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# Putting parliamentary self-development into practice

**A Guide to the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments**

Common Principles  
for Support to Parliaments



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**Cover photo:** Parliaments lead their own development. © IPU (L. Fortunati), 2014

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# Foreword

The role of parliaments in promoting good governance across the world has rarely seemed more important. Parliament is the seat of political legitimacy and of democratic accountability; it is where a nation debates and determines issues of critical common importance. It is a primary driver of deepening democracy.

Throughout the world, nations have come together to eradicate poverty, confront inequalities and address climate change. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals – embodying this global ambition – is critically dependent on governance that is fit for purpose. This, in turn, depends on vibrant and responsive parliaments. Globally just as much as nationally, therefore, effective parliaments are indispensable to meet the critical challenges of the twenty-first century.

It was against this background and based on many years of development experience that the *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments* were produced. They are intended to guide parliaments and partners in matching their performance to this century's challenges. Since publication in 2014, the *Common Principles* have been widely accepted and have had significant impact.

At the heart of the *Common Principles* is the vision that parliaments should be in the driving seat of their own development: "Parliament alone is best placed to articulate its needs and to define broad strategic objectives, as well as tactical approaches to particular activities" (*Common Principles*, p.15)

Partners have a critical role to play in helping parliaments to realize their governance potential. However, partners cannot do this unless parliaments first seize the development initiative. The primary responsibility for this rests with parliamentary leaders, such as Speakers, members of parliament and Secretaries General.

*A Guide to the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments* aims to assist parliamentary leaders in that endeavour by means of a process of parliamentary self-development.

The *Guide* develops the support for parliamentary self-development set out in the *Common Principles*. As an action-oriented document, it draws on examples from across the world, highlighting where parliaments have moved forward decisively in taking control of their future, as envisaged in the *Common Principles*.

There is no "one size fits all" approach to parliamentary development: to apply overarching common principles successfully, they must be properly localized. Consequently, the *Guide* suggests rather than prescribes what to do. It is up to each parliament's leaders to determine the way forward for their institutions.

As the *Guide* points out, managing change well means acquiring an appropriate institutional mindset and accompanying practical tools. Change is continuous: parliaments whose responses to it are designed to meet change by enhancing their role will be at an obvious advantage. This *Guide* defines parliamentary self-development as "the continuous, parliament-led management of change resulting in improvements to parliament's capacity to discharge the 'core' tasks of oversight of government, representing people and passing legislation".

This definition reminds us of two points. First, the focus of parliamentary development is to retain, at the highest level, parliament's capacity to undertake the core functions of accountability, representation and legislation. Second, any development interventions should be justified on this basis.

I am confident that the *Guide* will prove a useful and practical companion to the *Common Principles* for all those responsible for developing parliament's potential. I hope that it will encourage those who have yet to start on the self-development path, and help sustain those already on the way.



Martin Chungong  
IPU Secretary General

# Introduction

The *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments* set out the basis for support to parliaments by providing a development framework for the work of parliaments, support bodies and practitioners.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of the *Common Principles* to the work of the parliamentary community quickly became evident.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, it has been suggested that a guide, giving detailed practical expression to the *Common Principles*, would be useful. How might parliaments create the conditions for their development? What relations between parliaments and external partners are likely to produce sustainable development outcomes? This *Guide* seeks to fulfil that purpose. It suggests answers to these and similar questions, and provides practical guidance to parliaments seeking to quicken their pace of development.

**The *Guide* is therefore intended primarily for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff.** It should also be a tool for those interested and engaged in parliamentary development: the key role of support partners is recognized throughout.

The *Guide* is based on the premise of the *Common Principles*: that every parliament is unique, but that sharing local examples of good practice can illuminate solutions to general development challenges. The *Guide* therefore gives equal weight to both local initiatives and sound international practices. It is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive. Instead, it offers suggestions and tools to help individual parliaments devise their own, locally appropriate development programme.

