

IN THIS ISSUE

AFRICA

Parliamentary oversight: the experience of Ethiopia	Page 1
Enhancing parliament's capacity through ICT: the case of Mauritania	Page 2
Overview of UNDP's support to Parliament's first 5 year term (2006-2011) in DRC	Page 2
Training for Parliamentary Staff from Francophone Countries in West Africa	Page 2

ARAB STATES

Support to the Tunisian Constituent Assembly	Page 2
Parliamentary outreach and engagement in environmental issues in Jordan	Page 3
Support to inclusive and participative political institutions in select Arab States	Page 3
Support to the National Transitional Council and General National Congress in Libya	Page 4

ASIA-PACIFIC

Parliaments and Anti-Corruption: strengthening the role of Public Accounts Committee in Kiribati and Tuvalu	Page 5
Launch of Samoa's first Parliamentary Support Project	Page 6
Practice Parliament for Women Candidates in Papua New Guinea	Page 6
GOPAC/UNDP Workshop for parliamentarians on the fight against corruption in Dili, Timor Leste (March 28-29, 2012)	Page 7
Strengthening Public Participation in Law-Making and Rule of Law – the experience of China's National People's Congress	Page 8

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Supporting women's political participation within the Legislative Assembly in El Salvador	Page 8
Preparing Parliament for the 21 st Century in Trinidad and Tobago	Page 10
Parliamentary commitment to citizen security in Central America	Page 10

GLOBAL

International Executive Program for Parliamentary Staff	Page 11
Meeting of the African Networks of Parliamentarians on the MDGs	Page 11
Your help evaluating the Global Parliamentary Development Expert Roster	Page 12

Parliamentary oversight: the experience of Ethiopia - *Sehen Bekele, UNDP Ethiopia*

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Ethiopian Parliament is tasked with reviewing and scrutinizing public expenditures. The Ethiopian Federal Parliament established PAC for the first time in 2005. The PAC is given the specific power to examine the public accounts, to comment on the public accounts and all the reports drafted and submitted by the Auditor General. The PAC has been engaged in sub-regional gatherings such as the East African Association of Public Accounts Committees where it has gained experiences from countries more advanced with similar contexts. The Association in its May 2009 Special Session on Ethiopia passed a number of resolutions to further strengthen PAC and other accountability measures in areas of public funds in the country. Ethiopia organized its own national accountability conference and regional accountability conferences. As a result of these experience sharing activities, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, Afar Regional State, Dire Dawa City Administration and Harari Regional State have established their respective PACs. Amhara and Tigray regional states assigned their Budget and Economic Affairs Standing Committees to do the function of PACs. To ensure more accountability and transparency, the Ethiopian Federal Parliament assigned the opposition party member as the head of the PAC.

These initiatives have enabled PACs to have clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities. The PAC members have been using standardized checklists and formats to make quality and effective oversight in checking and balancing what the government is doing against public budget expenditure. The PACs are able to work closely with the Federal Auditor General and Regional Auditors General Offices in scrutinizing the utilization of public funds by government organizations. As a result, the field based activities of PACs have become more significant both at the federal and regional levels. Due to the critical and valuable comments of the standing committee on the performance of the executive organ, accountability has increased.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Kevin Deveaux, Parliamentary Advisor, UNDP HQ
(kevin.deveaux@undp.org)

Diane Sheinberg, Parliamentary Programme Manager, UNDP HQ
(diane.sheinberg@undp.org)

Enhancing parliament's capacity through ICT – the case of Mauritania

-Fah Ould Brahim Ould Jiddou, UNDP Mauritania

Support to parliamentary development is one of the key components of UNDP Mauritania's governance programme. Among the most innovative initiatives undertaken recently is the gradual evolution towards an electronically administrated Parliament, through the digitization and archiving of legal documents, including the report of proceedings. UNDP created an online database with featured videos and audio options that includes data relating to the work of the previous parliament (2007-2012). This database is accessible to all Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff and will soon be accessible to the public as well. Parliamentarians also have access to wireless internet connection in the Chamber Hall of the National Assembly and receive specific training on the use of these new technologies which help support the Documentation Center of the National Assembly and contribute to retaining institutional knowledge.

Overview of UNDP's support to Parliament's first 5 year term (2006-2011) in DRC

-Ibrahima Niane, UNDP DRC

In preparations for the November 2011 elections, UNDP supported the reform process of the 2006 electoral law. 3 experts provided technical advice to the committee in charge of reforming the law on various issues such as voting procedures, eligibility conditions, and electoral disputes.

Trainings were organized for Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff of the national parliament and provincial assemblies on parliamentary work, legislative drafting, the constitution, regionalism and decentralization, parliamentary procedures, parliamentary oversight, inter-institutional relations, parliamentary outreach and communication.

