



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Expert Roundtable on the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments

Building to last: Parliamentary support aims for sustainable outcomes

Geneva, 28 October 2016

ROUNDTABLE REPORT

Background

In recent decades, support to parliaments has steadily increased, as have the number of support partners. The Common Principles for Support to Parliaments were developed by a working group¹ to underpin parliamentary support and make it more effective.² The Principles were formally adopted by the 131st IPU Assembly in October 2014, and have since been endorsed by 111 parliaments and organizations.³

Once the Common Principles had been developed, parliaments and their partners sought to examine more closely how to apply them in our day to day work. and It was proposed to organize a regular series of expert roundtables to provide focused insight into specific elements of the Common Principles and to help develop tools that would allow them to be applied more robustly.

On 28 October 2016, the first roundtable took place at the Headquarters of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Geneva. It focused on Common Principle 3: *Parliamentary support aims for sustainable outcomes*. Over 50 members of parliament, parliamentary staff, and parliamentary support practitioners participated in the meeting, representing 17 parliaments from every continent and seven partner organizations.

The aim of the roundtable was to:

- Review Common Principle 3 and share perspectives on what sustainable outcomes mean.
- Identify the lessons learned and challenges faced in terms of making support projects more sustainable.
- Share knowledge about tools that would help strengthen sustainability, and examine how to integrate them into the day-to-day work of parliaments.

Welcome and introduction to Common Principle 3

Introductory remarks were made by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General, and Ms. Kareen Jabre, Director of the IPU Division of Programmes. They highlighted the continuously evolving nature of the Common Principles, and their value as a resource that the entire parliamentary community owned. They also introduced Common Principle 3 – *parliamentary support aims for sustainable outcomes*.

The Common Principles define *sustainability* in the context of parliamentary support as the continued accrual of the benefits of external assistance to an institution, even after the assistance ceases. This implies that parliaments have or develop the capacity to manage change. According to Common Principle 3, sustainable outcomes are achieved by developing tools (a strategic plan, clear staff job descriptions) and fully integrating them into the day-to-day operations of parliament. However as the Common Principles indicate, tools, processes and planning alone do not achieve sustainable outcomes. The main method of ensuring continuity in a parliament is through its people. The

¹ Comprised of the European Parliament, the National Assembly of France, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

² http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/principles_en.pdf

³ Endorsements as of 12 January 2017: <http://www.ipu.org/dem-e/cp-endorsements.pdf>



permanent secretariat and many others, such as the Speaker, party leaders and members all have crucial roles to play.

Challenges to achieving sustainable outcomes

In this session, participants shared the challenges they had experienced. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Charles Chauvel (Team Leader, Inclusive Political Processes, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)). There were presentations from Mr. Ahmed Saad Eldin, Secretary General of the Egyptian House of Representatives, and Ms. Jiko Luveni,

Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji. A variety of challenges were raised by the participants. They covered the need to be politically sensitive to national cultural contexts, to coordinate intensively, as well as other more specific challenges.

On the need to be politically sensitive to national cultural contexts, the following views were highlighted:

- Parliaments are inextricably linked to the wider political, social and economic context. They are therefore subject to influences and changes beyond their control. Examples shared included large-scale political upheaval and frequent electoral cycles. Both situations often lead to a fluid parliamentary calendar. Any support provided must work around such situations rather than interrupting them. The point was also expressed that in election years, support providers would do well to focus more on staff.
- Parliaments noted that external support should not only be sensitive to local culture, but also appreciate the practicalities of parliamentary work. One parliament mentioned that study visits were more useful if parliaments of a similar size and political system worked together.
- Another common challenge was that it was not always understood that all political actors should be involved in parliamentary development. Leadership from the Speaker, party political representatives and senior staff was cited as a critical ingredient for sustainability, because it fostered cross-party priorities on development and support issues.

