



Donor Coordination Meeting on Parliamentary Development

*Organized by the UK Department for International Development,
the United Nations Development Programme, and
the World Bank Institute*

Hosted by DFID

*1 Palace Street, London
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SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

1. The *Donor Coordination Meeting on Parliamentary Development* was a follow-up to the first [*Donor Consultation on Parliamentary Development and Financial Accountability*](#) (Brussels, May 2007). The meeting provided a forum to share recent experience and lessons learned on parliamentary development with the goal of continually improving donor programs and support for greater impact.
2. The meeting opened with participants sharing where their agency is in terms of supporting parliamentary development. Several of the donors represented had not participated in the 2007 consultation, and several noted that they are only beginning to engage in parliamentary development support projects. Participants highlighted the difficulties they face in collecting information on their agencies' support to parliaments; particularly as such support may be part of larger governance or other projects. Weak links between headquarters and the field can further exacerbate this information gap. While all agreed that coordination is critically important, until recently it has been difficult to carry out in practice, even at the basic level of information sharing. In light of these challenges, the donor coordination group on parliamentary development is a welcome, relevant, and timely initiative.
3. Participants reflected on lessons from the Wilton Park conference on *Enhancing the Effectiveness of Parliaments*, which took place just prior to the donor coordination meeting (a summary of the main messages of the Wilton Park conference will be provided shortly). They reviewed progress since 2007 and discussed ways to take the donor coordination group forward. Working level discussions were held on three important emerging issues: parliaments and conflict prevention and recovery; working with parliamentary organizations and networks; and normative frameworks for parliamentary development through legislative benchmarks and indicators. The meeting concluded with suggestions for moving forward.

SESSION I: Review of progress since the 2007 Donor Consultation on Parliamentary Development and Financial Accountability

4. In 2007 the donor coordination group identified five mechanisms for moving forward:

1. Establishing an informal donor contact group on parliamentary strengthening.
2. Holding regular (annual or biannual) structured consultative meetings to discuss donor approaches to parliamentary strengthening.
3. Piloting an on-line 'knowledge hub' on parliamentary strengthening.
4. Developing good practice principles for donor support to parliamentary strengthening, especially in the context of direct budget support (building on the Paris principles on aid effectiveness and the DAC capacity building principles)
5. In the longer term, sharing results and good practice principles with the OECD-DAC Network on Governance (GOVNET) and encouraging GOVNET to consider parliamentary strengthening as part of its next work programme.

The discussion in Session I centred on plans for the knowledge hub and links to the OECD-DAC.

Developing a parliamentary knowledge portal

5. Parliamentary development materials are not easily accessible and opportunities for knowledge sharing remain limited. To date there is no single global website dedicated to gathering knowledge and experience in this field. UNDP has taken the lead on advancing the 2007 Donor Consultation proposal for a comprehensive online knowledge hub, allocating 300,000 USD for its development through their Global Program for Parliamentary Strengthening (GPPS III). This budget will initially be used to provide technical assistance and IT support; to promote donor coordination; and to develop a communications campaign.
6. In addition to donors interested in parliamentary development, the hub will target practitioners, researchers, parliamentary staff, legislators, and other national actors such as the media and CSOs - attempting to identify their different needs and target information accordingly. At the outset the site will be focused on creating a community of practice and building up content. UNDP proposes including a virtual library; e-discussions and expert advice; interactive online learning modules; case studies and success stories from the field; encyclopaedic data about legislatures; links to related websites (e.g. those of parliamentary development actors); and a directory of donor contact points in headquarters and regionally. However, it remains to be seen how information will be added, whether interested parties can post openly, whether posts will be subject to certain levels of quality control, or whether the site will consist of multiple levels (e.g. public and password protected).
7. Donors are invited to participate in a steering committee for the hub which will help establish the basis for collaboration, approve a draft a concept paper, identify key materials for inclusion, and furnish a Terms of Reference for the recruitment of an IT consultant and/or network facilitator. The Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) has already agreed to collaborate in these efforts - participating in the steering committee and sharing information from their rich existing databases such as [Parline](#). The representative from the European Parliament noted his office's willingness to explore the use of the [European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation](#) (ECPRD) platform for the hub. UNDP has previous experience in this area through its global website which gathers a selection of core documents, previous development of [arabparliaments.org](#), and its contribution to [iKNOW politics](#). Other models of interest include the [ACE Electoral Knowledge Network](#), and the [U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre](#) with its system of online help desks. Any and all assistance is welcome as this is a massive undertaking that will likely be both costly and labour intensive. Further resources will be required should the hub be translated into additional languages, and to support the creation of new knowledge materials.