Given the high turnover rate (80%) following the elections in November, many of the newly elected representatives lacked the experience and expertise to carry out their mission. UNDP compiled all the learning modules into one handbook which was distributed to the MPs during the opening session. Furthermore, UNDP, together with IPU, the Department for International Development, the EU, and other key partners, organized an induction course for the newly elected MPs with regard to their parliamentary mandate.

UNDP has also provided support to improving the archives and institutional memory of the National Assembly by publishing the parliamentary proceedings. A first set of documents (3500 in total) were published in February 2012.

Training for Parliamentary Staff from Francophone Countries in West Africa

-Cédric Jurgensen, UNDP HQ

UNDP Benin, in partnership with the French National Assembly (FNA) and with the support of the National Assembly of Benin, organized a regional seminar on 5 and 6 June 2012, to enhance

the knowledge of parliamentary staff from francophone countries in West Africa and promote parliamentary best practices in the region. This initiative was launched by UNDP after the success of an equivalent seminar, held on 18-19 October 2011 in Libreville (Gabon) for Central African Parliaments. Thirty officials of the Parliaments of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Cape Verde and Ghana attended the seminar, along with 4 UNDP colleagues from Dakar Regional Center, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire, an experimented deputy and two parliamentary staff from the French National Assembly.



The main objective of the seminar was to enhance the knowledge of participating officials on parliamentary work with a particular focus on: parliamentary oversight of the executive; the role of standing committees and plenary sittings in the legislative process; the status and management of parliamentary staff. The seminar also encouraged the creation of a regional network to further continue the exchange of experiences. The portal on parliamentary development, AGORA, was promoted among parliamentary staff in the region, inviting them to participate in a dedicated space created on the portal in October 2011. In addition to the presentation of Agora by UNDP HQ, colleagues from Dakar presented UNDP experiences in supporting West African Parliaments, and recommendations for budget oversight in the context of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA).

Support to the Tunisian Constituent Assembly

-For more information, please contact Olivier Pierre Louveaux, Knowledge Manager, UNDP Brussels

The UNDP project "Support to the Constitutional, parliamentary and national dialogue processes" was signed with the National Constituent Assembly on the 13th April 2012. The project intends to provide comprehensive support to the Tunisian constitutional process so that it is effective, efficient, and inclusive, and results in a legitimate social pact. This aim is to reinforce the national capacity to undertake participative processes of dialogue and consensus building. In that framework, several activities were implemented during the last month, including:

A study visit for members of the Constituent Assembly of Tunisia on how to work with civil society and involve citizens in the constitutional and parliamentary work: This visit provided an opportunity to exchange experiences and knowledge with the parliamentary assemblies present in Brussels. The purpose of the visit was to interact with parliamentarians, government officials, media and civil society that have participated in processes of constitutional revision or institutional reform, and to learn more on the relationships between an assembly and civil society, in order to adapt these methods to the Tunisian context and thereby establish a dialogue mechanism. A work plan was prepared by the Tunisian delegation in order to foster the dialogue with the citizens, with the support of UNDP country office. During the same visit, the MPs got the opportunity to be briefed about the functioning of the EP and particularly about the communication mechanisms.

The project supported another study visit organized by UNDP in collaboration with the French National Assembly. Four Tunisian female members of the Constituent Assembly participated in this activity. The goal was to brief the MPs on the functioning of a pluralist parliament, including the work of the parliamentary committees, the political groups and the administrative services.

A seminar on the legislative-executive relationships has been organized on possible options in terms of political regimes in the context of the current constitutional debate in Tunisia. This activity gathered several renowned scholars and practitioners and was an opportunity to share experiences from Portugal, Turkey, Morocco and Italy. Recommendations endorsed by the Speaker have topped this event.

A call for proposal has been launched with the aim to foster the national dialogue on constitutional issues, particularly with the most excluded citizens and the regions.

The process to update the electronic voting system and the ICT infrastructure in the Assembly has been launched. A team composed by national and international experts are currently auditing the system and providing technical inputs in order to quickly allow the MPs to work and communicate with efficient tool. Capacities of staff and MPs will be strengthened in that framework as well.

