

AGORA, Portal for
Parliamentary Development



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Welcome to the second AGORA Newsletter!

AGORA, the Portal for Parliamentary development, is proud to present its second newsletter.

AGORA is a multilateral initiative of the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, the **World Bank Institute (WBI)**, the **National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)**, the **International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)**, and the **European Commission**. The Portal was successfully launched in March 2010 in Paris, and marked the birth of the first virtual platform for knowledge sharing on parliamentary development.

This quarterly newsletter presents the latest information, knowledge and activities in the field of parliamentary development, and keeps you informed of recent activities in this growing field. For more information, we invite you to consult AGORA at www.agora-parl.org, or visit our partner institutions.

If you want to contribute or have any questions, please mail to: moderator@agora-parl.org

Parliamentary digest

To find out what has happened these past months, [click here](#).

Recent Resources

To consult the newest and upcoming resources in our library, [click here](#).

Calendar

To view the complete calendar of upcoming events, [click here](#).

Analysis



The role of Parliamentary Organisations in Monitoring the Democratic Performance of Parliaments - by K. SCOTT HUBLI. "The potential for PMOs to play a greater role in monitoring parliamentary performance against international democratic benchmarks seems clear. Civil society organizations have played a similar role in other areas of democratic development – particularly elections. Over the years, the international community ..." [Click here to read more](#)

Area of Expertise



Global Parliamentary Report: Parliament and Citizens – by GREG POWER. "The focus of what will be the first in a series of global parliamentary reports is the relationship between parliaments and citizens. Parliamentary legitimacy rests to a large extent on the way in which the institutions respond ..." [Click here to read more](#)

Chronicle



Hon. BERNADETTE LAHAI, Member of Parliament (Sierra Leone). "It is women's constitutional right to vote and be voted for. Numerically, they make up 51% of the population and since politics is about number, we expect that the gender that forms the largest proportion of the population should have that same representation in parliament. In addition, it makes economic sense to fully utilise all of a country's human resources, both potential and actual. 'Womanitics', or the use of women in development politics..." [Click here to read more](#)



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AGORA wishes you an excellent 2011. In this second AGORA newsletter, we offer you the chance to explore one of the essential missions of parliamentary assemblies, namely their function of representation. Democracy is a complex system involving several actors who influence one another. Parliaments are one of the core institutions of such democratic systems, and their representative function constitutes an indispensable element by establishing a link between citizens and their governments. This function was deemed so vital that the UNDP and the IPU decided to join forces to produce a first Global Parliamentary Development Report entitled "Parliament and Citizens". As Greg Power, who is in charge of this report, puts it in his article: « Parliamentary legitimacy rests to a large extent on the way in which the institutions respond to the needs and expectations of voters. But this is a permanently shifting relationship, and parliaments need to be continually evolving and adapting to the challenges that they face ».

To begin with, assemblies, which are composed of representatives elected by the population, should fairly reflect the different segments of this population in all its diversity. Consequently, assemblies should properly represent the groups whose access to spheres of influence and power is traditionally more arduous, such as women or minorities.

Legislative and government oversight functions will undoubtedly be influenced by the composition of the assembly. Only when this composition is fair will they genuinely reflect the mandate granted by citizens.

Hon. Bernadette Lahai, member of Sierra Leone parliament, answered AGORA's questions on her experience as a female MP and on the challenges that the Sierra Leone parliament has faced in relation to the reconstruction and development of the country.

The representative function also means that parliaments and MPs engage in an active dialogue with citizens in order to understand and integrate their opinions and perspectives in the laws and oversight of the government.

Strengthening the ties between representatives and citizens is of particular relevance. In order to boost this synergy, some parliaments have set up « Constituency Development Funds » (CDFs). Marc Baskin explains the advantages and disadvantages of this mechanism.

The representative function also entails access to and transparency of the parliamentary institution. A new trend has emerged in this field, resulting in the assessment and monitoring of parliamentary performance by civil society. Scott Hubli explains this new phenomenon, which was the subject of a joint study conducted by NDI and WBI which identified approximately 190 active parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) in some 80 countries.

Clearly, the relationship between the parliament and citizens is a complex, yet crucial one. As a platform for the exchange of knowledge and know-how in the area of parliamentary development, AGORA also wishes to contribute to the consolidation of this relationship both as a place for the exchange of knowledge, practices and successes in this field (area of expertise) and as a meeting place for parliaments, parliamentarians and other public and political life actors. The latter are encouraged to debate and exchange ideas on the issue of parliamentary strengthening, as parliaments are considered to be central and unifying actors that can act as important vehicles of change in development policies.

We hope to count you among our active members so you can participate in the exchange and mutual strengthening of capacities in the area of parliamentary development and, more specifically, of representation. The broader participation of each one of you in the first Global Parliamentary Development Report on the topic « Parliament and Citizens », via the group that was recently created for this purpose on our Trusted Area, is one of AGORA's main objectives for 2011.

Enjoy your reading!



23-24 September 2010: European Commission – Workshop/Training on Parliamentary Support (Brussels, Belgium)

The objective of the training workshop, which took place in the European Parliament in Brussels, was to familiarise staff with parliamentary development, so that they are better equipped when implementing parliamentary support programmes. Participants also learned about different ways in which parliaments can be engaged in development assistance and national development strategies.

[Read more...](#)



25-29 October 2010: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association - Parliaments, Aid Effectiveness, and Conflict Prevention Workshop (Vienna, Austria)

Following the Parliaments, Aid Effectiveness, and Conflict Prevention Workshop at the Joint Vienna Institute in Austria, representatives from eight Commonwealth Parliaments in countries recently or currently affected by violent conflicts, agreed on recommendations to expand the role of Parliament in preventing and resolving serious conflicts that destabilize entire nations.

Based on their countries' experiences in conflict and post-conflict recovery and assisted by specialists from six international organizations, the 14 Parliamentarians analyzed the types of conflicts affecting nations today, their causes, the economic and social conditions which help escalate disputes into violent conflicts and the responses of Parliament and other state institutions. They recognized that Parliamentarians have a leading role in conflict prevention and building a durable peace.

[Read more...](#)



31 October – 03 November 2010: International Parliamentary Conference on Parliaments, Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Effective Participation in Politics (Chiapas, Mexico)

The conference held in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, aimed at advancing the agenda of democracy by identifying ways in which parliaments everywhere can be more open to the participation of minorities and indigenous peoples. It examined how the double discrimination faced by women belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples can be overcome. It also looked at how parliaments and their members can more effectively promote and defend the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples.

