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### **Introduction on the Global mapping**

This Study provides an overview of the players (donors and implementers), methods, themes, strategies, reference frameworks, main activities and implementation modalities applied in the area of parliamentary strengthening.

It discusses key components of sustainable strategies for parliamentary development. These include the need for a thorough understanding of the political context – typically by conducting a Political Economy Analysis (PEA). However, many donors have found it difficult to use the insights emerging from a PEA to develop more strategic, realistic programs that target the underlying causes of parliamentary dysfunction.

The Study says that parliamentary development strategy should be parliament-designed and that a project should be owned by parliament. However, for many funding organisations the concept of *national ownership means agreement with the government*. This results in executive influence over administrative, financial, and political aspects of parliamentary strengthening; this in itself is antithetic to the idea of parliamentary strengthening and the separation of powers.

Many parliamentary development organisations have identified lessons learned which include the need for better contextualization, long-term commitment, demand-driven donor support, integrated and target-group specific support, and opportunities to connect national and supra-national programs.

The Study speaks about the benchmarks for democratic parliaments. Donor agencies can find guidance in the new, IPU-drafted Common Principles for parliamentary support.

### **Part 1: Opportunities for parliamentary development**

There are many opportunities for entering parliamentary support. I will mention couple of typical entry points and expand on advantages and potential risks.

A first entry point is thematic support to parliament. Being confronted with serious challenges in the area of for instance health, education or environment, it can be useful to provide thematic support to parliament, and its committees in these areas. Sometimes, SDC might work with the government on policies tackling these challenges, but it is as important to also advise parliament and its committees. One can this have an advisor in one of the thematic areas supporting a ministry on a policy or draft law and then also support the parliament committee. However, there is a risk. When a high level expert is dropped in parliament, advising the committee chairperson, there is a risk that the regular staff of parliament feels sidelined or marginalized. And high level technical advise is always for a limited period of time. It is thus important that this advisor also works with parliament staff, attempts to increase their knowledge and strengthen their ability to follow-up to the high level technical input of the advisor. In such case, it can be a good contribution to provide technical advice, which thus strengthens the institutional capacity of parliament.

A second example of an entry point is to support the parliament in reviewing the annual budget. It is one of the core responsibilities of parliament. Often MPs don't have the experience or skills to read a budget document, as submitted by the executive; or to extract the relevant observations from reports of the Auditor General on the budget implementation. A parliamentary project can thus choose to strengthen the institutional capacity of parliament by the creation of a parliamentary Budget Office. This is a group of skilled professionals, knowledgeable in budget and financial matters. A project can thus assist in the establishment of such an office, its rules, human resources, methodology, etc. However, there is also a risk. Such skilled professionals on budget and financial matters are scarce, there are not too many available. They often have good opportunities in the private sector as well. They can be expensive for parliament to keep. This can create jealousy with other, regular staff. It is thus important to find a good balance for funding the budget of parliament and remuneration of regular staff as well.

A third example of an entry point to parliament support is to advise on a multi-year strategic plan. Often there are many ideas around to support parliament, among MPs and senior staff. A strategic plan provides a vision and a road map to achieving the objectives, to implement the activities. It gives perspective what reforms can be implemented this year and the following years. In doing so, it is important to prepare the strategic plan in an inclusive process, to involve MPs and senior staff, MPs of ruling party and MPs from opposition parties. There is a risk that the Strategic Plan remains an internal document of parliament alone. It is necessary to involve also external stakeholders, such as civil society, experts, media, academics, independent institutions, etc. The more inclusive the process is, the more the Strategic Plan can contribute to increased respect and appreciation for the institution of parliament and democracy altogether. If these external stakeholders are not included, there is a risk that some of them might attack some provisions of the plan without seeing the full picture; for instance if the strategic plan foresees in specific actions of citizens outreach at a later stage of the implementation of the plan, or if there are provisions on renovation of parliament premises. Instead of a splintered view and partial information, the strategic plan can provide an overall picture where parliament is going in the years ahead. For SDC and other agencies supporting parliament the Strategic Plan also gives guidance where they can direct their support.

A fourth example of an entry point to parliament support is the engagement between politicians and the public. This involves:

- improve public consultation on legislation or policy,
- forge better links between parliament and civil society and the media
- constituency outreach of MPs through constituency offices
- encouraging more people to visit parliament,
- creating mobile parliamentary buses to tour the country and providing information,
- creating parliamentary radio stations
- use of social media and new ICT tools in parliamentary outreach and public input.

## **part 2: Target groups of parliamentary development**

Parliament is not a monolithic organization. There are different stakeholders and different needs. So, which are the target groups for parliamentary assistance ?

Firstly, there is the parliament administration, the staff of parliament. They are often the institutional memory of parliament, provide continuity, and should be politically neutral, serving all members of parliament whatever their political background. Often staff has very few opportunities for learning

their job, there are few trainings or opportunities for professional development. Thus, a parliamentary assistance project can provide training for staff, but it is important to look for specific needs of specific groups. For instance, if we consider the Legal Department or Legal Unit within parliament, there needs can include legislative drafting training, how to read draft laws and how to draft amendments to legislation. Another need for a legal department is access to legal sources, Journals, precedents and court rulings in specific thematic areas, access to databases, etc. A parliamentary support project can assist in that. Another department in parliament is for instance an international relations unit, which assists MPs when preparing for a visit abroad, working visit, official visit, conference, etc. A parliamentary project can provide guidance on structure of such Unit, Job Descriptions, rules on preparing and reporting back on visits abroad, how to ensure it contributes to the regular work of parliament in committees.

