



**Global Partners**  
Governance

# Understanding the Role of Support Partners

IPU Roundtable on Common Principles for Support  
to Parliaments

29 March 2018

# GPG Background

- Supporting parliaments, parties, ministries and local government
  - Established 2005, aiming to provide more politically-astute and agile form of programming
  - Expert Associates with direct political experience
  - Problem-solving rather than project management
- Analysis, advice, delivery
- Delivery projects  
Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Honduras, Ukraine, Fiji, Nepal, Libya, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Rwanda, Uganda, Afghanistan, ...



# Strategic Analysis and Advice



## Why engage with parliaments?

International assistance and parliamentary strengthening – an overview.

It seems that almost every system of government needs a parliament. Given that fewer than half the world's countries qualify as 'democratic' by most definitions, having a parliament is not the same as having a democracy. Parliaments vary immensely in terms of power, significance and effectiveness. Yet however flawed they may be, their presence appears to be essential to the idea of the state's legitimacy and its claim to represent the public interest.

Parliaments play a critically important role in emerging democracies. The institutions' performance in those early years will shape public expectations, establishing the norms and values which determine the democratic culture. Their work covers every significant public area connected with politics and economic development. Parliaments can perform a pivotal role in gender equality and conflict management through debate and legislation.

In short, parliaments are concerned with the same strategic issues as international donor agencies. They should be powerful allies in achieving those objectives. Yet, for the most part, they remain ignored, misunderstood and largely excluded in development programmes. Despite increased recognition of the centrality of parliaments, they remain a small part of the international support to governments.

The purpose of this series of notes is to equip parliaments and parliamentary processes, and identify ways for the international community to engage with them more effectively. This first note offers a summary, which subsequent notes will explore in more detail. It covers:

1. Why engage with parliaments?
2. Political economy, analysis and parliamentary support.
3. The functions of parliaments.
4. Legislation, oversight, representation, and extra-parliamentary opportunities and entry points.
5. The role of parliaments in political development.
6. Conclusion: Parliaments as powerful allies.

1. Why engage with parliaments?

International support to parliaments has a poor track record. That much international assistance has depended on capacity building, training and the provision of resources. Too often, implementing organisations have rolled out the same programmes and departed on templates, regardless of the country or political context.

Because of such limits to the field of parliamentary development has sometimes been regarded as the most effective area of international governance support.

Despite income parliaments are a

## POLITICAL PARTIES IN DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

A DIPD READER



DIPD

Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States

## The difficult development of parliamentary politics in the Gulf: Parliaments and the process of managed reform in Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman

Greg Power



Department for International Development



## GUIDE TO WORKING WITH PARLIAMENTS AND POLITICAL PARTIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



A DFID Strategic Document



Better parliaments, stronger democracies.

## GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARY REPORT



Empowered lives. Resilient nations.

## The changing nature of parliamentary representation



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# Parliamentary reform is complex ...

## Central tensions in the process of reform

- **Government vs parliament.**

Government wants to get its way, parliament's job is to hold it to account

- **Personal preference and political interests.**

Every MP has an opinion about reform.

- **Administration and political business.**

Politicians and staff do not necessarily want the same things.



# Most International Assistance has little understanding of politics or parliaments

- Too much focus on structures instead of political behaviour
  - Institutions look different but people do the same things
- What matters is what can be measured
  - Too much emphasis on numbers, not impact
- Unrealistic expectations of what can be changed
  - How quickly, and the role of international assistance in that process



# Managing donor agencies and support partners

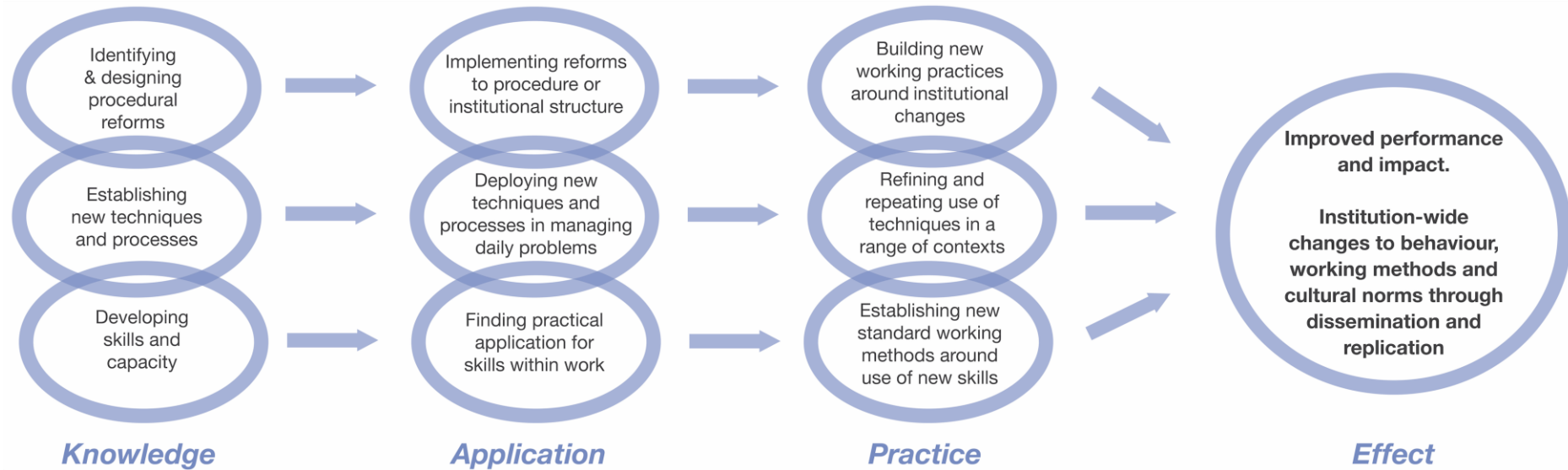
- Why engage with parliaments?
  - Policy impact, not process
- Aim for “modest and significant” – Get the small things right
  - Realism about reform.
- Co-ownership of project documents
  - All projects must hit indicators, politicians, staff and support partners must develop them together
- Change the role of assistance – Enabling, not implementing



