and respect for chiefly authority are seen as contributing to the proliferation of land disputes at grassroots level and to crime at other levels of government.

The Appendix provides more information on the community assessments.

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<sup>26</sup> ADB. 2002. RETA 6065, *Assessing Community Perspectives on Governance in the Pacific*.