Members of parliament from some forty countries from all regions were debating these issues during three days in the company of experts, UN officials and others. The conference took place in Chiapas, a State in Southern Mexico where a very large proportion of the population is indigenous.

Following the conference, the Chiapas Declaration on the representation of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in parliament has been adopted.

[Read more...](#)

10-11 November 2010: APF Parliamentary Seminar in Benin on Democracy and Good Economic Governance. (Cotonou, Benin)



Debates, which were animated by six parliamentarians from different francophone countries (Benin, Gabon and Senegal), focused on issues related to the powers of parliaments in terms of budget oversight, to the role of standing committees, the role of parliaments on the international scene and financial transparency of political life.

The study of budget control revealed a pressing need to include parliamentarians closely in the elaboration of finance laws whether in the preparation, by holding, inter alia, budget-oriented debates, or in the execution by relying on the conclusions drawn by independent authorities such as the Court of Auditors or the auditor-general.

The topic of financial transparency of political life allowed the confrontation of the different experiences concerning the measures laid down by most democracies in order to sanitize political life.

Debates also dealt with the role of committees and tackled the new structures established in order to support traditional oversight means, as well as the role of parliaments on the international level.

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18-19 December 2010: Work Bank Institute - Asia Regional Public Accounts Committees Meeting (Dhaka, Bangladesh)

A workshop for PACs, and committees with similar responsibilities, from across Asia took place in Dhaka, December 18 – 19. This was a follow-up to the South Asia meeting held in Dhaka in November 2009 and concluded with the formal establishment of the Asia Regional Association of PACs (ARAPAC). The workshop was organized by the program with support from the IMF, CPA, USAID Afghanistan and the Asia Foundation (TAF) Timor Leste office. Representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, the Maldives, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Thailand Timor Leste and Viet Nam participated.



02 - 04 December 2010: Annual Conference of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (Brussels, Belgium)

The Annual Conference is PNoWB's flagship event, bringing together over 200 network members, leaders from civil society and partner organizations, and top officials from a number of International Financial Institutions including the World Bank, IMF and regional development banks.

These are the four leading themes for this year's conference: Financing for Development, Evidence-Based Policymaking in Development, Aid Effectiveness and Alignment and, MDG Review.

[Read more...](#)

UNDP Update on Parliamentary Development and Crisis Prevention

Effective and empowered parliaments and political parties can act as important actors in crisis prevention and post-conflict recovery through mediation, the promotion of dialogue, the adoption of conflict sensitive laws which address the very sources of violence and a better representation of the population by increasing the political participation of women and minority groups.

On the basis of the [UNDP Guidelines for the International Community on Parliaments, Crisis Prevention and Recovery](#), UNDP launched a set of activities to better address and enhance the crucial role parliaments play in crisis prevention and recovery. In 2010, our parliamentary development and crisis prevention activities at national, regional and global levels in three regions (namely the Arab States region, Central America and West Africa) led to the following successes:

A methodology has been finalized on building the capacity of a parliament to respond to crisis prevention and recovery issues through a dedicated self-assessment tool that has been shared with regional parliamentary groups in the Arab States region, Central America and West Africa and piloted in two countries in West Africa to effectively support the capacities of parliaments to address these challenges in conducive political environments (Togo and Guinea-Bissau).

Three parliamentary working groups were launched and consolidated in the Arab States region, Central America and West Africa on key crisis prevention and recovery (CPR) themes, including security sector reform (SSR). These regional networks are composed of both members of parliaments (MPs) and parliamentary administration staff from the regions who have been actively engaged in sharing their experiences and facilitating south-south exchanges, within each region, on key crisis prevention and recovery themes through regional meetings, and on the AGORA parliamentary development platform where dedicated regional groups have been created to continue the dialogue (www.agora-parl.org). During these parliamentary working groups, dialogue was also reinforced with **regional parliamentary**

organizations (ECOWAS Parliament in West Africa, Parlacen and Parlantino in Central America), key **regional and international partners** (such as the *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)*, the *United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC)*, The *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)*), **civil society organizations** (Lebanese Parliamentary Monitor and Yemen Parliamentary Watch in the Arab States region, *West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA)*, *West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)*, and **practitioners** (European Commission, Canadian CIDA, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), USAID) .



A global platform on parliamentary development and crisis prevention was launched and is now available for knowledge sharing for parliamentarians and practitioners on the AGORA portal for parliamentary development ([Click here to read more](#)). This platform offers key documents, guidelines to improve parliamentary performance, success stories and knowledge products. Awareness-raising videos and short movies on the important role parliaments can play in crisis prevention and recovery (CPR) are also available ([Read more](#)).

New research on emerging CPR themes were produced and shared with parliamentarians and practitioners in the regions to better inform parliaments on important CPR challenges such as electoral and political violence, gender-based violence, armed violence, regional crisis prevention mechanisms, the role of political parties and state building.



Hon. Bernadette Lahai holds a Ph.D in Agricultural Extension and Rural Development. She worked for 13 years at the Agricultural Research Institute in Sierra Leone, specializing in gender issues agricultural and technology research and development. Hon. Lahai also worked as a FAO National Consultant for a Women's Project in Sierra Leone, and as a Gender and Social Sector Expert in the development of the Sierra Leone Vision 2025. She joined politics in 2002 and has been a Parliamentarian since then. Hon. Lahai is a gender and women's activist, and member of many women's and professional organizations.

Women remain underrepresented in parliaments worldwide. Why, in your experience, is it so important to have women in parliament? What can they bring to further assist development?

As a first point, it is women's constitutional right to vote and be voted for. Numerically, they make up 51% of the population and since politics is about numbers, we expect that the gender that forms the largest proportion of the population should have that same representation in

“ The biggest challenge has been to put the national interest above party interests ”

parliament. In addition, it makes economic sense to fully utilise all of a country's human resources, both potential and actual. 'Womanitics', or the use of women in development efforts, is increasingly viewed as highly efficient and necessary. Women bring their unique personal and group experiences to bear on legislation; they are by nature more long-term thinking, which is the foundation for the leap most newly industrialised countries like Malaysia and Indonesia have made. Women naturally work through consensus rather than competition, which could have positive effects on all parliamentary procedures. Finally, as women have historically been marginalised, they will strive to ensure that the laws parliament enacts serve to protect marginalised groups, including women, youth, the elderly, orphans, ethnic minorities and so forth.

As a Member of Parliament in a post-conflict state, how have you experienced the role of your parliament in post-conflict reconstruction in Sierra Leone? What aspects have been most challenging to the institution, and what lessons could be learned from this?