Developing parliamentary life is a fundamental part of promoting peaceful societies through inclusive institutions. The *Guide* is therefore intended to contribute to attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular to building representative decision-making as set out in SDG 16.7: “Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”<sup>3</sup> We hope that the *Guide* will help parliaments make a stronger contribution to governance at all levels.

The *Guide* is the outcome of three valuable contributions:

- In March 2018, delegates discussed and contributed ideas for a *Guide* at the round table entitled “Proactive parliaments: bolstering self-development”, hosted in Geneva by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The *Guide* was further enriched by examples of good practice from parliaments in response to a questionnaire circulated after the event.
- The 2018 round table drew on the work of an earlier workshop entitled “Common Principle 3: Parliamentary support aims for sustainable outcomes”, also hosted by the IPU in Geneva in October 2016.
- The *Guide* has also benefitted from input by members of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, in addition to comments from staff of 32 national parliaments at an IPU information seminar.

We are grateful to all contributors.

The 2018 round table considered that a *Guide* should be brief and practical. This text seeks to reflect that suggestion. One round-table delegate pleaded: “Don’t just tell me, but show me”. That widely endorsed plea has influenced the *Guide*’s structure, not least in the examples found in boxes and footnotes throughout. We make no apologies for the number included. These examples illustrate diverse ways in which parliaments are consolidating and strengthening their capacity, and provide justification for all parliaments taking similar measures.

Section 1 of the *Guide* introduces an approach to organizational parliamentary self-development. Section 2 identifies the main constituent elements of self-development. Section 3 offers a streamlined self-development model based on the elements identified in the preceding section. There are three annexes, addressing in turn staff skills, the annual strategy cycle, and partnership working.

1 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments*, 2014. <https://www.ipu.org/our-work/strong-parliaments/setting-standards/common>. Cited henceforth as *Common Principles*. Developed by a working group drawn from the European Parliament, National Assembly of France, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

2 The *Common Principles* have 160 endorsements from parliaments, parliamentary assemblies and partner organizations (November 2019).

3 SDG 16.7 is a sub-target of SDG 16: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>.

# 1 Approach

Today more than ever parliaments are working harder to develop their capacity to better respond to the increased scrutiny and growing expectations from people for more efficient and effective service from their representatives.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.1 Parliament, change and “self-development”

At the heart of the *Common Principles* lies an organizational self-development approach. This approach states that **parliaments are responsible for strengthening their capacities and managing the impact of change to their advantage**: “only parliament can take responsibility for its own development.”<sup>5</sup>

### BOX 1 Common Principle 1

**Principle 1: Parliamentary support partners are guided by the needs of parliament**

Support to a particular parliament must fully reflect the parliament’s needs, which are best articulated through an inclusive process that takes account of the diversity of a parliament’s members, political parties, parliamentary officials and others. **Parliament alone is best placed to articulate its needs and to define broad strategic objectives, as well as tactical approaches to particular activities**, although external partners can often also be helpful in facilitating a strategic planning process.

Source: *Common Principles*, p.15

### 1.1.1 Change

The nature of self-development is abiding because the social, political, economic, technological and environmental contexts within which parliament works are in constant flux. The pace of change is irregular. **Change ranges across a spectrum from evolutionary to revolutionary, with periods of relative stability interspersed with moments of transformation.**<sup>6</sup> This model, which informs the *Guide* throughout, is shown schematically in Figure 1.<sup>7</sup>

**The challenge for parliamentary authorities<sup>8</sup> is to identify development tools they can use to manage (or at least strongly influence) change to parliament’s advantage, thereby ensuring parliament’s capacity to perform its scrutiny, representation and legislative “core” tasks with continuing relevance.**

FIGURE 1  
Change: Punctuated equilibrium



In order to meet that challenge, parliament may consider adopting a self-development outlook or approach, together with an associated strategy and operating frameworks.

