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# Global Parliamentary Report 2017

IPU and UNDP

Parliamentary Oversight:  
Parliament's Power to Hold Government to Account





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# About the report

# Purpose of the report

Provide a global perspective on how oversight is practiced

Make recommendations for strengthening oversight

Be a catalyst for a renewed focus in parliaments on oversight



# Inputs

Literature

Expert consultations

Survey and interviews with MPs

Questionnaire for parliaments

Written input from parliaments, CSOs,  
scholars

National focus groups

# Outputs

Case studies and country examples

Data

Tips for MPs

Principles of oversight

Recommendations

Summary for MPs



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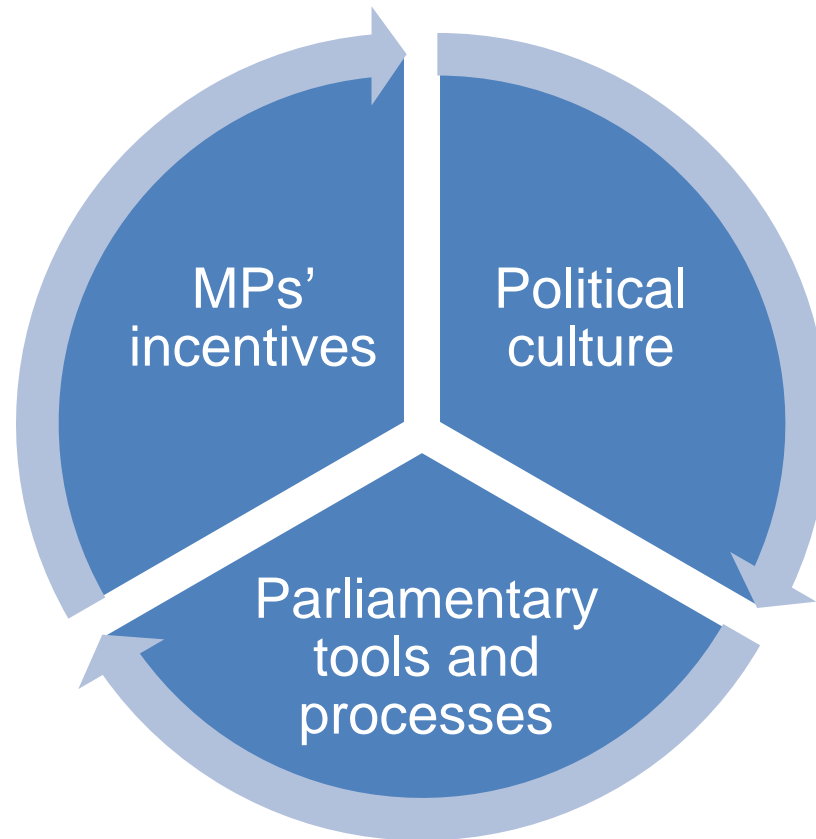