Parliament has been instrumental in post-conflict reconstruction in three key ways. Firstly, with respect to legislation, it has repealed and incorporated the decrees of the military junta into laws, and has amended or passed new laws that address some of the causes of the conflict, such as the Political Party Registration Act, the establishment of the National Electoral Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Small Arms and Light Weapons Commission, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Secondly, the parliament has worked on increased oversight of the executive for equitable and effective use of finances and funding. Finally, more attention is being paid to the representation of constituents and their needs, with an emphasis on those issues and challenges that government should seek to address. Considerable problems persist, however. The biggest challenge has been to put the national interest above party interests, due to the considerable influence of political parties on the decisions MPs take in parliament, and due to the tremendous power given to the President. In addition, parliament has an attrition rate of over 80%, transparency and accountability remain weak due to patronage. Politicisation of every issue in the country makes these features difficult to reform. ►►

One of the Millennium Development Goals is to provide all children with basic education. Basic education is a building block for democracy, as it teaches us about 'vivre ensemble', the exclusion of violence, and the importance of dialogue. What tools do parliaments have at their disposal to help foster basic education for all? How can oversight of government, legal mechanisms, and lawmaking ensure that all children can attend primary school?

Consultation with constituents on needs, problems and potential solutions to educational needs is crucial, as is oversight of the executive. A parliamentary network for the exchange of experiences, expert hearings, and cooperation with CSOs could do much to improve policy-making on this topic as well. What is important as well, and this goes beyond education as a policy field alone, is to ensure communication between all stakeholders so that gaps in implementation can be identified and adequate corrective measures can be taken. This is done through setting and reviewing performance targets; field visits; keeping citizens informed and soliciting their technical, financial and moral feedback; and through accurate supervision of the educational projects and through oversight of the executive.

In fragmented societies, such as post-conflict countries, the link between democratic institutions and citizens is particularly important. MPs should ensure that they represent their constituents adequately by communicating with them through a constant and ongoing dialogue. At the same time, exchanges with their peers in parliament should ensure that a consensus can be reached on policies. In this light, the role of parliament in rebuilding the social and political structures of the nation, and in achieving reconciliation, is crucial. How can parliaments best play this role?

The main way for parliaments to play this role is by ensuring through legislation that both restorative and retributive justice are undertaken to forestall reoccurrence. At the same

time, legislation should redress the factors that led to the conflict in the first place such as social inclusion, free and fair elections, accountability and transparency, political tolerance, etc. Throughout, accountability is indispensable, as is a constant dialogue with constituents. Lastly, parliament should be alert to early warning signs of imminent conflict, and be proactive and forward-looking in its approach – only then can tragedies be prevented and can reconstruction achieve lasting, sustainable results.

The Millennium Development Goals are the most well-known mechanism in the global fight against poverty. How important are pro-poor policies in your region, and what can parliaments do to design and implement them with a view to achieving the MDGs?

The importance of pro-poor policies has been reflected in Sierra Leone's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the incorporation of gender budgeting in the budget process, prioritising rural and agricultural development as means of reversing rural-urban migration, and projects that will increase access of the poor to sustainable income, and a pro-poor focus in the development budget. What can and should still be done in the future is speedily ratify

“ Legislation should redress the factors that led to conflict “

loans and grants focusing on pro-poor programmes, and monitor their progress so that potential setbacks and needs can be addressed. In addition, parliament should ensure that the domestic revenue base is strengthened and monitored so as to make adequate allocations to effectively implement pro-poor programmes. To support these initiatives, constituents should be educated concerning their roles and responsibilities, and leadership and skills training should be provided. Finally, as I have stressed before, effective oversight is absolutely essential – only that way can these programmes be truly efficient.

Parliamentary Function of Representation

In democratic parliaments, MPs are elected by the citizens. Through the electoral system, parliamentary seats are distributed to render MPs accountable to a specific constituency within a particular geographic, ethnic, religious, or other grouping or of a particular interest or political view. This link to citizens is the basis of parliaments' representative function.

The parliament, as the total sum of these differences, represents the beliefs and ideas of a nation. The composition of the assembly should therefore adequately reflect the entire population in all its diversity, including women and minorities.

The representative function of parliament is indeed characterized by its role as venue for the expression and debate of issues of local, national and international importance, and the translation of those debates into policies.

How citizens view their interactions with their parliamentarians may dictate the effectiveness of these MPs in fulfilling their representative role. In many countries, weakness in the representative capacity of the parliament poses a significant threat to democratic advancement. It is clear that there is a growing lack of confidence in

representative institutions. The relative lack of confidence in the political institutions that act as intermediaries between citizens' concerns and government policy – parliament and political parties – suggests a strong disconnect between representative institutions and their constituents.

Furthermore, the legal and political context can either encourage or constrain parliamentary representation. New democracies emerging from authoritarian regimes often inherit a legal structure that was not designed to encourage public involvement or participation in the legislative process. It is important to consider this framework and its implications for strategies that seek to increase the representative capacity of the parliament. Governance and electoral systems clearly affect the mechanics of representation. Finally, even if a well-conceived legal and political framework can encourage effective representation, parliaments also need the human and financial resources necessary to support the representative function.

Context and Framework

The social context is also crucial. Actors outside the



UNDP - The Legislature and Constituency Relations

This document of UNDP focuses on the relationship between the legislature and the constituency. First of all, the focus goes to the importance of legislative-constituency relations and interaction. Secondly, key issues and challenges for legislatures in developing countries are examined. Thirdly, activities and structures to enhance legislative constituency relations are tackled.



l'Assemblée Nationale (France) - Les activités internationales de l'Assemblée Nationale

This document mainly consists of several fact sheets from the book "The International Activities of the National Assembly." It is supplemented by new developments in the field of external relations, on the observation of elections and on interparliamentary organizations.



NDI & UNDP - Guidebook on Strengthening the Representative Capacity of Legislatures

This paper was prepared as by NDI and UNP and is intended as a practical guide for those designing programs to strengthen the representative capacity of legislatures in emerging democracies. Some program options are listed and several implementation issues are examined.

► parliament should indeed have sufficient information about how they can provide input and about how to advocate and monitor the parliament. Weak civil society's capacity for parliamentary representation can be an issue even in countries with a vibrant civil society and press. In emerging democracies, civil society may have had years of experience in acting as a watchdog or critic of an authoritarian regime, but may lack the capacity to effectively advocate for changes in policy through the parliament and their capacity to effectively advocate for changes in policy through the parliament and their representatives. Moreover, the mechanisms by which civil society and the press exercise a watchdog role also change with the emergence of a more democratic regime. Civic education is then crucial to inform the public about the structure, roles and functions of parliament and citizen's rights and responsibilities in a democratic nation.