### BOX 2 Parliamentary self-development

**“Parliamentary self-development” is the continuous, parliament-led management of change resulting in improvements to parliament’s capacity to discharge the “core” tasks of oversight of government, representing people and passing legislation.**

The adoption by parliament of self-development is transformational: it involves accepting the management of change as a defining characteristic in the life of parliament.

4 *Common Principles*, p.2

5 *Common Principles*, p.3

6 Colin Hay (2002). *Political Analysis*. Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, p.161

7 *Ibid.* p.162

8 “Parliamentary authorities” refers to parliament’s political and official management.

## 1.2 Purpose

This *Guide* sets out the parliamentary self-development approach and structure. It addresses issues such as:

- How parliament may control and manage its own development, and
- The respective roles of parliament and external partners in a self-development structure.

The *Guide* is not prescriptive and the uniqueness of each parliament's context is fully acknowledged.

## 1.3 Why self-development matters

A vigorous parliament is important for a number of reasons.

### 1.3.1 Strengthening parliament reinforces democracy

**Parliament has a critical role in the modern democratic State. Consequently, its continuing relevance to State and society speaks to the health of a democracy,<sup>9</sup> while the strength of parliament's determination to carry out its functions in a way that is understood, endorsed by, and of clear benefit to the electorate is a key marker of its vitality.**

For example, parliament's fundamentally reforming environmental, social and economic function<sup>10</sup> requires it to set an example in terms of gender justice and equality – both in its organizational structure and in its accountability, representational and legislative processes.

#### BOX 3 Common Principle 6

**Principle 6: Parliamentary support addresses the needs and potential of women and men equally in the structure, operation, methods and work of parliament**

Where women's contributions are blocked, educational and working opportunities denied, or barriers placed to women's participation in governance leadership and decision-making institutions, countries deny themselves the full potential and capacities of roughly half the population. Gender equality is, therefore, a crucial factor in driving sustainable development, economic growth and poverty reduction.

*Source: Common Principles, p.29*

An out-of-touch parliament is likely to indicate an ailing democracy.

#### BOX 4 "Institution-building approach"

Parliamentary development interventions emphasize trust-building, neutrality and an understanding of parliamentary development as a long-term process requiring patience. **Such a concept of development is a continuous "institution-building approach" rather than a "time-limited project"**

It is also profoundly human-centred, frequently involving the selection of "champions" – members of parliament trained for future provision of support and the sharing of knowledge. This approach promotes the building of institutional memory.

*Source: Parliamentary Institute of Asia*

### 1.3.2 Self-development facilitates the work of parliamentarians

Parliamentarians are unlikely to provide adequate oversight of government, pass effective legislation or represent constituents or the nation well unless they, those they represent, and parliamentary staff appreciate and respect how parliament works. **Parliament's procedures and working methods need to be transparent and up to date, and accessible to parliamentarians. They must be the product of a continuous process of self-development and renewal. Parliament's work loses relevance unless parliamentarians and officials act consciously as agents of positive change.** In other words, they must reflect critically on their functions, seek actively to keep up to date, and avoid operational redundancy.

### 1.3.3 Capacity-building not capacity substitution

**Self-development encourages parliament to call the shots, and to refine the quality and relevance of external support. When parliament adopts a dynamic development leadership role, it is less likely to become stuck in a dependency culture where capacity substitution blocks capacity-building.**

Capacity substitution usually aims to deliver "quick wins". It arises from a misunderstanding of the long-term nature of parliamentary development. And it undermines parliament's organizational confidence and internal vitality, shifting the development initiative away from parliament and often delaying the timely exit of support organizations.

<sup>9</sup> "Effective parliaments are essential to democracy, the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, and economic and social development." *Common Principles*, p.13.

<sup>10</sup> *Common Principles*, p.18. For parliamentary engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 see: IPU, *Global Parliamentary Report*, 2017, pp.73–76. <https://www.ipu.org/oversight>.

### 1.3.4 Self-development encourages parliaments to build from the inside

**Self-development encourages strong internal resilience: the desire to build capacity by drawing first and foremost on parliament's internal resources and information.** For example, the Parliament of Pakistan draws on several important internal resources in planning and executing development.