Parliamentary outreach and engagement in environmental issues in Jordan: Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Health Monitors the Environment Situation in the Eastern Desert *-Sawsan Gharaibeh, UNDP Jordan*

In October 2011, UNDP organized a field visit for the Environment and Health Parliamentary Committee to Azraq and Azraq Wetland Reserve in collaboration with the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN). The Reserve was established by the RSCN in 1978, one year after Azraq Wetland was declared one of the major stations of migratory soaring birds on the African-Eurasian flyway. Unfortunately, a number of environmental issues remain challenging in Azraq because of abuse and overuse of water from the Azraq Basin, environmental violations of industries there. Members of the Environment and Health Committee

visited the reserve and were presented with a background on the reserve, migratory birds routes, role of RSCN and alternative energy sources used there. MPs also visited socio-economic projects by the RSCN and observed their benefits to local community in terms of generation of income and employment opportunities. Additionally, part of the visit was dedicated to meeting with local community representatives who explained the environmental challenges the area is facing. They also explained the impact of these challenges on local community including on health, especially of children, air pollution, inefficient waste management and the impact of manufacturing activities on local infrastructure. It is worth noting that this is the first parliamentary committee that visits Azraq since 1989. As a result of the visit, Local community representatives are now planning to form a local committee that will follow up on these environmental issues in the area.

Support to Inclusive and Participative Political Institutions in Select Arab States

-Diane Sheinberg, UNDP HQ

The Arab Political Institutions Project (API) project document was finalized and signed by all relevant parties by the end of February 2012. UNDP organized political economy and context analysis of political institutions in Algeria, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Somalia, Egypt & the Occupied Palestinian Territories. 6 missions were conducted between April and June 2012 (the mission to Egypt was cancelled after the dissolution of both houses of Parliament on the eve of the second round of the Presidential elections). As a result of those missions, UNDP designed programmatic strategies and Result Resource Frameworks (RRF's): 1,500,000 USD were allocated to country offices to implement the identified activities supporting newly established political institutions (such as the National Transitional Council in Libya), strengthening inclusive dialogues between political institutions and with women and youth (Somalia, Jordan and Algeria) and supporting newly elected women Members of Parliament (Algeria, and similarly after the upcoming elections in Jordan, Lebanon and Somalia). The missions further pointed out to important programmatic linkages with regards to timely support to political institutions in the context of the electoral cycle. Particularly, in post-conflict settings, it is critical to support newly established political institutions as they play a key role in a process of national dialogue, legitimizing the political settlements and spearheading the implementation of legislative processes. Women and youth movements are actively lobbying for more demands in both political and economic spheres: legislative agendas and political parties platforms will have to further integrate such demands in their programmes and priorities for action. Similarly, political parties will have to review their current structures and internal regulations to enable the participation of youth and women leaders; however, they still lack the capacities and platforms to engage with such stakeholders.



Kevin Deveaux (Policy Advisor HQ), Franklin De Vrieze (Parliamentary Expert) and Soulef Guessoum (UNDP Libya) Scoping mission to Libya

Support to the National Transitional Council and General National Congress in Libya

-Soulef Guessoum, UNDP Libya

The **National Transitional Council (NTC)** served as a transitional parliament for Libya, assuming legislative powers and acting as the highest authority in the country during the transition. As part of the regional Project “Inclusive and Participative Political Institutions” UNDP provided support to the NTC focused on strengthening capacities, knowledge and skills of its members and staff in different areas of parliamentary operations, exposing them to best practices in that domain. Based on the experience of supporting the NTC, parliamentary development efforts of UNDP Libya will continue during the period 2012-2014 to support the newly elected General National Congress (GNC).

Supporting the Secretariat: UNDP’s support to the NTC focused on institutional strengthening of its Secretariat. The challenge included establishing key secretariat departments expeditiously; defining an organizational structure for the secretariat; clarifying workflows; and delineating staff roles and responsibilities. UNDP brought in the former Secretary General

of the Parliament of Belgium to work closely with the NTC chief of staff and provide daily advices and guidance. This effort produced a detailed document for the Secretariat detailing the organizational structure and defining the duties and responsibilities of all key departments

Reinforcing capacities for law-drafting: In partnership with the NTC, UNDP-Libya hosted, in June 2012, in Tripoli, a five-day specialized training on law-drafting. 70 legal staff from the NTC; the Office of the Prime Minister; 19 ministries including the ministries of Justice, Planning, and Defense; and the Court of Audit took part in the training.

UNDP also provided support to the establishment of a parliamentary library and research center. Over 700 key legal publications including, books, guides and dictionaries, in addition to 160 guides from the Inter-parliamentary Union, were procured as a seed core the library and research centre. A detailed organizational structure for the library was developed including specific terms of reference of key senior positions.

UNDP provided support for the organization of the inaugural session of the **newly elected General National Congress** which will assume power after the NTC. Draft internal procedures of the first GNC session were developed along with three procedural guides to orient newly elected members to their functions. The guides covered: 1) legislative powers in a political system, 2) the structure of parliament and 3) the rights and duties of elected members.