Communication and Outreach

It is particularly important for parliaments and parliamentarians to be equipped with the institutional and political capacities to facilitate the function of representation.

Many parliaments have outreach offices that seek to facilitate the flow of information in and out of parliament. They may

also contain special services designed to assist the capacity of MPs to communicate with civil society organizations, the government, and other stakeholders.

Some elementary factors can guarantee a minimum of publicity for the parliamentary work as the publicity of debates in plenary and in committee meetings and the access to the parliamentary documents, namely via the official parliament's website.

The development of a parliamentary website constitutes a powerful tool for information and exchanges which allows bringing closer the citizens and their representatives and strengthening transparency of the parliamentary activities.

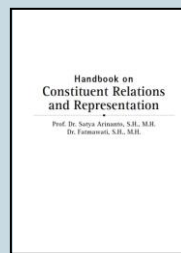
Due to the importance today played by the audiovisual media in the constitution of the public opinion, the important tools can be the diffusion of the parliamentary activities. So democratic parliaments may also have television or radio stations, websites, and publications designed to help include citizens in the policy process.

Contact, information and communication between parliament and the media are also key elements allowing a good understanding of the parliamentary activities by the citizens and constituting the roots a constructive dialogue.



Senat (France) – Guide Pratique de la Communication Parlementaire

Communication is a democratic and institutional imperative for all contemporary parliaments. Parliaments are faced with a common challenge: the deficit between the preeminent place they occupy in the institutions and their lack of



UNDP – Handbook on Constituent Relations and Representation

The book illustrates the importance of building relations with constituents and provides information about how to build an effective communication strategy. The book provides ideas on how to best follow-up the input from constituents, the advantages a constituent office, and how to support the constituent relations of members.



IPU & UNDP – The Representation of Minorities and Indigenous People in Parliament

This publication provides an overview of the state of minority representation in national legislatures. The publication is the result of a Survey conducted in 2009 by IPU and UNDP, focusing on national-level rules, parliamentary group-level norms and regulations and opinions of individual parliamentarians.

Legislatures and the Subversion of Representation

Given the representative role that legislatures play in democracies, undemocratic regimes often use the legislative form to cloak undemocratic practices. The appearance of collective decision-making and voting lends an air of legitimacy, even if the parliament may be relegated to “rubber stamping” government policy with no real debate or review.

► Dialogue

A parliament, to play its role as key representative institution in the democratic system should also ensure the dialogue with all the actors of the public life, to listen to the needs and social tensions, in their entire diversity, in order to complete in the best manner its oversight and lawmaking functions. The effectiveness and the efficacy of the law and the oversight of the government’s policies are closely linked to that.

For parliaments and their MPs, effective representation requires engaging the citizens in dialogue in order to understand their views and perspectives, with the aim to utilize the powers vested in their office (i.e. legislating, participating in debates, authoring questions, etc.) to voice the resulting ideas.

To ensure this dialogue, several mechanisms can be established. Public hearings and field committee visits for example, can provide opportunities for legislators to hear the views of experts and citizens on public policy issues which they can then express accordingly.

Because citizens cannot know how they are being represented if the parliament is opaque and MPs are uncommunicative, transparency has an important bearing on the representative function. The presence of the representatives in their constituencies is also an essential point. In some countries, parliaments may even provide funding to assist MPs in setting up offices in their constituencies and to offset the costs of travel.

In addition, citizens in new democracies often wish to actively exercise democratic freedoms by engaging with elected

representatives to improve the quality of life in their country. When opportunities for this engagement do not exist or are ineffective in changing government policy, support for democracy is eroded.

In some countries, MPs may be expected to lobby on behalf of their constituencies for specific projects or financial considerations. The representative role of MPs requires that they return to their constituencies and demonstrate their accomplishments. Aside from re-engaging constituents in dialogue, sometimes MPs may also provide other types of constituency services, including casework (i.e. helping to solve constituents’ problems). The establishment of “local parliamentary offices” (e.g. in Laos, Vietnam, China) or “parliamentary conferences” which essentially entail “transporting” the parliament or committee to the provinces, the creation of information centers for the parliament’s visitors and the organization of ‘youth parliaments’ are other examples of this active dialogue between citizens and parliaments.

It is also common for parliaments to have bureaus specifically designed to engage with other parliaments and institutions from foreign countries. Indeed under the parliamentary function of representation, the establishment and maintenance of relations with other parliaments should also be mentioned; this can range from the simple exchange of information to formal visits conducted on a reciprocal basis. These “parliamentary exchanges” enhance ties with other countries and facilitate the sharing of ideas, values, knowledge and experience. The international relations of the parliaments and their members can also take place thanks to the parliamentary associations and inter-parliamentary groups.

To explore AGORA’s knowledge module on Parliamentary Function of Representation, please [click here](#)

The Global Parliamentary Report – Parliament and Citizens

By Greg Power

Towards the end of 2011 the UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union will jointly publish the first Global Parliamentary Report. The intention is to provide an assessment of the state of parliaments worldwide – examining their changing role and the way in which they are responding to the increasingly complex demands of governance, citizens and society. And, as part of the process, we are keen to draw on the insights and expertise within the Agora community.

The focus of what will be the first in a series of global parliamentary reports is the relationship between parliaments and citizens. Parliamentary legitimacy rests to a large extent on the way in which the institutions respond to the needs and expectations of voters. But this is a permanently shifting relationship, and parliaments need to be continually evolving and adapting to the challenges that they face. The aim of the report is to examine how these challenges are playing themselves out in different parts of the world and, critically, explore examples of parliamentary innovation which have sought to deepen the dialogue between people and politicians.

The analysis will be built around four broad themes – and it is in each of these that we are seeking advice from members of Agora. The first is the way in which political representation is itself changing. It appears that parliaments old and new are facing similar pressures from citizens for greater consultation, forms of more direct democracy and heightened public expectations created by the immediacy of modern communication methods.

We need to understand how those pressures are manifesting themselves. Particularly in relation to the role being played by political parties (and their parliamentary caucuses) as the principal vehicles for representation and their critical role in determining the effectiveness of the parliament. We are also



Greg Power is a Director of the social purpose company Global Partners and Associates. He has worked on projects to support the development of legislative institutions and political parties in the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans, and is currently engaged with the Iraqi Council of Representatives. He was previously employed by the British government, as a special adviser to Rt Hon Robin Cook MP and Rt Hon Peter Hain MP, advising on parliamentary reform and wider issues of democratic renewal. Prior to this he was Director of the Parliament and Government Programme at the Hansard Society. He is a Senior Visiting Fellow at the LSE's Centre for Global Governance.

attempting to find out whether parliaments of a similar age are facing similar problems – those in each of Samuel Huntington's 'three waves' of democracy for example.