#### BOX 5 Resource development in the Parliament of Pakistan

In addition to the political heads of the Senate and National Assembly and the Secretariat executive structures, there are several internal bodies which are involved directly in planning and implementing development. For example:

- The Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) (with a dedicated staff and an annual budget provided by the Senate and the National Assembly)
- The Women's Parliamentary Caucus
- The Young Parliamentarians Forum
- The Parliamentary Taskforce on Sustainable Development Goals

These groups obtain financial resources for their work from a number of sources: government grants, membership fees, contributions from the Senate and National Assembly, and collaboration with national and international development partners and think tanks.

*Source: Parliament of Pakistan*

Self-development rests upon institutional self-awareness, i.e. an information-rich environment. Parliament's leaders cannot move confidently forward to improve operations, develop staff capacity and increase parliament's capacity to produce excellent public goods without accurate information and analytical capacity.

#### BOX 6 Action based on research: Afghanistan

Since 2016, the National Assembly of Afghanistan has conducted an annual Staff Perception Survey (SPS) in both the Upper and Lower Houses. This has indicated areas requiring management intervention. As a result, a comparative report on harassment and other allegations experienced by women staff was produced. The Secretaries General organized a meeting with all women staff to emphasize that no harassment or discrimination against them would be tolerated.

*Source: National Assembly of Afghanistan*

This is not only a matter of gathering internal parliamentary information. Ensuring parliament's increasing representative relevance externally depends on data drawn from wider sources.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.3.5 Self-development allows parliament to avail of external partnerships to better effect

External partners are nevertheless an important resource for parliaments. In particular, parliaments that are operating in development contexts, are undergoing rapid change or are under-resourced are likely to find the assistance of support organizations useful.

Parliaments themselves are the primary source of international standards, guidelines and assessment frameworks. Yet organizations such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie (APF), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the South African Development Community (SADC) help to keep the international spotlight fixed on fundamental parliamentary development issues – such as benchmarks for democratic legislatures, self-evaluation and effectiveness, and fresh ways of approaching representation and accountability.

These bodies, and others like them, promote research, discussion and consensus-building within the parliamentary community. Their work and publications make it easier for parliaments to learn from one another.<sup>12</sup>

#### BOX 7 Common Principle 5

##### **Principle 5: Parliamentary support is grounded in emerging international democratic parliamentary standards**

The emerging international standards for democratic parliaments ... will help avoid any risk of parliamentary support focusing on a single model of parliamentary democracy, and instead base support efforts on those elements of parliamentary practice that are universal and cut across constitutional systems.

...

International standards are a common language that enable the parliamentary community to find common pathways for future development in response to the changing needs of national populations.

*Source: Common Principles, pp.26–27*

Where resources for development come primarily from external bodies and not parliament (resource asymmetry), there is a risk to parliament of development ownership deficit. **By closely defining partners' roles, and stressing parliament's leadership function, self-development ensures an appropriate relationship between parliamentary development actors.**

<sup>11</sup> Indicators set for SDG 16.7 (see Introduction) are quantitative: "Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public services, and judiciary) compared to national distributions" (16.7.1); and "Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group" (16.7.2). <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>. Also see Annex 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Common Principles*, p.14

## BOX 8 Common Principle 7

### **Principle 7: Parliamentary support utilizes local and regional expertise**

External support to any parliament, however well informed and expert, requires guidance and practical assistance from within the immediate operating environment.

Long-term partner engagement will require national staff and resources to complement the sharing of international experience and enhance the knowledge of international staff on the local context. National expertise within partner-sponsored work normally permits a much richer mix of support than would be available from international experts alone.

*Source: Common Principles, p.33*

External bodies are engaged globally in joint work with parliaments “on the ground”. **To be effective, support from external partners must be integrated fully into parliament’s strategic and operating frameworks.**

One such example is the interlocking development management structure of the National Parliament of Timor-Leste.