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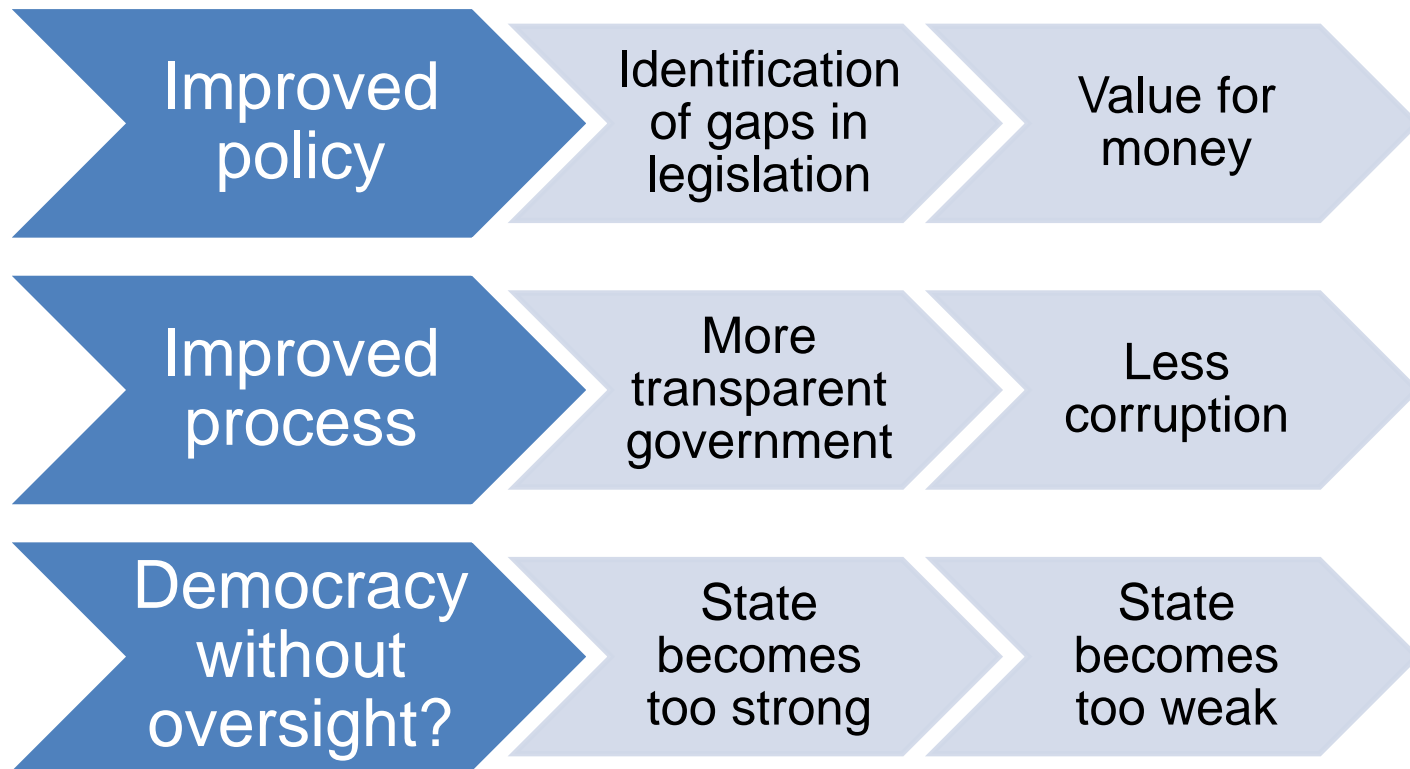
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# Contents

# Areas of investigation



# Impact of effective oversight



# An effective system of oversight requires:

a strong mandate with clearly defined powers to hold government to account

committed and willing participants who are prepared to use the powers available to them to hold government to account

sufficient capacity in parliament to give teeth to these powers, including independent sources of research and analysis and a sliding scale of possible sanctions





# MPs' incentives

“How does such activity help (or hinder) me in pursuing the issues I’m interested in?”

An opportunity to steer government policy towards their political goals.

Oversight activity also produces benefits for society

*probity* – assessing the presence or absence of corruption

*fidelity* – assessing the degree to which government follows the law

*equity* – assessing the fairness of government distribution of costs or benefits

*efficiency* – assessing the ratio of costs to benefits

*effectiveness* – assessing the degree to which actions have their intended effects



- Most significant and agile instrument of parliamentary oversight
- Can be a highly effective means of holding government to account
- Meets regularly, stable membership, engages with government, civil society and the public
- Supported by well qualified and expert staff
- Enhances the quality of government through evidence gathered in inquiries with appropriate conclusions and representations



# Tips for MPs participating in committees

## What do I need?

- Effective research and advice from committee staff and subject experts
- Understanding of the committee's annual plan of work
- An interest in the subject area of the committee
- Up to date knowledge of the committee's subject area
- Relevant information about how the issues affect your constituents



# Tips for MPs - committee hearings

How can I be effective in committee hearings?

- Ensure a wide range of people are invited to give evidence or provide information including the public
- Ensure that different experiences and perspectives are taken into account throughout the inquiry such as those of women and men, disabled people, younger and older people including children
- Before hearings co-ordinate with other members to ensure that each member asks different questions and there is no repetition





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# International Examples



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# Conclusions

# Summary of findings

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**Parliamentary oversight is and will remain a political activity**

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**An effective system of oversight remains an aspiration for many parliaments**

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**Most MPs express commitment to oversight. But in practice, prioritization and capacity issues often limit their engagement in oversight activities**

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**Oversight is a marker of parliament's relevance in the 21st century**

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# Summary of recommendations

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**Establish oversight as a top priority for parliament**

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**Strengthen the mandate and capacity for oversight**

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**Co-produce oversight outputs with partners**

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**Make good use of parliament's oversight powers**

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**Build public support for oversight**

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**Seize the opportunities available to MPs to shape the oversight environment**

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