The second theme is more specifically how parliaments *collectively* engage with and represent the public. In other words, it will look at how parliaments involve individuals and organisations during the course of their legislative, budgetary and oversight functions. What are the ways in which parliaments draw on evidence from the public, how easy is it for members of the public to participate and which parliaments are using innovative ways of consulting voters?

It will seek to assess how well parliaments are engaging with the outside world in key policy areas, such as health, education or the environment, and highlight innovative ways (including the use of ICT) in which greater consultation has had an impact on policy development. It will also seek to identify good practices – among parliaments, governments, ►

- ▶ the media and civil society – that enable voters to better understand the role and work of parliament and improve the quality of legislation and oversight.

As well as a collective representative function, politicians have an *individual* representative function. This is the third theme – exploring the way in which they respond to individual voters or groups of voters. This is a key dynamic in every parliament, and often at the heart of how politicians see themselves, but one which is too often overlooked.

How, for example, does the ‘electoral incentive’ affect their work inside and outside parliament? This varies according to the electoral system, with list systems encouraging greater loyalty to party chiefs, and constituency systems meaning that politicians are often judged by voters on what they deliver locally.

Anecdotal evidence suggests there is a huge amount of innovation being undertaken by politicians, and a huge variety in the way in which these roles are pursued. We will aim to highlight these and identify some key characteristics of constituency work. We will also look at the impact of constituency development funds in different countries, exploring the pros and cons of this recent trend.

The final theme is the way in which parliaments are communicating with voters. That is, how they reach out and explain their role to the public. This will pay particular attention to public attitudes to parliament (and how these contrast with the opinions of parliamentarians themselves) about how well the institutions are fulfilling their expected roles.

It appears that in many countries attitudes are based on limited understanding and unrealistic expectations of what politicians can do. But that perception needs to be understood. The analysis will look at the issue of trust in politicians and parliaments, its causes and dynamics, and highlight some of the measures that parliaments have taken to address mistrust.

As a first stage we are aiming to map the field of parliamentary development programmes and identify stories, examples and case studies, particularly around the four themes. We would welcome examples of support programmes designed to improve the relationship between voters and politicians, the challenges of public expectations in different countries and innovations in constituency service, parliamentary practice or outreach.

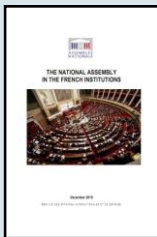
Our analysis is premised on the belief that parliaments perform vital roles in representative democracies which cannot be replicated by any other institution or actor. But maintaining their legitimacy means continuing to evolve at the same pace as the societies they seek to represent. We hope that with your help the report will offer insights, advice and innovation to this end.

If you would like further information please contact Greg Power – greg@global-partners.co.uk.

The Global Parliamentary Report is designed to be a practical rather than an academic analysis of the state of parliaments. We are therefore very keen to draw on the experience of those working in the field. To this end the AGORA Trusted Area group *Global Parliamentary Report – Parliament and Citizens* is designed to find real examples about the way in which the parliament-citizen relationship is changing in different countries, and about how parliaments (and politicians) are responding to those challenges. We want to identify examples and case studies which provide substance for the report, and information on the range of parliamentary support programmes designed to improve representation - and AGORA members provide the most useful source of expertise and insight.

To request membership of Trusted Area and join the group *Global Parliamentary Report – Parliament and Citizens*, please go to

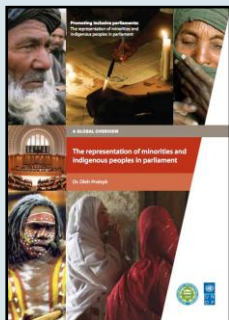
<https://agora.trustedarea.net/login>



The National Assembly in the French Institutions

Developed by the French Department of International Relations as a work tool at the disposal of its foreign interlocutors, parliamentarians and officials meetings, the "Compendium of Data Sheets" addresses all of the parliamentary institutions.

[Click here to read more](#)



UNDP – IPU: A global Overview: "The representation of minorities and indigenous peoples in parliament"

The publication "A global overview: The representation of minorities and indigenous peoples in parliament" provides an overview of the state of minority representation in national legislatures. The publication is the result of a Survey conducted in 2009 by IPU and UNDP, focusing on national-level rules and regulations, parliamentary group-level norms and regulations and opinions of individual parliamentarians.

The parliamentary representation of minorities and indigenous peoples is essential for ensuring these groups' effective participation in public affairs. Whether minorities and indigenous peoples are actually present in legislatures, whether their voices are heard, and whether their interests are taken into account are all important indicators of minority/indigenous participation in decision making on a national level. Such participation has the potential to benefit everyone in a society. It can help to strengthen democracy, greatly improve the quality of political life, facilitate societal integration and prevent conflict. [Click here to read more](#)



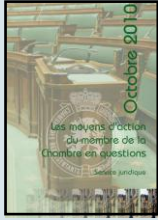
Journal of Democracy – "The Elusive Synthesis" by Thomas Carothers

Development aid and democracy support have become increasingly interconnected, but cooperation between them is only partial and its future uncertain. Traditional divisions between the two domains narrowed in the 1990s amidst increases in international aid budgets and optimism about dual transitions to democracy and markets. Development agencies increasingly recognize the importance of governance and political context in their work while democracy organizations address the challenge of helping democracy deliver the on citizens' socioeconomic demands. Yet both domains remain wary of integration. Many developmentalists are fearful of politicizing aid while democracy experts worry that democracy goals be subordinated to economic objectives. [Click here to read more](#)



European Parliamentary Forum - The Role of Parliamentarians in Advancing the Health MDGs

This handbook presents an all-encompassing view of parliamentarians' role in EU decision-making in relation to global health, provides balanced examples of good donor practice, and makes strong recommendations for effective aid and the appropriate priority for health. It contains a guide to existing European commitments to global health and the role of parliamentarians in monitoring delivery of those commitments to the health-related MDGs. [Click here to read more](#)



The Chamber of Representatives (Belgium) - The means of action available to MPs

The present manual, which is addressed to all MPs, aims at answering the following question: « What can I do individually in order to participate in the best possible way in the exercise by the Parliament of its oversight and legislative functions? [Click here to read more](#)



European Commission – “Engaging and Supporting Parliaments Worldwide. Strategies and Methodologies for EC action in support to Parliaments”

This Reference Document is a practical tool for use in planning European Commission (EC) parliamentary strengthening programmes and to a lesser extent in engaging with parliaments in development cooperation in partner countries. It is geared for use by European Union (EU) Delegation staff, both political and operations staff, but is also of use to other actors (donors, practitioners) as well as parliamentarians and parliamentary staff involved in parliamentary strengthening.