## BOX 9 Arrangements for managing development in the Parliament of Timor-Leste

A **technical committee** chaired by Parliament’s Secretary-General and comprising all relevant parliamentary officials and representatives of implementing external partners, and a **steering committee** chaired by the President of Parliament and comprising high-level representatives including donors. **This structure ensures inclusive stakeholder participation and effective coordination of policy and implementation levels.**

A **programme coordinator** is employed by Parliament and acts as hinge or link between these bodies. The coordinator is aided in harmonizing partner delivery within the framework of priorities set out in **Parliament’s Strategy** by a **Measurement and Evaluation Division**. A **matrix of intended results** is generated and shared with partners to aid their coordination efforts and to avoid duplication.

Parliament operates a **memorandum of understanding** with each external partner. **Parliament contributes funding for development** to all projects, even if only a symbolic or “in-kind” amount.

The **local legitimacy** achieved through the role of Parliament is underpinned by the way in which agreements embodied in relevant **international development** instruments explicitly provide a global framework for the arrangements.

*Source: National Parliament Timor-Leste*

**Parliaments can draw on a rich network of parliamentary support organizations for both remote and “on-the-ground” resources. They should do so as self-development leaders.**

## 1.4 Incentives

There are strong incentives for parliament to adopt a self-development approach.

### 1.4.1 Incentives for parliament

The self-development approach is a powerful way to refine controls over parliament available to the Speaker, her/his management team, parliamentarians and officials.

- It promises constant qualitative improvements in “core” parliamentary functions by enabling routine review and renewal of relevant delivery processes, as well as offering valuable professional development opportunities for parliamentarians and staff.
- It fosters a culture of efficiency, effectiveness and value for money in all parliamentary business.
- It is a lure and platform for potential external partners to engage positively with parliament and deploy resources to parliament’s benefit.
- As the examples in this *Guide* show, many parliaments are already on the “self-development” road and demonstrating success.
- It is intended to help parliament to fulfil its “core” tasks with increasing effectiveness and relevance, thereby serving the electorate.

Incentives like these will operate more or less effectively depending on the context. Where innovation is the norm, they are likely to be readily accepted. Where it is not, more time may be required. But in all circumstances, parliamentary authorities looking for an effective tool to manage change are likely to find the self-development approach helpful.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Submission: Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives.

### 1.4.2 Incentives for external partners

External stakeholders are likely to contribute best in situations where parliamentary leadership is geared up to address change, has accepted responsibility for setting its own priorities, and is focused on gaining maximum benefit from the relationship.

*Where parliaments aspire to self-development but have yet to implement it, external partners should strongly consider encouraging such an approach.*

## 1.5 Summary

**Self-development is a way of understanding the organizational aspects of parliament as perennially provisional and susceptible to improvement, and managing them accordingly.**

**Self-development is not an optional extra to the “core” functions of parliament. Rather, it is intrinsic to parliament staying politically relevant and effective. It is about equipping parliamentarians and staff to stay strategically and operationally agile, able to address current and future challenges, and collectively aware of contextual social and political currents.**

**A permanent regime of self-development, based firmly on sound management information, can give parliament the capacity to continue fulfilling its “core” constitutional remit – holding government to account, representing constituents and passing legislation. Embracing change management in this way ensures parliament retains institutional strength and democratic credibility.<sup>14</sup>**

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<sup>14</sup> *Common Principles*, p.13

# 2 Elements

**Parliamentary support should focus on tools to sustain development assistance and on institutionalizing a process for continued institutional development.<sup>15</sup>**

The self-development structure chosen by each parliament reflects its unique circumstances. Yet many elements of such structures are common to all parliaments, although the linkages between them will differ from one to the next.