A second target group are the committees. Committee chairpersons have an important role in determining the agenda of committee meeting, need the skills to chair a meeting giving equal opportunity to all members including members of the opposition. A parliamentary project can provide guidance on agenda setting of a committee, work plan of committee, ways how to organize public hearings, etc. Committees are often the workhorses of parliament, the place where the real work happens. members of committees are in need for technical advice on thematic issues or on oversight techniques.

A third target group are the Speaker, deputy Speaker, Bureau of parliament; thus the leadership. Advice is often useful in areas of procedures of parliament, chairing the sessions. A regular MP which makes a mistake is an individual mistake. A mistake by the Speaker, for instance in interpreting the rules, sets a precedent or can lead to controversy. Policy advice by other MPs or former MPs, peer to peer advice, can be useful in this respect.

A fourth target group is the SG of parliament. He usually has two main responsibilities: management of the House, of the administration; and be the first advisor to the Speaker on procedural matters. So, a parliamentary project can assist in this; on management issues, human resources policies, change management in the organization, development of the parliament budget, etc.

In all these target groups, it is important to remember that one supports institutions not individuals. Although one advises individuals, which can be champions of change, the focus is the institution. This is important for sustainability and impartiality of the project.

### **part 3: Systemic approaches and complementarities to other interventions**

within the governance area parliamentary development is of course not on its own; there are synergies with other thematic areas. I will mention couple of them.

The first thematic area is electoral assistance. Assisting elections is not just limited to the elections day and preparations. There is the electoral cycle, which includes also ensuring the functioning of the Electoral Commission, updating the voters list, following up to conclusions and recommendations of election observation missions on the conduct of elections and the climate surrounding the elections. The synergies consist of the fact that there is also a parliamentary cycle to take into account, the cycle of the parliamentary life. This includes the approval of the state budget, time needed for considering, debating and amending legislation, parliament outreach work, etc. Synergies between parliamentary

assistance and electoral assistance tries to ensure that both cycles are coordinated. This means, for instance, that requests for parliament approval of new members of the Electoral Commission is timed in a way that parliament has sufficient time to look into that; that the budgetary needs of the Election Commission are timely communicated and justified to parliament; that officials of the Electoral Commission are available to parliament on the budget, submit an annual report on the proceedings of their work, etc.

An important entry point for addressing structural issues are thus electoral legislation, as it is important for the composition and organisation of parliaments. Laws addressing, for example, rules of procedure of parliament and freedom of information may also provide an entry point for support.

A second thematic area where there are synergies with parliamentary work is the area of political parties.

- parties often have platforms they try to realize through the work in parliament; sometimes platforms are important, sometimes the role of the party president is more determining, or the loyalty to the history of the party.

- MPs in parliament are often grouped in parliamentary groups, Caucus through which parties work. Working with parliament requires thus some knowledge on the parties, their platform, leadership structure, history and values. Some projects are sometimes requested to assist in building cross-party groups, such as gender caucus, where MPs work together across party lines.

- Most parliamentary projects tackle institutional deficiencies by building the capacity to fulfil certain functions, but that does not always resolve issues. For instance, in some cases parliament is technically well equipped and constitutionally capable of holding the government to account, but it doesn't happen. The reason is that the way how the ruling party dominates state institutions including parliament means that there are few incentives and space to exercise oversight effectively. Thus, to understand parliament's weakness, one needs to understand the power balance among parties.

- distinction between working with parties and working on the party system:

- classical, traditional party work, such as trainings for party activists on communication, party organization, assist in reviewing the statutes of parties. In these things it is important to be inclusive and neutral in interaction with all individual parties.

- Alternative way, on political party system:

- political party law to clarify the legal basis for establishing a party;
- assist in legislation to regulate party financing and thus target the corruption in parties;
- support inter-party relations by facilitating multi-party dialogue processes.

A third thematic area where there are synergies with parliamentary work is public financial management and the budget cycle. The budget cycle involves actors in the government, such as Ministry of Finance, but also independent institution such as the Auditor general. In many countries, the auditor general is an "officer of parliament". So, establishing good relations with the Office of Auditor General is important. Other synergies are between budget review in parliament and transparency, enabling sufficient time for parliament to review budget and get comments from civil society or conduct budget hearings with relevant agencies, ministries, state entities requesting a specific portion of the budget.

#### **Part 4: Way forward**

There are various ways in which SDC can decide to engage further in parliamentary support at country level. Couple of thoughts from my side

1. support to executive on policies and legislation; then also support to corresponding committee; but in a way which strengthens parliament in institutional way. This is mainly the thematic or issue based support.
2. support to elections, then also support to parliament as the institution emerging from the elections. In one way or another. one way would be to do so on the parliaments role in outreach and communication with voters and citizens; as it is the logical next step after elections; and SDC could look for specific and innovative approach, for instance the use of new media or social media in parliament communication (if the context is conducive for that)
3. if support to parliament outreach, then also citizens input and public participation. Not only parliament outreach, as parliament selling itself to voters, but also parliament enabling input by the citizens in its work, in debates and hearings. in other words: if you support the launch or renovation of a parliament web-site, then focus is not only that all information is available and the outreach is comprehensive, but also that there is possibility for input, so, draft laws are put on line and citizens can comment on them on-line, someone collects the comments, summarizes them and sends them to the relevant committee chairperson, etc.
4. involve former Swiss MPs or parliament staff from Bern in an SDC parliamentary program, as way to bring key values of parliamentary culture of consensus building and consensus decision making to the beneficiary parliament.