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
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

Knowledge

- Identifying & designing procedural reforms
- Establishing new techniques and processes
- Developing skills and capacity

Application

- Implementing reforms to procedure or institutional structure
- Deploying new techniques and processes in managing daily problems
- Finding practical application for skills within work

Practice

- Building new working practices around institutional changes
- Refining and repeating use of techniques in a range of contexts
- Establishing new standard working methods around use of new skills

Effect

- Improved performance and impact.
  Institution-wide changes to behaviour, working methods and cultural norms through dissemination and replication
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
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.

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

Geoff Mulgan, NESTA
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.
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
strengthening representative politics.