## 2.1 Preliminary steps and implications

### 2.1.1 Decision in principle

**Embedding a self-development structure requires, above all, a conscious and informed decision by parliament's leadership – the Speaker, parliamentarians and the head of administration.** The decision is unlikely to stick unless it reflects a broad political and organizational consensus that persists through changes of leadership and government. "Without the political will of the parliamentary authorities and their support, the implementation of any cooperation initiative is destined to fail".<sup>16</sup>

**In all aspects of parliamentary development, therefore, success depends on political will and organizational consensus.** Consensus cannot be taken for granted and will normally require "championing" on the basis of clear benefits that are widely dispersed among parliamentary stakeholders.

This approach is exemplified by the Parliament of Namibia: "Self-development can be best realized if the institutional plan is explained and understood by employees at all levels of employment so that they can take ownership of their roles and responsibilities".<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Common Principles*, p.22

<sup>16</sup> Submission: Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie.

<sup>17</sup> Submission: Parliament of Namibia.

### BOX 10 Common Principle 4

#### **Principle 4: Parliamentary support is inclusive of all political tendencies**

Inclusiveness means providing opportunities, wherever possible, for support and assistance to all political tendencies represented in parliament, to the extent that they abide by generally accepted democratic practice, such as respect for the rule of law and for the rights and privileges of political opponents. Both the members of the majority and of the opposition should benefit from parliamentary support activities, and no group should be entitled to veto support for others.

*Source: Common Principles, p.25*

### 2.1.2 Administrative, personnel and financial implications

**The existing administrative structure is likely to require a measure of adaption to incorporate a self-development process.** For example, the style of management may need revising (see **Annex 1**).

While some human, technical and financial resources may need to be reallocated, the key elements of a self-development structure normally exist within parliament's political and administrative set-up. In any case, any reallocation costs are likely to be offset by institutional efficiency gains arising from the adoption of a self-development approach.

**Secretariat staff members require the personal attributes, technical skills and organizational support to implement self-development successfully.**<sup>18</sup> Without staff who are both technically qualified and able to act "developmentally" (i.e. who conceive their work and parliament's wider operations in terms of managing change), the administrative coherence required for successful implementation is likely to prove elusive (see **Annex 1**).

While it is good practice for parliament to have the power to allocate (or "appropriate") money for its budget and control its staff, many parliamentary authorities do not yet have full legal control over their human and financial resources – a situation known as "functional autonomy".<sup>19</sup> **A modern parliament should control its budget. Achieving such control is central to this Guide's vision of parliamentary self-development.** This will require parliament to negotiate with government, which normally holds the purse strings. Yet government will likely appreciate the operational efficiency, effectiveness and value-for-money gains that are desired outcomes of parliamentary self-development.

<sup>18</sup> *Common Principles*, p.23

<sup>19</sup> For example, the principle that parliament should have freedom to determine its budget is formally recognized in the Latimer House Guidelines between the three branches of government, which state that: "An all-party committee of members of parliament should review and administer Parliament's budget which should not be subject to amendment by the executive." CPA (2005). *Administration and Financing of Parliament, A Study Group Report*, p.6. [www.cpaq.org](http://www.cpaq.org).

Even parliaments that do not yet have full control over their budget can engage productively with government to obtain appropriate funding. The absence of “functional autonomy” need not be a bar to self-development, especially where government is mindful of its benefits.<sup>20</sup> For example, the National Parliament of Solomon Islands has an arrangement with government that, although short of full autonomy, gives it some influence over its funding and ensures funding for self-development.

### BOX 11 Administering development funds in the National Parliament of Solomon Islands

The Budget Implementation Committee (BIC), chaired by the Deputy Clerk and comprising the senior managers, manages parliament’s development budget in alignment with the strategy and annual corporate plan (ACP) activities. Any new development activity has to be endorsed by the BIC. The Committee is responsible for the management of Parliament’s budget and works closely with the Budget Unit of the Ministry of Finance & Treasury (MOFT) and the Ministry of Development Planning & Aid Coordination (MDPAC). The Committee meets three times a year and submits biannual status reports on Parliament’s development budget.