The Introduction places parliamentary development in the broader context of EU development assistance, specifically as a key component of democracy support. Furthermore, the aid effectiveness agenda requires a strengthened reliance on domestic accountability systems, in which parliaments will play a pivotal role, leading to a higher priority for parliamentary strengthening in development assistance frameworks. The introduction provides a brief description of parliaments and their place in democratic systems of governance.

The first part of the document highlights an assessment carried out of support provided to parliamentary development in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries in 2000-2009, assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the EC’s work in this area and makes recommendations for future EC- funded parliamentary support programmes.

The second part discusses the aim of parliamentary development — trying to achieve an institution that plays its constitutional role effectively and exercises its powers appropriately. The chapter discusses the broader political conditions that enable effective parliaments to function, addresses the crucial relationship between parliament and civil society in democratic development, underlines the preconditions for a successful parliamentary development programme, such as the will to become stronger, the ability to exercise the full range of constitutional powers over legislation, oversight and representation required for the effective functioning of a legislature in a contemporary liberal democracy.

This chapter also presents an Assessment Framework for parliamentary development, a practical tool designed to assist EC delegations and their partners as well as parliaments to develop an understanding of the current strengths and weaknesses of parliamentary functions, and with the elaboration of effective parliamentary development programmes. Finally, the impact of external factors, in particular the role of donors, on the feasibility of parliamentary development programmes is analysed.

The third part presents a series of key principles for parliamentary support and discusses in detail the different strategic entry points or intervention modalities for EC parliamentary support programmes. It presents and discusses also three general types of approach to parliamentary support programmes, the institutional model, the party model and the civil society model, as well as a strategic development planning approach which allows the different elements of the three models to be integrated.

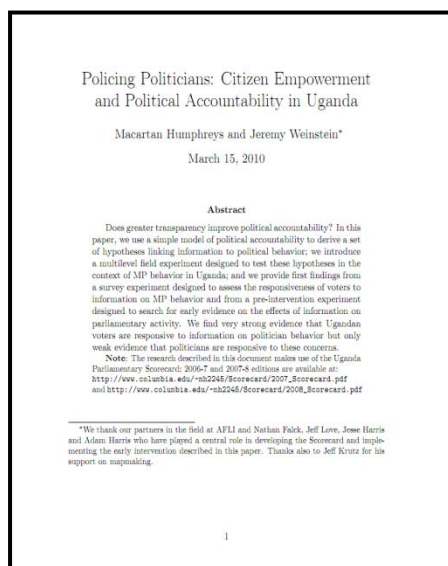
The final section of the chapter discusses different implementation partnership approaches: twinning with other parliaments, working with the European Parliament, or South-South collaboration with the parliament in, for example, South Africa; or partnership with United Nations agencies, global and regional parliamentary associations, political foundations, international financial institutions, national (domestic) organizations and individual experts, as well as private international consulting organizations and individuals. [Click here to read more](#)

The Role of Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations in Monitoring the Democratic Performance of Parliaments

By K. Scott Hubli

Over the past five years, a consensus has begun to emerge within the parliamentary community around a set of criteria for assessing the democratic performance of parliaments (see previous newsletter or [click here](#) to visit AGORA). Over the same period, civil society organizations around the world have become more actively engaged in monitoring parliamentary performance. A recent study, conducted jointly by the World Bank Institute (WBI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), identified approximately 190 active parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) in some 80 countries. These two developments, however, have proceeded largely independently. Much of the dialogue regarding benchmarks for democratic parliaments has occurred among parliamentarians themselves, with very limited participation from civil society organizations.

The potential for PMOs to play a greater role in monitoring parliamentary performance against international democratic benchmarks seems clear. Civil society organizations have played a similar role in other areas of democratic development—



particularly elections.

Over the years, the international community has built a broad consensus around the minimum characteristics for democratic elections. Citizen election monitoring organizations have

played a vital role in assessing whether or not a country's elections processes meet international democratic norms. PMOs are beginning to play a similar role in supporting parliamentary development—as the articulation of international norms for democratic parliaments has reached a critical mass over last five years and as the number and experience level of PMOs has also increased significantly during this time.

While continued research is needed, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that parliamentary monitoring can have strongly positive effects on parliamentary performance. In examining parliamentary scorecards — a technique used by many PMOs, one recent academic study has found “some evidence that politicians alter their behavior in light of exposure to scorecard information ... and strong evidence that voters, rather than being beholden to ethnic ties or patronage politics, are willing to condition support on quality of engagement in national politics.” (see Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein. March 15, 2010. *Policing Citizens: Citizen Empowerment and Political Accountability in Uganda*. Columbia University). Other PMOs have shown strong potential for strengthening dialogue between citizens ►



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- ▶ and parliamentarians, facilitating public access to information about parliaments and their work, and working collaboratively with parliaments to further parliamentary reform.



The international community can help to strengthen the potential impact of PMOs in a number of ways. First, it can help to engage PMOs more directly in dialogue with the broader parliamentary community on the issue of norms and standards for democratic parliaments. The joint WBI-NDI study found that few of the PMOs surveyed were aware of the parliamentary community’s work on benchmarks and standards. Engaging PMOs in discussions by parliamentary associations about benchmarks and standards for democratic legislatures can be beneficial for both the PMO and parliamentary communities. For its part, the PMO community can learn more both about how parliamentarians view their roles and about the constraints that they face in performing them. PMOs can also obtain feedback from MPs in order to refine and improve their monitoring methodologies and develop MP buy-in with respect to monitoring activities. Parliamentarians clearly benefit from this increased understanding by PMOs; however, they can also learn from this dialogue to better understand civil society’s expectations of their parliament.

The lack of dialogue between PMOs and parliamentary associations on legislative benchmarks points to a larger issue that must also be addressed – namely that the relationship between parliaments and PMOs in a country is often unnecessarily adversarial. As noted in joint WBI-NDI study, some PMOs initially tend to see poor parliamentary performance primarily as a failure of leadership by individual parliamentarians; the focus is on “naming and shaming” individual MPs that don’t meet specific PMO criteria. However, as PMOs gain experience working with parliament, many have developed a more sophisticated understanding of the constraints that individual parliamentarians face, as well as a more nuanced view of how to encourage parliamentary reform. As a result, many PMOs are adopting approaches that are somewhat less adversarial and seek to proactively engage parliamentarians in the development of their assessment methodologies. Many also work with parliament to support parliamentary strengthening and reform efforts.