Participants also shared their need for greater local ownership and coordination over parliamentary development. For example:

- Many parliaments stressed that it was difficult for them to effectively manage and coordinate multiple offers of external support.
- Some parliaments noted that many external support partners had their own support preferences (for example, public accounts committees are very popular targets of support).
- The lack of a central body through which parliaments could coordinate the support they received might lead to duplication, inefficiency, and higher financial and human resource costs.
- The reporting requirements of many donors and partners often led to parliaments being unable to streamline their reporting processes, which in turn resulted in duplicated or disconnected work.

“Do not use donor funds for routine things”

Other challenges that participants mentioned included:

- Agreeing on clearly expressed objectives designed to improve training for members and staff on both their core work and their ability to effectively transfer knowledge within parliament.
- Losing expertise when MPs leave office, especially in light of the increasingly higher turnover of parliamentarians in recent years.
- A lack of adequate expertise for locally driven monitoring and evaluation processes.
- Obtaining an adequate operational budget for new parliaments. (External supporters can provide basic equipment and hardware until the parliament has consolidated its own budget).
- Delays in disbursing donor-supported project funds. (Support partners' approval processes are often lengthy, even where parliaments require rapid access to funds).
- Overcoming a dependency on external partners' financial and other support. (Incentives that did not encourage self-sufficiency and local ownership were counter-productive).

Tools to help achieve sustainable outcomes

Participants tackled many of the challenges above by sharing their views on helpful tools and good practices. The discussion was underpinned by the understanding that each parliament operated within its own particular circumstances, and that what may work in one parliament may not in another. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Scott Hubli (Director of Governance Programmes, National Democracy Institute). Presentations were made by Mr. Aung Kyi Myunt MP (Vice-chairman of the Joint Coordination Committee of the Union Assembly of Myanmar), Mr. Kyaw Soe (Secretary of the Joint Coordinating Committee on Parliamentary Strengthening and Director General of the Union Assembly Office of Myanmar), and Mr. Okumu Dison, (Director of Corporate Planning and Strategy for the Parliament of Uganda).



Two subjects were discussed: tools and practices meant to contribute directly to improving the transfer of knowledge from practitioners to parliaments or within parliaments; and tools and practices designed to improve efficiency, coordination, and local ownership of support projects. Additional tools were also highlighted.

Improving knowledge transfer:

- **Training of trainers.** Many participants emphasized that being able to train trainers was an important element of support projects, and a vital part of ensuring that parliamentary staff and members continue to transfer the knowledge that they gain.
- **Local counterparts.** Designating staff as local counterparts to share information and materials to the wider institution was highlighted as a useful and sustainable practice. Such staff act as focal points within parliament so that expertise can be reliably disseminated.
- **Parliamentary twinning.** The development of twinning relationships between parliaments was identified as a good practice that could be a reliable and continuous link for exchanging knowledge.
- **Harnessing the knowledge of former parliamentarians through associations.** Many participants said that the high turnover rate of MPs in recent years made it important to

“Aim support to be catalytic”

capitalize on the knowledge of former parliamentarians. Associations of former parliamentarians had been established and could help with useful local knowledge and context for induction programmes and continuing professional development for MPs. These programmes could be designed to teach novice MPs about their role and refresh the knowledge of incumbent members.

- **Developing and using online tools** offered improved access to training and expertise
- **Parliamentary learning/training institutes** were also highlighted as useful permanent institutions within parliament. They would be suited to documenting knowledge and disseminating expertise.

Examples of tools that coordinate local ownership of parliamentary development, included:

- **Strategic/development plans.** A strategic or development plan that is driven by parliament and has an accompanying roadmap for action was highlighted as a key tool that can define the guiding vision for a parliament's development. Through such activities plans can be prioritized, monitored and evaluated, while transparency and accountability can also be encouraged. Strategic plans are also helpful for aligning parliaments' work with regional and global commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **A central planning/coordination body.** Perhaps the most widely discussed good practice was a hub for planning, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating projects that could strengthen the coordination and effectiveness of parliamentary support. Although the makeup of such a body varied, it was often a committee that included parliamentary leaders, such as the Speaker, representatives of political parties and senior staff.
- **Guidance notes for parliamentary support.** The roundtable featured a set of guidance notes that parliamentarians can draft to help local and international organizations wanting to support parliaments. These guidelines are often written by a parliamentary body mandated to coordinate support projects, strengthen parliament's leadership and enhance decision-making about institutional development. The guidance can also strengthen transparency, facilitate clear communication about support partners' and parliaments' expectations, and establish or reinforce ethical guidelines.
- **Joint planning mechanisms.** Encouraging all the partners of a given parliament to plan jointly can help to map out and coordinate activities. This could be done through a regular meeting.
- **Outcome indicators for monitoring and evaluation.** Some parliaments noted the advantages of having access to lists of outcome indicators with which they could benchmark and assess the impact of their development activities.

Other tools highlighted:

- **Partnerships.** Strong domestic and international partnerships were also raised by many as an important way of improving the effectiveness of parliamentary support. Domestically, good relationships with civil



society, academia, and the media, were considered important elements of bringing parliament closer to the people, increasing transparency, inviting constructive feedback, and nurturing the development of local talent. The value of partnerships with international and regional organizations or parliamentary assemblies was also emphasized. For example, regional parliamentary institutes, or partnerships with established institutes in neighbouring countries, were identified as helpful resources where expertise that is more tailored to regional circumstances could be consolidated.

- **Raising awareness for expert practitioners to strengthen cultural sensitivities.** Both parliaments and practitioners underlined that it was important for parliamentary support to be sensitive to parliaments' individual cultural contexts. An understanding of national history, tradition and culture was a necessary ingredient for transmitting knowledge that would be well adapted to particular social norms, institutional characteristics or other elements of local context. Courses or programmes that strengthened the sensitivity of expert practitioners to such particularities were proposed.

All the tools included important practices that could help parliamentary support result in more sustainable outcomes. It was agreed that the most important element in the equation was building trusting relationships between parliaments and partners.

Developing results-oriented planning and monitoring processes

Effective training for MPs and staff and the use of tools are both important to ensure that sustainable outcomes are achieved. However, more work is needed if such knowledge and practices are to become part of the fabric of the day-to-day operations of parliament. Therefore, in addition to external

“Start a programme, do it well, and it will be taken over by parliament”

support, parliaments may also benefit from training that firmly integrates good practices into their planning, monitoring and reporting processes, and so allows these processes to remain locally owned. The roundtable covering this topic consisted of an introductory presentation by Mr. Martin Schmidt, and was followed by breakout into working groups to answer questions related to central planning, monitoring, and reporting bodies.

Mr. Schmidt stressed how important it was for parliaments to monitor and evaluate their own development. This would facilitate continuous learning and adaptation, enable support projects to meet their desired outcomes and enhance local ownership. It was important that all those involved in such work communicated clearly with each other and maintained a central planning and reporting body within parliament. The following suggestions for effective monitoring and evaluation were made:

- Indicators that recorded the impact of activities, rather than their outputs should be used.
- Results should be well-communicated.
- Institutional memory should be built up consistently through regular knowledge sharing and documentation.
- All stakeholders should be included in the planning and review process.

Following the presentation, participants broke out into five groups to share their experiences and views on how their parliaments integrate mechanisms for sustainability and how support could better help them meet desired ends. Each group then presented its findings. The observations made included the following:

- Although some parliaments had a central planning and reporting body, many did not. Where they did exist, these bodies took a variety of forms: some were run by the Speaker or Secretary General, while others were complex committees that included MPs and parliamentary staff.

- There was general agreement on the value of using impact indicators to measure projects. However, these were widely regarded as difficult to identify and measure.
- Many participants stressed the importance of regular monitoring, evaluation and reporting so as to foster a continuous and frequent process of self-correction.