OECD-DAC work stream on aid and accountability and relevance for parliamentary development

8. The Accra High Level Forum, and its resulting Accra [Agenda for Action](#), has opened up the dialogue on aid effectiveness to include parliaments (as well as CSOs and the media), thus ending traditional government to government exclusivity. As part of this, there is an increased emphasis on balancing donor support to executives with a greater emphasis on the role and importance of accountability institutions. To that end, the OECD-DAC is planning a new work stream which looks at the relationship between aid and accountability. This would include examining of the role of demand-side institutions

such as parliaments, political parties, and the media. The OECD-DAC plans to assemble best practice from donors and may go so far as to come up with donor principles, some of which would specifically apply to parliamentary development. The new work stream would also examine how different modalities of aid may undermine, skew, or distort accountability. The coordination group was called on to share high quality case studies with the OECD-DAC on parliamentary strengthening from a range of countries.

SESSION II: Discussion on Developing Donor Working Groups on Key Topics in Parliamentary Development

Parliaments and conflict prevention and recovery

10. The role of parliaments in conflict prevention and recovery has emerged as a key issue in parliamentary development. Until recently, there has been a tendency to ignore parliaments' role. While donors may mobilize large scale resources for ending hostilities and organizing pluralist elections in conflict-affected countries, comparatively little support is provided to help build and sustain core democratic institutions such as parliament. While parliaments and individual parliamentarians sometimes contribute to conflict, and while many factors can render post-conflict parliaments ineffectual, parliaments are nevertheless well placed, through their legislative, representative and oversight functions, to be part of the solution.
11. The donor coordination group reviewed UNDP's Initiative on [Strengthening the Role of Parliaments in Crisis Prevention and Recovery](#), which among other things commissioned around 30 country-level case studies and led to the creation of [Guidelines for the international community on Parliaments, Crisis Prevention and Recovery](#). Developed with a broad group of partners, these guidelines were presented to a Donor Conference in 2006. Currently, UNDP is:
 - Undertaking a new project on *Developing the Capacity of National Parliaments to Support the Restoration of Community Security*;
 - Making available a limited amount of new funds through GPPS III for rapid deployment of assessment teams in post-conflict countries.; and
 - Seeking to engage in discussions with other donors to assess the potential for collaboration on pilot projects in countries emerging from conflict.
12. The coordination group observed that despite a multiplicity of actors, work with parliaments in conflict affected countries does not appear to have suffered from a high level of duplication. Different actors appear to have played to their different strengths. For example the Parliamentary Centre has typically worked at the regional level; WBI and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) have focused on providing empirical and anecdotal evidence through for example, their joint publication of a book entitled *Parliaments as Peacebuilders in Conflict Affected-Countries*; and UNDP has overseen the development of rules for international engagement. Nevertheless, there are continuing weaknesses in terms of information exchange and provision of parliamentary support know-how to post-conflict institution building actors. The pre-eminence of this issue has led several of the organizations mentioned to consider forming a working group to ensure continued coordination, knowledge building, and advocacy. Interested donors are welcome to join this group. The working group should also bring in other relevant UN agencies or departments and seek to inform the work on Conflict, Fragility and state-building being taken forward by the OECD-DAC.

Working with parliamentary organizations and networks

13. The second topic covered in Session II was working with parliamentary organizations and networks. Donors noted that there has been a proliferation of new networks but little knowledge base about what they are really delivering. In theory such networks should add value to parliamentary development work but the extent to which they are having a real and sustained impact remains in question. Moreover, there are concerns about overlap of both mandates and members. The representative from the IDB noted that in Latin America the larger, more formal parliamentary organizations seem to be failing with broad mandates often equalling broad problems. They have found that smaller more focused networks with narrow mandates, working towards limited but very concrete results seem to be

more successful. However it is not clear whether this can be extrapolated to other regions. For others, it is the unofficial member-driven networks that appear less sustainable due to difficulties in procuring predictable core funding support. Donors have sometimes been complicit in the creation of new networks which were often seen as useful program outputs – but again the financial sustainability of these networks has failed to materialize.

14. Donors face difficulties in evaluating proposals and requests for funds, as well as occasional political pressure from parliamentarians in their own countries to fund the networks to which they belong. Participants agreed to share information on which networks they are supporting and any existing evaluations. Donors should at a minimum be cautious about creating new networks, and, where appropriate, encourage new parliamentary initiatives to place themselves under the auspices of existing organizations and networks. In addition, wherever possible, donors should promote joint funding arrangements and undertake joint evaluations. For example, it was noted that that a multiagency evaluation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum will begin in November, examining its management, administration, and overall achievements. The group was also encouraged to support new research in this area as beyond reports documenting their work, little exists in terms of literature and analysis around parliamentary organizations and networks. It should be noted that USAID undertook a preliminary study on *Regional and International Legislative Organizations* in 2007, and WBI, CIDA and USAID are planning a joint evaluation of GOPAC.