Several PMOs have demonstrated that it is possible to successfully combine both monitoring (which can be perceived as only criticizing parliament) with activities to build public support for parliament, and for parliamentary reform. As one representative of an established PMO noted, “parliaments are not exactly popular... If the discourse of the [PMO] is similar to what the feeling of the people is – and doesn’t question the negative image that people have about the congress – then we are not doing much... If citizens don’t realize that Congress is a very important branch for a political system to work, then we’re not going to be a democracy.”¹ As but one example, Directorio Legislativo in Argentina makes awards to recognize members of Congress who have contributed to democratic innovation in the institution. Other PMOs, such as PRS in India, seek to play a role akin to a parliamentary research service, providing parliamentarians

¹ Pachón, Mónica. Congreso Visible. Telephone interview, January 28, 2010

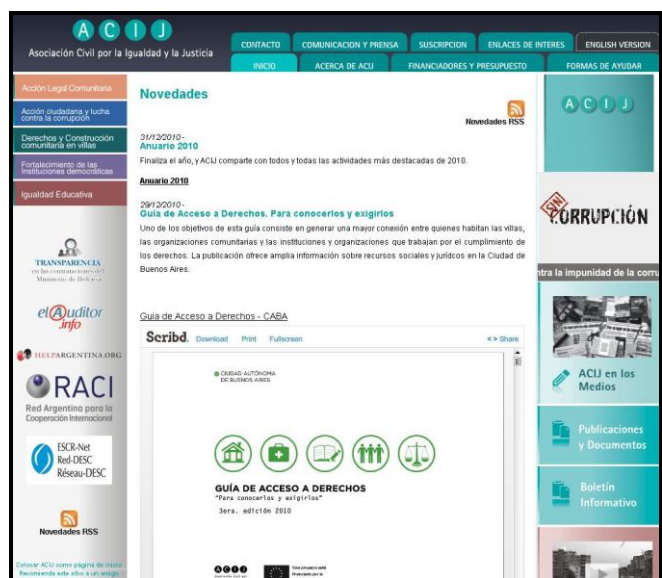


- ▶ and citizens alike with summaries and comparative information about pieces of legislation.

Although the situation varies widely from country to country, many PMOs struggle with limited access to meaningful information about the parliaments they seek to monitor. In some countries, parliaments rarely use roll call voting, so that it can be difficult to for PMOs and citizens to know how individual MPs vote on particular measures or issues. In others contexts, such information may not easily accessible or may be posted on the parliamentary website, if at all, only after a significant amount of time has elapsed. In other cases access to committee proceedings is very limited. In these circumstances, PMOs will often focus on the data that is available, rather than the data that is most meaningful. To take one example, many PMOs monitor the attendance of members in the plenary. While this information may be important, attendance data needs to be contextualized (e.g., by taking into account official travel or time in the district) and may say little about the quality of an individual parliamentarian's contributions to legislative work. To overcome this challenge, PMOs are beginning to more actively focus their efforts on improving parliamentary transparency. Some have suggested the need to further develop minimum standards relating to parliamentary transparency to ensure that citizens and civil society

organizations have access to basic data (in open data formats) about parliamentary operations. This is also a topic which could be further developed in the context of benchmarks for democratic parliaments.

Finally, the international community can help to support increased networking of PMOs, both regionally and internationally. Emerging regional networks of PMOs in Latin America and the Middle East and North Africa have shown the potential benefits of sharing information and good practice. However, additional sharing of expertise and good practice on a global level would also be useful. AGORA can make an important contribution in this regard; it is currently reaching out to the PMOs identified in the joint WBI-NDI study. AGORA's discussion group features in its "trusted area" provide an opportunity for PMOs from around the world to exchange experiences and share good practice on parliamentary monitoring. The AGORA community also provides opportunities to promote dialogue and sharing of information between PMOs and parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and the broader international parliamentary development community. At the same time, PMOs, as routine observers of parliamentary affairs, can also be an important resource for the AGORA community on issues related to parliamentary development.



Constituency Development Funds

By Mark A. Baskin

The past decade has seen the creation of an increasing number of Constituency Development Funds in emerging democracies. A “Constituency Development Fund,” or CDF, is the generic name for a policy tool that dedicates public money to benefit specific political subdivisions through allocations and/or spending decisions influenced by their representatives in the national parliament. In different places, they are known as Electoral Development Funds, Member of Parliament Local Area Development Schemes, Constituency Development Schemes, Earmarks, Pork Barrel, Priority Development Assistance Funds, among others names. The emergence of CDFs has led to no small controversy:

Critics argue that CDFs fragment decision making on development away from the executive, can upset the balance of power between the legislative and executive, and lead to decreased accountability in the employment of funds and to the misuse of funds intended for development and delivery of needed services.

Supporters point out that CDFs can redress the imbalance between executives and legislatures, mitigate the “winner take all” quality of elections, give legislators a way to deliver essential goods and services to constituents, provide an opportunity for popular participation in development projects, strengthen ties of constituents to representatives and legislatures.

In response to these different perspectives, the international legislative community has undertaken systematic, comparative research on CDFs. A project at the State University of New York Center for International Development (SUNY/CID) has identified at least 18 such

funds: 10 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 4 in Asia, 2 in the South Pacific, and 1 each in the Americas and Caribbean. This evidence-based project opened in workshops in December 2009 and May 2010. We are conducting in-depth research in several countries, and are examining how CDFs are implemented, their transparency and accountability in operation, and how they affect constituency-representative relationships. In this work, SUNY/CID is working with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, as well as with the UNDP, the National Democratic Institute, the World Bank, the Parliamentary Network of the World Bank, the International Budget Project and individual members and staff from parliaments.

At this stage, the SUNY/CID project can draw a few provisional conclusions. CDFs appear to be increasingly significant tools of decentralized resource allocation in developing countries. The relationships between the emerging CDFs and traditional types of centrally-driven development institutions are complex, and it is no small task to achieve cooperation and coordination among different types of programs aimed at decentralization and local development. Whilst CDFs can supply goods and services that were left undelivered by centralized administrations, they also challenge MPs and other policy makers to devise norms, rules and procedures for their effective operation.



Mark A. Baskin is a senior associate at the State University of New York Center for International Development at the State University of New York (SUNY/CID) and research professor at the University at Albany's Department of Political Science. At SUNY/CID, he has managed and contributed to

parliamentary strengthening programs in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and also oversees the Center's academic and research programs. He is currently managing SUNY/CID's project on Constituency Development Funds.