Group of participants with the Minister of Justice at the closing ceremony of the workshop

Future UNDP support in the coming months will focus on providing support to the GNC—the elected assembly emerging from Libya’s first free, multi-party parliamentary elections, in six decades, which were held on 7 July 2012. UNDP will support members of the GNC—dealing with parliamentary duties for their very first time— to effectively fulfil their mandate in undertaking legislative, budgeting, oversight and representational functions. UNDP support to the GNC will also include: supporting organizational improvements in the Secretariat; strengthening procedures to ensure effective oversight and legislative scrutiny; and establishing mechanisms for regular interaction between civil society and the GNC for ongoing consultation and mediation purposes. Special focus will be devoted to women elected members in terms of enhancing their capacities and encouraging networks and exchange of experiences.

RESULTS

- Draft by-laws for the inaugural session of the National General Congress provided
- Draft by-laws of the National General Congress provided
- Organogram of the secretariat and terms of references of key positions were provided
- 70 legal staff trained on new techniques for drafting laws
- Over 700 books and guides on parliamentary work procured as a seed for establishing a parliamentary library and research centre
- Three guides on the parliamentary work produced for the newly elected members of the GNC

Parliaments and Anti-Corruption: strengthening the role of Public Accounts Committee in Kiribati and Tuvalu

For more information, please contact Charmaine Rodrigues, (previously based in UNDP Pacific Centre)

Parliamentarians in Kiribati are set to seek amendments to increase powers for an important committee that scrutinizes public spending. This development stemmed from training for parliamentarians to familiarize them with the Public Accounts Committee's (PAC) powers and functions. Since independence, the Committee has always had closed hearings, making them inaccessible to the public including the Members of Parliament who are not part of the committee.

The Committee currently has limited powers and resources to undertake investigations and to hold the Government accountable for the implementation of its recommendations, resulting in weakening of its ability to address corruption in the public sector. As one of the Kiribati Parliament's oversight mechanisms, the Public Accounts Committee when effectively used can become an effective tool for ensuring the accountability of public funds and curbing corruption in the public sector.

Within the framework of UNDP's Kiribati Parliament Support Project 2009 – 2012, a Public Accounts Committee Workshop was designed and facilitated by UNDP, the Kiribati Parliament staff and the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly including senior officials from government departments.

The Kiribati Parliamentarians noted that the powers of the Committee were limited to the consideration of the Auditor General's report and it had no power to recommend the criminal prosecution and the filling of appropriate charges, civil or administrative, of any person established by the Committee to have violated the public finance laws. Rest of the 46 Members of Parliament (MPs) also discussed the powers and structure of the PAC, its role in relation to the police, the state-owned enterprises and the Island Councils as well as the powers and resources that it needs to have in order to be effective in addressing corruption in the public sector. The three day workshop concluded on 5 May 2012 with concrete recommendations and requested the Speaker to seek their approval in Parliament during the August 2012 session. The recommendations included proposed amendments to existing laws with a view of broadening the powers, authority and scope of the PAC to strengthen its oversight function; measures to address poor follow-up on recommendations of the PAC, and that the Committee conduct public awareness and public hearing to increase public understanding of the PAC roles and allows opportunity for feedback on PAC reports.

Inaugural Public Accounts Committee Seminar Conducted for Tuvalu Parliamentarians

Many Tuvaluans over the years have seen the Public Accounts Committee as an extension of the Opposition group in Parliament. This misconception was thoroughly discussed and the role of the Committee clarified in a training attended by Tuvalu's Members of Parliament, government departments, state-owned enterprises and the Auditor General's Office who were trained on how to use the Public Accounts Committee more efficiently. The three-day seminar was designed and facilitated by UNDP, Tuvalu's Parliament staff and the Alfred Deakin Research Institute including senior officials from government departments. The workshop is an activity of UNDP's Tuvalu Parliament Support Project 2011 – 2013 with funding support from the British High Commission's Suva Office.

The seminar focused on the powers and functions of the Committee, its relationship with the national government and the Kaupule (local level government), state-owned enterprises, and the challenges and opportunities for strengthening the oversight role of the Committee. Questions discussed by the 15-member Parliament included: What are the powers and structure of Public Accounts Committee? What is the role of this committee in relation to the police, the state-owned enterprises and the Falekaupules (Tuvalu's traditional assembly)?

What does the Committee need to have in order to be effective and what are the challenges faced by the Public Accounts Committee in Tuvalu? The seminar concluded on 15 March with concrete outcomes - a proposal to establish a law entitled a Parliamentary Committees Act which aims to strengthen the oversight function of all Parliamentary Committees including the Public Accounts Committee; the establishment of a full-time dedicated office with qualified staff for the Committee, and that the Committee distributes its report to civil society and allows opportunity for feedback.

