

FAST FACTS

United Nations
Development Programme



Parliamentary Development

Viable democracy and open society depend on effective lawmaking, oversight and representation — the three chief functions of parliaments. Parliaments are pillars of democratic governance, with a critical role in spurring and sustaining national action towards the Millennium Development Goals. They can be powerful agents of change, particularly during and after times of crisis.

UNDP provides integrated technical assistance to parliaments in their efforts to: (1) build the capacity of legislators and technical staff; (2) promote institutional reform through strategic development plans; (3) strengthen parliaments' relationships with the executive and judiciary branches of government and with civil society; and (4) enhance the effectiveness of women members of parliament and improve their ability to caucus and learn from one another.



Photo: The Lebanese Parliament / UNDP 2009.

UNDP services

UNDP provides assistance in the following areas:

- **Constitutional reform and support for institutional frameworks** to ensure that parliaments have sufficient power and independence to contribute to democratic development;

MATTERS OF FACT

- **UNDP supports one in three national parliaments globally, including parliaments in 28 African countries.**
- **iKNOW Politics, the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, offers a free library of 4,790 resources in four languages to 8,750 members.**
- **AGORA, the online Portal for Parliamentary Development, enables practitioners from 200 countries to work together on a daily basis.**
- **The regional portal www.arabparliaments.org received 74,000 visits in the first six months of 2010, with 125,000 website and database downloads.**

- **Administrative and institutional reform**, which includes such areas as reform of the parliamentary professional service and the internal rules of parliamentary procedure, staff training, and activities to strengthen parliamentary library and research services;
- **Policy support with a focus on MDG advocacy**, which is an important component of UNDP programming in many countries. Parliaments must have the capacity to develop the legal framework and scrutinize implementation by the executive branch;
- **Parliamentary outreach**, a vital aspect of UNDP's parliamentary development work that aims to ensure public participation in parliamentary processes;
- **Political party reform** aimed at ensuring that parties make constructive contributions to the deliberations of parliament; and
- **Capacity building for members and staff** on substantive and procedural issues as well as skills such as public speaking, dealing with the media, debating, and codes of conduct.



In Nepal, members of the Madheshi community of Biratnagar attend a political rally to demand greater representation in parliament. Photo: UNDP 2008.

How UNDP works

UNDP engages in Parliamentary development with the aim to benefit the poor and other disadvantaged groups by increasing their political representation and increasing government accountability to the public.

UNDP's network of 166 Country Offices and its status as a non-partisan agency provide a strong framework for UNDP parliamentary programmes. The high level of trust it enjoys among UN Member States is crucial to its ability to develop programmes that can be politically sensitive. In countries in transition, UNDP is often regarded by the international community and national parliaments as a partner capable of coordinating donor support to institutions that emerge following UN-assisted elections.

Three levels: Global, regional, national

Globally, web-based social networks invite the exchange of information and ideas. Two cutting-edge tools are **iKNOW Politics** (www.iknowpolitics.org) for the political empowerment of women and **Agora** (www.agora-parl.org), which is open to anyone working with parliaments. UNDP also works with its partners to develop regional and global benchmarks for democratic parliaments, in particular through the UNDP Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening.

Regionally, working groups of parliamentarians are discussing and developing new ideas and approaches. UNDP created this space to build the capacity of national parliaments, and applies solutions to UNDP projects. The regional groups address topics such as women's empowerment, the role of parliaments in crisis prevention, standards for political party legislation, and the representation of minorities and indigenous peoples in more inclusive parliaments.

Nationally, UNDP works with more than 60 parliaments throughout the world. Among diverse activities, UNDP fosters strategic development plans aimed at strengthening the capacity of elected bodies to function as democratic, transparent and accountable institutions.

UNDP support to Parliamentary Development in 2010

Region	Number of Projects 2002	Number of Projects 2010
Africa	20	28
Arab States	6	10
Asia & the Pacific	14	20
Europe & the CIS	4	8
Latin America & the Caribbean	2	5
Total	46	69

Key resources

All relevant documents can be found at:

www.undp.org/governance/focus_parliamentary_dev

Related websites include:

www.agora-parl.org

www.iknowpolitics.org

www.arabparliaments.org

For more information, visit: www.undp.org/governance

Democratic Governance
Bureau for Development Policy
United Nations Development Programme
304 East 45th Street
New York, NY 10017 USA

July 2011



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.