Parliaments in Practice offers a snapshot of recent developments in parliamentary strengthening.



First Aboriginal MP elected to the federal parliament faces challenges.

November 2010

AUSTRALIA: Australia elected its first aboriginal MP, Ken Wyatt, during August 2010 legislative elections, raising hopes in a society which is still seeking reconciliation with its indigenous peoples. For his investiture speech before the parliament, Ken Wyatt wore a traditional aboriginal costume and expressed his pride that an Indigenous MP could finally speak on an equal footing with other MPs in this temple of democracy. [Read more...](#)



What if the parliamentary regime was the solution?

07 December 2010

IVORY COAST: While Ivory Coast finds itself in a unique situation with two presidents of the Republic, one can only think of the ways likely to limit the absolute power which fascinates leaders to the extent they tend to forget that they are there only to serve their people.

The Westminster parliamentary model is proposed as a reference model for Africa. The closer regimes get to this model, the better democracy and the rule of law would function.

[Read more...](#)



The place of women in the decision-making process

15 December 2010

SENEGAL: An awareness-raising day on the gender approach in policies, development programs and budgets was organized for parliamentarians by the Ministry of Gender and Relations with African and foreign women associations. [Read more...](#)



MPs are urged to focus on villages.

06 November 2010

BAHRAIN: Newly-elected MPs are being urged to introduce legislation that will help bring investment into villages and turn them into fully-fledged modern communities.

[Read more...](#)



Afghan MPs demand president form new parliament.

13 December 2010

AFGHANISTAN: A group of about 100 Afghan members of parliament demanded that President Hamid Karzai inaugurate the assembly by December 19, almost three weeks after final results of a fraud-marred election were declared. [Read more...](#)



Kurdistan Democratic Party assigns 10% leadership quota to women

15 December 2010

KURDISTAN: The official spokesman for the 13th congress of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) stated Tuesday the assembly members have agreed to allocate 10% quota to female members for the leadership of the party. [Read more...](#)

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2 -3 February 2011: Conférence Interparlementaire sur la Diversité des Expressions Culturelles (CIDEDEC) (Quebec, Canada)

The *Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (CIDEDEC) (Quebec, Canada) aims at taking stock of the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions five years after its adoption. It also aims at providing parliamentarians from francophone countries with the necessary tools for promoting this legal instrument in their Parliament, with their government and civil society. It is hoped that these works would lead to a mobilizing strategy which will not only ensure the implementation of the Convention by States, but will also contribute to strengthening dynamic cultural sectors in francophone countries.



6 – 12 February 2011 : World Bank Institute - Sixth Annual Summer Residency Program for Public Accounts Committees (Beechworth, Australia)

This annual program is designed specifically for Parliamentary Public Accounts Committees, and is aimed at building stronger understanding of the role and function of PACs, as well as developing action plans for improvement. Areas to be covered in the 2011 program include:

- Understanding budgets and examining budget outcomes
- Working with the Auditor General
- Overcoming impediments to PAC effectiveness
- Issues for Public Accounts Committees and Auditors General
- Empowering Public Accounts Committees
- Developing Country Action Plans for the Public Accounts Committees



February 2011: International IDEA - Roundtable on Parliament & Gender in Sudan

International IDEA in collaboration with the Sudanese Women Parliamentarians' Caucus will hold a Roundtable in Sudan on the topic: "Additional Empowerment Strategies for Women in the National Parliament of Sudan: Being an Effective Parliamentarian". The main theme will be : Once in parliament, women ought to become effective Parliamentarians and be held accountable alongside their male Parliamentarians.

Attention will be paid on translating women's presence into policies- Can women make a difference in the Parliament of Sudan? Are women in Parliament more likely to pursue gender-sensitive policies? In order to become effective in law making, representation and oversight functions/responsibilities, there is need for supporting women Parliamentarians. This support includes orientation/induction on parliamentary functions/roles, rules and procedures so that they can contribute effectively to debates and law making.



28 February – 25 March 2011: French National Assembly - Annual training cycle on parliamentary work at the National Assembly for senior civil servants in Francophone Parliaments (Paris, France)

The specialized international cycle on parliamentary work is organized annually in Paris, France in partnership with the ENA, the National Assembly and the Senate. It is intended for senior civil servants and parliamentarians worldwide. Each class counts approximately 30 participants which are selected by the French embassies. The Francophone cycle lasts 4 weeks while the Anglophone cycle lasts two weeks. The next Francophone cycle will be held between February 28 and March 25, 2011, while the next Anglophone cycle will take place between June 27 and July 8, 2011. Additional information may be obtained from ENA international relations department or from Mrs. Françoise Polak at the National Assembly (fpolak@assemblee-nationale.fr).



19 – 23 February 2011 : World Bank Institute - West Africa Association of Public Accounts Committee (WAAPAC) Accountability Conference Meeting (Lomé, Togo)

Overall objective of the meeting is to strengthen the capacity of parliaments to engage in the budget process (ex ante, ex post, on PFM and procurement issues). The goal of the event is to foster/strengthen the WAAPAC, enhance the capacity of Members and staff through south-south exchange, and provide a forum in order to draw linkages between PAC networks, SAIs and multi-stakeholder coalitions overseeing procurement processes in West Africa.



01 - 04 March 2011 : International Symposium Fundamental to Democracy: Parliamentary library and research service (Canberra, Australia)

The program of the International symposium, held in Canberra, Australia, includes a training day on using technology in parliament and a symposium that will bring together thinkers and practitioners from the Australasian and Pacific regions and around the globe. The event aims to assist in the development of parliamentary libraries and research services by providing an opportunity for sharing information, knowledge and experiences; to encourage the strengthening of parliamentary libraries and research services within the region and their parliaments; to support the development of innovation through sharing information on innovative practices, to build the capacity of staff through training in information technology and service delivery; and finally to strengthen the cooperation between the Section and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliaments, Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP), Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).



01 March – 01 April 2011 : World Bank Institute – eLearning Courses on Parliaments and Budget

The Parliaments and Budget eLearning course, equivalent to 5 days (40 hours) of classroom training, will start March 1 and will last for approximately 6 weeks, including time for completing the course final project. Topics covered include:

- Introducing the budget;
- the budget process; parliamentary approval of the budget;
- the audit of public accounts;
- and opening up the parliamentary involvement to the media and the public.

While it has been designed especially for parliamentary staff, it is open to all participants and will be of particular interest to journalists, civil society groups and officials working in ministries of finance. The course moderator for this course is Rick Stapenhurst. Places are limited. For more information, please contact Brooke Prater at parliamentarystrengthening@gmail.com or register online [here](#).