Developing normative frameworks for parliamentary development – Legislative Benchmarks and Indicators

15. The 2007 donor consultation reviewed and discussed the emerging international consensus on normative frameworks for parliamentary development, more specifically, the IPU's collection of good practice from 75 (or around half) of their member parliaments around the globe entitled *Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century: A Guide to Good Practice (2006)*; the National Democratic Institute's discussion paper *Towards the Development of International Minimum Standards for Democratic Legislatures (NDI, 2006)*, and the CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures. Several new tools have been developed, two of which are described below.
16. Since the last consultation the IPU has used their collection of good practice to develop a *Self-Assessment Toolkit for Parliaments* (Sept. 2008). Using a five point scale with 1 being very low/very poor and 5 being very high/very good to assess respondents' judgements, the toolkit poses 54 questions under six categories:
 1. The representativeness of parliament;
 2. Parliamentary oversight over the executive;
 3. Parliament's legislative capacity;
 4. The transparency and accessibility of parliament;
 5. The accountability of parliament; and
 6. parliament's involvement in international policy

The toolkit was presented to MPs at the IPU annual assembly in early October 2008 and the IPU will train a group of facilitators in early December 2008 who will be available should countries request their assistance.

17. Similarly, NDI has gone beyond the discussion paper to develop a *Minimum Standards Assessment Survey* (2008) which turns 35 of the identified standards into questions under three headings:
 1. Structure and Organization of the Legislature
 2. Balance of power
 3. Public access, transparency and accountability

The survey attempts to determine perceptions of the legislature's (formal) authority, and of its performance (behaviour) on a scale of 0-5. It is designed to be administered to parliamentarians themselves, parliamentary staff, and representatives of civil society – their perceptions are then

compared. NDI has also developed a comprehensive facilitator guide with explanations and examples.

18. On September 21-24, 2008, WBI and Griffith University organized a *Workshop on Legislative Benchmarks and Indicators in Brisbane Australia*, with the goal of examining ways to assess legislative performance and the effectiveness of legislative strengthening programs; sharing approaches, methodologies and results; and discussing whether a new, holistic framework to measure legislative performance could (or should) be established. Participants included over twenty legislative development practitioners, academics, and CSO representatives. Workshop participants agreed to present this work to the donor coordination meeting and identified a series of additional steps for taking this work forward:
 - Creation of a small steering committee (including IPU, CPA, APF, NDI, WBI and UNDP among others).
 - Seeking feedback, and identifying areas of consensus and divergence, at the regional level (e.g. SADC Parliamentary Forum, South Asia, Pacific Region or small island states, etc.).
 - Promoting a research agenda in which the different frameworks are applied at the country level (in established, new large and small legislatures etc. and at least one non-Anglophone), if possible comparatively.
 - Holding a larger conference in late 2009/early 2010 with a broader group of participants to take stock of, and to present, the results of the above research agenda.
19. Interested donors are invited to participate in a working group on this topic, support the research agenda, and participate in the larger conference. It was stressed that the goal of such work is not to rank parliaments but rather to help parliaments to assess their own performance, often in light of preparation of parliament's budget or a strategic plan, or a parliamentary reform process. At the same time, the tools may help donors and practitioner organizations to better target their support and to assess the impact, or effectiveness, of their assistance.

SESSION III: Conclusions and Recommendations for Way Forward

20. Several concrete steps were identified for moving the work of the donor coordination group forward:
 1. Participants agreed to continue to meet annually. WBI offered to host the next annual donor coordination meeting on parliamentary development in its offices in Paris in autumn 2009.
 2. In an effort to increase information sharing and to advance the agenda between meetings, donors are invited to join one or more of the three working groups proposed on (1) developing a parliamentary knowledge portal, (2) parliaments and conflict prevention and recovery, and (3) legislative benchmarks and indicators.
 3. Donors would benefit from undertaking and sharing a mapping of their support to legislatures. In order to better harmonize this exercise, those agreeing to undertake the mapping exercise should include the country/region where the project is taking place; the project title; contact person; time frame; a brief (one paragraph) synopsis of the project/program; the project value; partners and/or other donors and whether there are donor coordination mechanisms in place; and dates for planned or completed evaluations. Some may choose to undertake a more in depth mapping or evaluation. These findings can then be shared during the next donor coordination meeting and included in the knowledge hub. Some donors expressed their willingness to undertake such an exercise, although others explained that they will not be able to undertake the mapping in the short term due to limited capacity. It is hoped that they will be able to do so in the longer term.
 4. Donors are called upon to share relevant documents that they would like included in the knowledge hub. UNDP will follow-up with a request for specific information.
 5. Donors should share any available high quality case studies on parliamentary strengthening with the OECD-DAC and the coordination group.
 6. Participants took note of a meeting on political parties to be hosted in The Hague by the Institute for Multiparty Democracy in early 2009, as well as the potential reactivation of a network on political parties. There may be opportunities to bring together donor fora on parliaments and political parties in the medium term given the interconnected nature of these agendas.

ANNEX ONE: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Stefan Kossof, DFID
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3. Rick Staphenurst, World Bank Institute
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9. Doris Voorbraak, World Bank
10. Keith Schultz, USAID
11. Geut Geert, The Netherlands
12. Eli Moen, Norad
13. Paul Sherlock, Irish Aid
14. John O'Grady, Irish Aid
15. Ian Dewhurst, JICA
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