Launch of Samoa's first Parliamentary Support Project

-Marie Mureau, UNDP Samoa

The Office of the Legislative Assembly, UNDP and Ausaid jointly launched the first Samoa Parliamentary Support Project (SPSP) on 31st May 2012. The Project was developed to strengthen the capacity of Samoa's Members of Parliament to more effectively and accountably progress Samoa's national development priorities and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The project also aims to deepen the democratic process in parliamentary debate and improve communications with the public. "Open meetings of the various oversight committees is one of the important changes that will come about during the project so that the public have an opportunity to understand how decisions are made in Parliament," said Mrs. Noble, the UNDP Resident Representative. "Under this SPSP, Samoa's Parliament will undergo some positive democratic changes in its procedures and practices particularly in the strengthening of its representative role. Under this AusAID funded Institutional Strengthening Project and with the support of the UNDP Country Office, measures have been put in place for a Public Engagement Unit comprising of a Public Outreach initiative and a Parliamentary Education Unit. This is to ensure that our Parliament is more accessible to all citizens by encouraging their participation in the various mechanisms of our Parliament. This will be particularly favorable for the marginalized sectors of the country particularly for women as the Constitution Amendment Bill pushing for a 10% women's quota is currently in progressing through the House and will be one of the orders for discussion this Session" *said the Prime Minister, Honourable Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Aiono Neioti Sailele Malielegaoi.*

Practice Parliament for Women Candidates in Papua New Guinea

-Peterson Magoola, UNDP Papua New Guinea

Pacific women representation in political decision making processes is of the lowest percentage in the world (*just under 3 per cent of all elected leaders in the Pacific are women*). In PNG, under the leadership of the Department for Community Development, significant work has been done by UNDP through

Civil Society, the National Council of Women, and the Office of Development for Women with support from other partners on the Equality and Participation Bill to reserve 22 seats for women in the National Parliament.

The Practice Parliament

In light of the general elections (starting in June 2012) and the concern that there may be no women MPs represented in the next parliament, UNDP supported the Department for Community Development to run a Practice Parliament training for potential women candidates. The exercise had three aims:

- 1) Understanding of Parliamentary procedures
- 2) Enhancing women visibility in media during campaigns
- 3) Public speaking skills on issues of national interest

Sixty (60) participants attended the Practice Parliament which was broadcasted live on Radio FM 100 nationwide. Women participants were divided in both opposition and government, and were given the opportunity to debate on various development issues including: How the government would protect women from unprovoked attacks based upon allegations of witchcraft; disabilities in PNG; indigenous landowners; etc. Following the Question Time, participants debated the Mock Reproductive Health Rights Bill, a practice Bill drafted to test women's skills in analyzing proposed legislation and debating amendments.

Impact of the Practice Parliament

- The Practice parliament increased awareness of the potential capacity of women candidates to represent their electorates at the national level. Feedback received from communities that were listening to the live broadcasting of the debate showed how these communities were thrilled by the level of knowledge and capability of women in moving forward national development priorities. At one point, a local man in a nearby village was wondering why women were pushing to be in Parliament, when he could hear them on Radio debating in Parliament – **NOTE:** The same day the National Parliament was having a session!
- The visibility of women's potential in political decision-making processes "awakened" political parties on the increased value women can add to these parties. Days that followed the Practice Parliament noted a number of Political Parties nominating women candidates to run for elections (*a 35% increase compared to the last elections*).
- In addition, political parties have expressed interest to be supported in gender mainstreaming as a means of promoting women leadership within the parties.
- More visibility for women candidates has been secured through daily coverage of women candidates' profiles, as well as the creation of the [PACWIP website](#) (Pacific Women in Politics) and a [Facebook page](#) which are further disseminating information on women candidates to online voters who are mainly youth.

Next Steps:

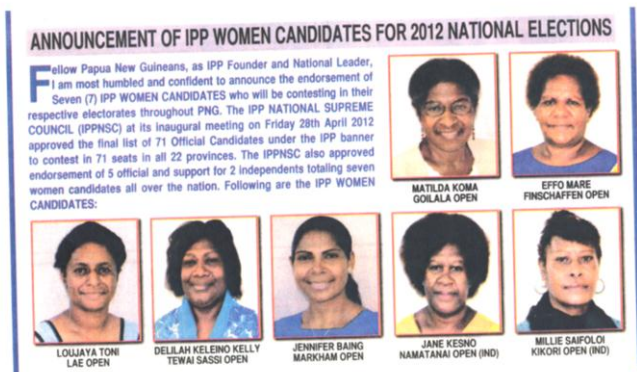
- Momentum has been generated for women representation at the local level elections. Currently women candidates who will run for LLG elections are requesting UNDP to provide similar support for the upcoming elections at the Local Level in 2013.
- In lead up to the next general elections, a 5-year electoral support programme will be developed to strengthen the capacity of women intending to run for 2017 elections. The programme will address: campaign financing, media/communication support; parliamentary strengthening, and women candidate recruitment.