*Source: National Parliament of Solomon Islands*

The Myanmar Assembly of the Union allocates funds for its development from the national budget.

### BOX 12 Funding development in the Parliament of Myanmar

The Union Assembly of Myanmar allocates resources for parliamentary development from the annual national budget allocated to it; various development partners (DPs) also provide resources. External partners’ financial resources are normally provided through implementing agencies, for example, UN bodies and international NGOs.

The Parliament provides “in-kind” counterpart contribution whenever appropriate, for example, venue facilities for training workshops and seminars, including support staff as required, in addition to fully furnished office space with modern utilities for DPs who request office accommodation within the Parliament complex. Associated costs for these local costs come from either capital budget portion or the recurring budget portion of the parliamentary budget.

*Source: The Union Assembly of Myanmar*

## 2.2 Parliament’s self-development infrastructure

**The machinery for self-development is found within the infrastructure of parliament: key offices, political and administrative bodies, and associated practices, processes and documents.** Some elements of this machinery, such as the office of Speaker (or presiding officer), are common to virtually all parliaments. Others, such as an effective parliamentary strategy, are rarer. The elements discussed below depend on the unique context of each parliament.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.2.1 Speaker

The Speaker (or presiding officer) represents the chamber of parliament over which she/he presides. The Speaker normally wields broad formal procedural, administrative and management powers, and exerts great influence. In the exercise of duties, she/he acts impartially. The Speaker’s word on key matters is usually final. Her/his rulings, decisions, and personality represent important ways in which parliament matures. **The Speaker is the cornerstone of parliament, and her/his leadership is crucial to establishing a parliamentary self-development culture.**

### 2.2.2 Guiding self-development

Parliament might choose to apportion day-to-day responsibility for self-development activities in a number of ways. For example, it might opt for a **single-body structure**, with one group on which politicians and administrative staff are represented. Alternatively, it may adopt a dual-body structure, in which political oversight/direction and implementation are segregated. Or, it may assign responsibility for self-development to an **existing body**. There is no one-size-fits-all model.

**Whatever self-development management arrangement is selected, success will depend on it exhibiting:**

- **Political and administrative legitimacy** – decisions take account of all political strands in parliament
- **High-quality strategic decision-making** – decisions about overall development programme direction, content and implementation are based on sound and rigorously analysed information
- **Technical competence** – activities and outputs reflect the agreed development programme, enhance the capacity of parliament’s staff sustainably, are fact-based, and avoid substitution

A **single-body structure** might comprise the Speaker, elected representatives of the parties in parliament, and a senior administrator. The formal relationship between the politicians and officials on such a body will be decided locally. The Parliament of Kenya’s approach to development demonstrates the **single-body** approach.

20 Submission: Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives

21 *Common Principles*, p.33

### BOX 13 Parliamentary Service Commission's development role in the Parliament of Kenya

The Parliamentary Service Commission – comprising the Speaker of the National Assembly as the chairperson, seven members appointed by Parliament, one man and one woman appointed by Parliament from among persons who are experienced in public affairs but are not MPs, and the Clerk of the Senate as secretary – participates in designing external support. It appoints/mandates negotiating teams with external partners and approves memoranda of understanding for external support.

In assessing offers for support, the Parliamentary Service Commission considers various factors including whether the assistance is geared towards meeting the Commission's objectives and whether the support will assist the Parliament of Kenya in meeting its overall mandate of representation, legislation and oversight. Thereafter, the Parliamentary Service Commission retains implementation direction by running the programmes from within. The decision on when to implement lies with the Commission as set out in the strategic plan.

*Source: Parliament of Kenya*

Adopting a **dual-body structure**, as in the case of the Parliament of Timor-Leste, requires effective coordination and communication arrangements between those responsible for political/administrative oversight and the technical implementers.<sup>22</sup>

Under the third model, an **existing body** may assume responsibility for self-development. This is especially true for smaller parliaments where resources are at a premium. Many parliaments have a committee of parliamentarians responsible for management and administrative matters. This could be a suitable body to absorb responsibility for self-development.