The respective roles of parliaments and partners

In the final session, participants shared their expectations about the respective roles of parliaments and partners in promoting sustainable outcomes. Participants were able to speak frankly about their own roles and those of their partners. This allowed a better understanding of all participants' positions and how they intersected. The session was moderated by Ms. Svetislava Bulajic, Secretary General of the Serbian National Assembly, and featured opening remarks from Mr. Warren Cahill, Chief Technical Advisor for UNDP in Myanmar.



An idea that came out strongly was that for parliamentary support to be sustainable and effective, it needed to be guided by the needs and commitment of parliament. Local ownership was therefore considered a requirement for sustainable outcomes. It was noted that some practitioners have not always followed this principle while for others, it has always been a central part of their work. The development of a strategic plan owned by parliament was therefore highlighted as an indispensable tool that could set the framework and parameters for its development.

The following observations were also made:

- Relationships based on trust and open and frank communication between practitioners and parliaments were important.
- The development of parliament was a continuous process. Parliament's complex and political nature often led to uneven progress over time. Progress may sometimes appear slow, yet at other times a leap forward might occur. This was a reality that needed to be recognized by donors and support providers.
- One participant specified that it was essential for practitioners to be engaged in support projects when a country's government could not or would not invest in the development of a certain area. However, if and when the external support was seen to result in positive and successful outcomes, governments would often be very keen to take ownership of the project. In that case, the cycle of external support to local ownership would be completed.

“Without local ownership, there should not be parliamentary support”

Closing remarks

Ms. Norah Babic (Manager of the IPU Technical Cooperation Programme) recapped the discussions that had taken place and outlined next steps. The community nature of the Common Principles was reiterated.

Annex 2: Summary of existing proposed tools

To strengthen the transfer of knowledge

- ✓ **Training of trainers.** Include training of local trainers in projects.
- ✓ **Local counterparts.** Designate local counterparts among staff charged with transferring skills to the wider institution and serving as coordination entry points with support partners.
- ✓ **Parliamentary twinning.** Consolidate inter-parliamentary relationships for continuous knowledge sharing.
- ✓ **Inclusion of former parliamentarians.** Harness experience of former parliamentarians to transfer knowledge, including through induction programmes and research institutes.
- ✓ **Induction programmes.** Programmes to bring parliamentarians up to speed on current practices.
- ✓ **Research institutes.** Permanent institutions to document knowledge and expertise and serve as centres for locally guided development.

To improve efficiency, coordination, and local ownership

- ✓ **Strategic Plans.** Plans driven by parliament to define its vision for development and provide a roadmap for action.
- ✓ **Guidance notes for parliamentary support.** Locally developed guidance notes for parliaments to set the terms and modalities of parliamentary support.
- ✓ **A central planning/coordination body.** A central body that includes political leadership and parliamentary staff to plan, coordinate, monitor and evaluate support projects.
- ✓ **Joint planning among partners.** Joint planning mechanisms for partners to coordinate activities.
- ✓ **Partnerships.** Strong domestic and international partnerships to bring parliament closer to its citizens, develop local skills for local partnership, and harness regional and international expertise.
- ✓ **Online tools.** Establish or use existing online tools for remote learning and capacity-building.
- ✓ **Outcome indicators.** Consider established outcome indicators as references for benchmarking performance while adapting them to local circumstances.
- ✓ **Clear job descriptions and effective oversight.** These should strengthen adherence.
- ✓ **Capacity-building for practitioners to strengthen cultural sensitivities.** Courses or programmes to sensitize practitioners to local contexts.