PNG intending Women Candidates during the Practice Parliament Session



Intending woman candidate Ms. Francesca R. Semoso debating a Bill



Newspaper supplement announcing nominations for some of the women who participated in the Practice Parliament



Practice Parliament session in progress for intending women candidates

GOPAC/UNDP Workshop for parliamentarians on the fight against corruption in Dili, Timor Leste (March 28-29, 2012)

-For more information, please contact Luca Bruccheri, Governance Programme Officer, UNDP Timor-Leste

UNDP, in partnership with the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), organized a workshop to provide substantial knowledge about the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and the GOPAC-UNDP selfassessment tool and to encourage more active involvement in the process of the formal UNCAC self-evaluation mechanism.

It also sought to engage broader civil society and parliamentarians in a national dialogue on the fight against corruption. A Report ([How Strong are we in the Global Fight Against Corruption?: Self-assessing the implementation of the UNCAC](#)) was released assessing this pilot workshop, as well as two other ones held in Burkina Faso and Morocco for Members of Parliament (MPs) and wider civil society. The report includes information about workshop sessions in each of the countries as well as a summary of recommendations gathered from workshop participants.



GOPAC / UNDP Workshop

Strengthening Public Participation in Law-Making and Rule of Law – the experience of China’s National People’s Congress

-For more information, please contact Henny Ngu, Team Leader for Democratic Governance, UNDP China

The Legal Affairs Commission (LAC) of the National People’s Congress (NPC) has been piloting various forms of participatory public hearing mechanisms at the provincial and district level. UNDP with support from the European Union (EU) is contributing to the pilot models through a combination of national research, comparative analysis on public hearings from other countries, study visits on constitutional review mechanisms, and training for over 1300 officials from the National and Local People’s Congresses on public participation in law-making. Based on the research findings and training, in November 2011, the LAC held a national review on current legislative public hearing procedures. Representatives from Local People’s Congresses and academics shared experiences on holding public hearings. Recommendations include the need to standardize and simplify legislative public hearings procedures. Regularize timing of public hearings; clarify the rights and obligations of participants; improve the selection process to have more diverse participants such as through open and public nomination and increasing representation from interest groups; strengthen follow up on hearing results to ensure that real changes are made and felt by the public; diversify public hearing channels such as online hearings, written submissions. These recommendations were submitted to the NPC as proposed amendments to the Legislation on Law.

As part of ongoing efforts to improve the oversight role of Local People’s Congresses (LPCs), LAC also carried out a review on pilot initiatives in Jinagxi and Hubei provinces. Recommendations made were to amend the NPC Supervisory Law and Budget Law in order to strengthen the authority of the supervisory functions of LPCs, increase training for LPC delegates and to broaden the membership and representation of LPC Standing Committees to include

For example, lawyers, accountants and economists to provide informed and relevant feedback.

Significantly, the NPC issued a White Paper on China’s system of law in October 2011 which affirmed that a fully-fledged legal framework was now in pace. While the White Paper listed China’s past achievements in legal reform, it also acknowledged rising public demand for more democratic legislation, the importance of public participation, better monitoring of law implementation and law harmonization. This validates the direction of national priorities and reinforces UNDP’s support to the NPC to advance public participation in law-making processes.

As part of strengthening the capacity of CSOs to participate in legal proceedings, UNDP is supporting the All China Environmental Federation (ACEF) to take on a groundbreaking role in representing communities as plaintiffs in environmental tribunals, UNDP provided technical expertise to compare and analyze Chinese, American and European public interest litigation systems, comment on draft legislative proposals and draft a ‘Guide Handbook for the maintenance of Environmental Rights’. ACEF used this to build a case against the Ding Pa Paper Mill, which was discharging waste water toxins into Nanming River in Guizhou province, exceeding environmentally safe standards. On behalf of affected communities, ACEF brought the case to the Guiyang environmental tribunal leading to the closure of the paper mill. With this successful prosecution paper mills and factories in surrounding districts began applying stricter pollution controls.