# The Logic of Change



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# Why engage with parliaments and parties?

There are certain things that only parliaments and parties can do, in terms of representation and accountability.

Where they are not working properly they will have an impact on the state's ability to deliver for citizens.

And, they are potentially powerful allies – with a reach in to every significant policy area they should be partners in development.

Including:

- National policy priorities
- Poverty alleviation
- Inclusive political settlements
- Gender equality
- Financial oversight
- Anti-corruption





# All About Behaviour

Structures are the most visible aspects of organisation – but not usually the most important for achieving results.

The most common mistake made by people trying to reshape institutions is that they overestimate the role of structures relative to processes and cultures.

Its striking that the most effective leaders achieve as much through influence and norms as they do through formal mechanisms.

Geoff Mulgan, NESTA



# Parliamentary Assistance as Change Management Strategy

Enabling, not implementing.

Self-sustaining reforms have to be driven by the people affected by them. The job is not to fix problems, but to help others fix them

1. Start with the individual, not the institution: Help MPs and staff do their jobs better.
2. Understand and align incentives to strengthen parliament.
3. Create pockets of good practice.
4. The ripple effect: Capture, repeat and replicate agreed ways of working.



## Enabling Change: A Behavioural Approach to Political Programming

International development work has experienced an exceptional surge of interest in politics, with a variety of initiatives and publications seeking to find new ways of understanding and addressing the most intractable problems in developing countries. For some time there has been general agreement about the broad tenets of this approach including utilising small scale projects that are 'politically-smart', locally driven, responsive to need and employing multiple entry-points, and captured most fully under the rubric of the *Thinking and Working Politically* and the *Daring Development Differently* coalitions.

There remains though a gap between the agreement over principles that inform such an approach and workable models for employing these insights in the design, delivery and measurement of international assistance projects. We have written previously about these issues in *Global Partners Governance (GPG)* in a rare position in this field in that we undertake research, analysis, and evaluation for donors and implementing agencies, but also deliver projects designed to strengthen representative politics. Each stream of work informs the other, and this set of 'Politically Agile Programming' papers is an attempt to capture the insights from our analytical work and our experience working in some of the most difficult and sensitive political environments over the last few years.

Our work is focused exclusively on political institutions and the people that work within them, including parliaments, political parties, ministries, and local government, to make them more effective, resilient and responsive. But we believe that our approach has wider implications and may

be of use to the broader development field. It is perhaps worth noting that international development agencies appear to have struggled to employ political analysis in their programmes, with these most political institutions, perhaps ironically because of the politically sensitive nature of such work.

This note attempts to capture the logic and key features of our enabling approach. That logic is informed by three key principles. First, effective political institutions are defined more by the characteristics they display than by their structure – specifically by the extent to which they are resilient, representative and responsive. Second, meaningful and self-sustaining political change comes about through changing behaviour, not simply by changing rules or structures, yet behavioural change is rarely recognised as an explicit objective of aid programmes. Third, self-sustaining political change can only be implemented by the people who are directly affected by it. The role of project deliverers is thus not to implement change, but to enable others to implement change for themselves.

These insights are obvious to any organisations working on the ground in political institutions, but applying their logic fully would entirely change the way in which international assistance programmes (especially in the political sphere) are designed, commissioned, delivered and measured. Donor agencies and project deliverers need the courage of their convictions to move from simply talking about politics to engaging with the full implications of working politically.

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# Support to parliamentary committees in Iraq

- **Pockets of good practice:** Direct support to 3-6 committees
  - Developing systems, job descriptions, committee strategy
  - Implementing new practices with MPs and staff on policy enquiries, financial oversight, questioning ministers, legislation, evidence
- **Sustainability:** Entrenching new practices/building institutional memory
  - Committees writing their own handbooks and annual reports
  - Co-ordinating with parliamentary directorates
- **The ripple effect:** Replicating new behaviour
  - Working with Speaker's Office to establish standards and processes for all committees
  - Supporting committees to meet centrally-set standards



- Gender equality
- Financial oversight
- Anti-corruption



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**strengthening representative politics.**