Annex 3: List of participants

PARLIAMENTS

Australia	Ms. Claessa Surtees Deputy Clerk, House of Representatives
Burundi	Mr. Rénovat Niyonzima Secretary General, Senate
Chad	Ms. Opportune Aymadji Member of Parliament, National Assembly
Egypt	Mr. Ahmed Saad Eldin Secretary General
Egypt	Mr. Ashraf Abdel Wahab Director, Protocol Department
Fiji	Ms. Jiko Luveni Speaker
Fiji	Ms. Mereseini Vuniwaqa Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
Fiji	Ms. Jeanette Emberson Deputy Secretary General
Germany	Ms. Sybille Koch Head of International Exchange Programmes, Bundestag
Mauritius	Ms. Santi Bai Hanoomanjee President
Mauritius	Ms. Urmeelah Devi Ramchurn Deputy Clerk
Montenegro	Mr. Irena Mijanovic Head of the Secretary General's Office
Myanmar	Mr. Aung Kyi Myunt Vice-chairman of Joint Coordinating Committee on Parliamentary Strengthening (JCC)
Myanmar	Mr. Kyaw Soe Secretary of JCC and Director General of the Union Assembly Office
Namibia	Mr. Peter H Katjavivi President, National Assembly
Namibia	Ms. Elma Dienda Member of Parliament, National Assembly
Namibia	Ms. Marina Kandumbu Member of Parliament, National Assembly
Namibia	Ms. Petrina Haingura Member of Parliament, National Assembly

Namibia	Mr. Phillipus Wido Katamelo Member of Parliament, National Council
Namibia	Ms. Rosa Kavara Member of Parliament, National Council
Namibia	Ms. Emma Theofelus Deputy Speaker, Children's Parliament
Namibia	Ms. Emilia Mkusa Secretary to the National Council
Namibia	Ms. Lydia Kandetu Clerk, National Assembly
Namibia	Mr. Willem H Isaak Chief Parliamentary Clerk, National Assembly
Namibia	Ms. Ndahafa Kaukungua Chief Information Officer, National Assembly
Namibia	Mr. Ripuree Tjitendero Personal Assistant, National Assembly
Pakistan	Mr. Nehal Hashmi Senator, Senate of Pakistan
Pakistan	Mr. Amjed Pervez Secretary General, Senate of Pakistan
Portugal	Ms. Teresa Morais Member of Parliament
Senegal	Mr. Djimo Souare Member of Parliament
Senegal	Mr. Baye Niass Cisse Administrative Secretary
Serbia	Ms. Svetislava Bulajic Secretary General
Serbia	Mr. Vladimir Filipovic Head of the Foreign Affairs Department Secretary of the Inter-Parliamentary Group of Serbia
Sri Lanka	Mr. Dhammika Dasanayake Secretary General
Togo	Ms. Zonvide Dagban Présidente déléguée de la section nationale
Togo	Mr. Waguena Fademba Secretary General
Uganda	Mr. Raphael Magyezi Member of Parliament
Uganda	Ms. Jane Lubowa Kibirige Clerk to Parliament

Uganda	Mr. Robert Tumukwasibwe Assistant Director
Uganda	Mr. Okumu Dison Director, Corporate Planning and Strategy
United Kingdom	Mr. Matthew Hamlyn Clerk of Bills, Public Bill Office, House of Commons
United Kingdom	Mr. Rick Nimmo Director, BGIPU
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Romny Flores Member of Parliament

ORGANIZATIONS

Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie	Mr. Philippe Péjo Advisor to the Secretary General of the APF
International IDEA	Mr. Gary Klaukka Programme Officer
IPU	Mr. Martin Chungong Secretary General
IPU	Ms. Kareen Jabre Director, Division of Programmes
IPU	Ms. Norah Babic Manager, Technical Cooperation Programme
IPU	Mr. Andy Richardson Manager, Resource Centre
IPU	Mr. Jonathan Lang Project Officer, Technical Cooperation Programme
National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)	Mr. Scott Hubli Director of Governance Programs
SPM Consultants	Mr. Martin Schmidt Managing Partner
UNDP	Mr. Charles Chauvel Team Leader, Inclusive Political Processes
UNDP	Mr. Dyfan Jones UNDP Pacific Office Effective Governance Team Leader
UNDP	Mr. Warren Cahill Chief Technical Advisor, Myanmar

UNDP Mr. Aye Saw Bwe Doe
National Officer of UNDP-IPU Parliamentary Support Program

**Westminster
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(WFD)** Ms. Victoria Hasson
Parliamentary Advisor