Supporting women’s political participation within the Legislative Assembly in El Salvador

-Xenia Díaz, UNDP El Salvador



Campaign to promote the election of women MPs: “Let’s Vote for More Women”

In the context of the elections held in March 2012, UNDP El Salvador, together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provided support to the Women’s Parliamentary Group the Association of Parliamentary and Ex-Parliamentary Women (ASPARLEXSAL), the Council for

Equality and Equity (CIE) and the National Association of Women Mayors of El Salvador (ANDRYAS) in the design and implementation of the campaign “Let’s vote for more Women”, aimed at raising awareness and encouraging the people to vote for women in the process that would elect the 84 Representatives for the Legislative Assembly and the 262 Municipal Councils for 2012-2015. The campaign focused on the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador, and its key target audiences were the overall population and students in particular. This was implemented through prime radio spots, marquees, posters and interviews with various media outlets.

Click [here](#) for more information and an audio presentation of the campaign.



Discussion Forum on election platforms for the rights of women

Discussion forum on election platforms for the rights of women

In the context of the support given to the Council for Equality and Equity, together with the United Nations Population Fund, UNDP supported the organization of a forum on electoral platforms for women, which included the participation of women representatives from the different parties, and politicians who presented their proposals for working platforms in favor of women's rights for the 2012-2015 term. The event was attended by over 200 people.

Support to the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

As part of the project "Pact for Gender Equality" and following the creation of the first Parliamentary Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, the UNDP Gender Advisor made a presentation on the status of women in El Salvador during the Committee's second meeting in May 2012. The presentation served as an entry point and basis for the development of the Committee's work agenda.



UNDP El Salvador in partnership with the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and the Executive Technical Unit of the Justice Sector conducted a consultation process in June 2012 with the various institutions involved in the justice sector, in order to assess the progress made and obstacles encountered with regards to the implementation of the Comprehensive Special Law for a Life Free of Violence against Women, adopted in 2010 and effective as of January 2012, as well as the Law on Equality, Equity and Elimination of Discrimination against Women adopted in 2011. As a result of this effort, the inputs were used to develop proposals for legal adjustments to promote the rights of women and ensure the commitment of Women Representatives in support of the reform processes.



Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Together with UNWOMEN and the Women's Parliamentary Group, a discussion dedicated to the sharing of experiences took place in May 2012, around the issues of femicide in Mexico and the economic autonomy of women. The inputs provided by the discussions contributed to the development of the Parliament's Work Agenda.



Meeting in Mexico

Preparing Parliament for the 21st Century in Trinidad and Tobago

-Jens-Ulrich Poppen, UNDP Trinidad and Tobago

In February 2012, UNDP Trinidad and Tobago made yet another strategic commitment to capacity development in the Caribbean twin-island state by entering into a two-year project partnership with the Parliament. The Parliamentary Strengthening project will launch a series of initiatives aimed at modernizing the legislative functioning of Parliament and enhance the institution's outreach and communication. It will provide policy and legal guidance to the parliament leadership with a view to establish the functional autonomy of parliament and has identified the following areas for intervention:

- 1.) Development of a Comprehensive Strategic Development Plan for Parliament and the development of a multi-year follow-on project supporting the implementation of such Plan.
- 2.) Strengthening of the legislative functioning of parliament by introducing best practices in the area of public hearings and consultations through a system of Select Committees, assist in the institutionalization of the public consultation process and developing knowledge products on post-legislative scrutiny of law implementation.
- 3.) Strengthening of outreach and communication of parliament through improving the constituency relations management of elected Members as well as by providing assistance to direct channels of public outreach and external relations by parliamentary staff and presiding officers. This intervention also includes the development of a Parliamentary Communications Strategy as well as communications training with MPs and Members of the Senate while also seeking to broaden the public appeal of events such as Week of Parliament, Parliament Day and National Youth Parliament.
- 4.) Developing the functional autonomy of Parliament, an intervention that will be overseen by a Multi-Party Commission to be established for this purpose. UNDP will provide a legal drafting expert who will assist in 'translating' the stipulations of an already existing framework document on parliamentary managerial autonomy into an adequate legal narrative.



Parliamentary commitment to citizen security in Central America

-Natasha Leite, UNDP Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean

CISCAJ Meeting: The II meeting of the Commission of Citizen Security and Justice Administration (CISCAJ) of the Forum for Legislative Presidents of Central America and Dominican Republic (FOPREL) took place in Mexico on May 7th, 2012. During their second meeting the Parliamentarians reinforced their commitment to citizen security in the region and prioritized the issues of human trafficking and combating small arms and light weapons. El Salvador and Costa Rica were designated to develop Regional Legislative frameworks on these issues.

Parliamentary training: Last month the Regional Course on Citizen Security and Development for Parliamentarians of Central America came to a conclusion. 41 Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff were part of this virtual course that lasted for eleven (11) weeks. During this training they had an overlook of the security context in the region, familiarized themselves with the concept of citizen security, and focused on specific topics such as corruption, gender-based violence, youth violence and the development of security-related policy making in Latin America. The virtual course also provided a great space to exchange experiences and best practices in terms of approaches to overcome common obstacles. Members of the Latin American women parliamentarians' network substantially contributed to the exchanges, sharing their own perspective and casting light on the specific obstacles they face as woman parliamentarians.



International Executive Program for Parliamentary Staff
-Ruth Beeckmans, UNDP HQ

The World Bank Institute and the Institute for the Study of International Development at McGill University, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Parliamentary Centre and the State University of New York's Centre for International Development organized from June 11 to June 16, 2012, a training in Montreal for Parliamentary Staff from Commonwealth countries. Parliamentary Staff from Canada, Trinidad & Tobago, St. Helena, Namibia, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and South Africa participated in a one week training to build strong, dynamic, and effective parliaments. Besides the sessions on the core functions of Parliament – oversight, representation and law-making – the

training focused on the relation between the legislative and executive, management and strategic communication. Participants held interesting discussions on democracy, accountability, transparency and the role parliaments can play in extractive industries. Although participants came from very different backgrounds – it's hard to imagine a greater difference than the one between the Parliament of Canada and St. Helena - it was clear that they often face similar challenges, as for example parliamentary outreach to different constituencies. Montreal marked the start of an innovative 18-month program combining the intensive one-week residential seminar with expert-moderated e-learning courses, one-on-one professional mentoring and possible short attachments to other parliaments. UNDP encourages parliamentary staff present at the training to stay engaged, continue the exchange of ideas and good practices, and support each other to ensure parliaments become and remain strong pillars of democracy.

Meeting of the African Networks of Parliamentarians on the MDGs

“Parliaments are key for ensuring the achievement of the MDGs in Africa. Where parliaments are active they make a huge difference to implementing the MDGs. Africa is proof.” - Charles Abugre, Africa Director of the UN Millennium Campaign.

Organized by the UN Millennium Campaign, the ‘All Africa Parliamentary Conference on the Millennium Development Goals and Post-2015 Development agenda’ took place on 22-24 May 2012 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa. 150 African parliamentarians attending the meeting, including elected representatives from Nigeria, Mozambique, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mali, Tchad, Niger, Rwanda as well as observers from Asian parliaments. Parliamentarians underlined their strong commitment and key role in delivering the MDGs, looking at budgets, providing scrutiny and oversight of government and more importantly, representing citizens. Discussions turned to key issues of accountability, leadership and oversight of parliaments across the continent, that lead to concrete progress on the MDGs.

The Africa Network of Parliamentarians on the MDGs is a key platform for sharing experiences across the continent and driving greater oversight for delivering on the MDGs. Since 2010 the steering committee of the Network has undertaken advocacy trips to Senegal, Ghana, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Uganda to explain the importance of an African network of parliamentarians actively supporting the Millennium Development Goals. The main focus of this unique and effective network is to roll out shared strategy across all parliaments of Africa to promote MDGs in Africa, assess National Development Plans and harmonize with targets of MDGs, ensure monitoring of engagement, identify moments of actions when Members of Parliaments can push policy, highlight the interconnections between MDGs, share best practices and brainstorm on measure to ensure Africa parliaments have a voice. The network recently decided to organize an Africa-wide assembly to ensure all of African parliaments take part in campaigning for 2015 and thinking what development agenda should look like beyond 2015.



Your help evaluating the Global Parliamentary Development Expert Roster!

Ruth Beeckmans, UNDP HQ

In 2011, UNDP HQ developed a global parliamentary development expert roster. 50 experts from different regions and backgrounds have been selected. Around 20 Country Offices used the expert roster to recruit experts in parliamentary development. Given the wide variety of work in parliamentary development, the identified experts do not cover all areas of expertise Country Offices are looking for.

An evaluation questionnaire has been prepared to identify the gaps, target experts with specific expertise and language skills, and make the expert roster more user-friendly. The questionnaire will take only 10 minutes and your input would be extremely useful to improve the quality of the expert roster. We would appreciate receiving your feedback by the **end of the month of July**. You may access the evaluation [here](#).

USEFUL LINKS

- ✓ [Agora](#)
- ✓ [IknowPolitics](#)
- ✓ [Teamworks](#)
- ✓ [Arab parliaments](#)
- ✓ [IPU](#)
- ✓ [NDI](#)
- ✓ [WBI](#)
- ✓ [Newsletter of the Women Caucus Group \(GGD\) in Kosovo](#)
For more information, contact Jeton Rexha, UNDP Kosovo