### 2.2.3 Secretary general or clerk and secretariat

Where the secretary general or clerk also acts as parliament's chief executive, she/he will normally be responsible to the Speaker for administrative matters, as well as providing procedural advice. The office-holder frequently takes the lead in parliament's development, as is the case in the Parliament of Algeria.

### BOX 14 Role of the Secretary General in development in the Parliament of Algeria

The Secretary General has the role of facilitator of parliamentary development, working in close collaboration with the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers with oversight of administrative and financial matters. He is assisted in this task by the Directors-General of Administration and of Legislation.

*Source: Parliament of Algeria*

The secretary general is responsible for ensuring that parliament's secretariat is culturally attuned to self-development and has the appropriate practical skills to apply a self-development policy. She/he will consider setting up training programmes, drawing on external support as necessary. Administrative and resource adjustments may be required. She/he will need to apportion dedicated staff time to administer the parliamentary development body or bodies, oversee daily development work, and liaise with external partners. She/he is also responsible for collecting the information necessary for self-development.

**The secretary general is the focus of change management operations and is responsible for implementing change policies mandated by the Speaker and by parliament's political management.** Where the procedural and administrative functions of the secretary general and clerk are split between two or more post holders, all have an equal stake in parliament's self-development.

### 2.2.4 Parliamentarians

Successful self-development is an inclusive process. It relies on both top-down and bottom-up approaches: leadership and commitment by political and administrative management, together with the support and contributions of parliamentarians and staff at all levels. **Parliamentarians play a critical role in legitimizing and embedding the self-development approach and structure.**

While the decisions of senior political leadership and administrative management are required to initiate self-development, it can only play out in the daily life of parliament with the commitment of parliamentarians and staff.

**Parliamentarians, as a body, must accept and support a culture of self-development.** As an absolute minimum, this might involve parliamentarians considering an annual report on parliamentary development achievements over the past year, and scrutinizing the proposed development plan and resource allocation for the coming year. But deeper involvement by parliamentarians is highly desirable.

## 2.3. Identifying and managing change

Self-development is a rational response to change. It is a tool for parliament to discharge its "core" oversight, representation and legislative functions over the long term with consistency and relevance. Implementing self-development requires a continuous series of time-bound, specific actions:

- **Analysing the relevant contexts inside and outside parliament** – *identifying parliament's needs*
- **Exposing where strategic and operating improvements may be made, and conceptualizing the desired outcome** – *creating a vision, mission, outcome and outputs within strategy and operating frameworks designed to address clear needs*

<sup>22</sup> See Box 9

- **Identifying and applying appropriate interventions in mitigation (implementation)** – *establishing a work regime in which objective, evidence-based improvement processes may be woven into parliament’s annual, monthly and daily business by means of an annual strategy cycle.*

### 2.3.1 Needs

**The first step is a “needs assessment” (sometimes called a “self-assessment”, but often involving external assistance). This involves analysing parliament within its social and political contexts in order to understand the organization and determine its development priorities**<sup>23</sup> (see 2.4.2 below).

#### BOX 15 Common Principle 2

**Principle 2: Parliamentary support partners are attentive to the multiple, overlapping social, economic and political contexts in which parliaments operate**

Therefore, successful parliamentary support operations take close account both of the internal constitutional, institutional and procedural architecture of parliament and the multiple external social and political contexts in which parliaments are situated, and that act on parliament and of parliamentarians on a daily basis. Solid support will involve assistance to parliament in its drive to be inclusive and to reach out and engage with its constituents within all social and political contexts.

*Source: Common Principles, p. 18*

The continuous nature of change, however, means that a single needs assessment “snapshot” will be unlikely to provide an adequate basis for a programme spanning several years. The time horizon for accurate prediction is short.<sup>24</sup> As new and unanalysed structures, agents and ideas influence parliament, the programme may become less relevant, or certain parts may be rendered redundant.<sup>25</sup>

**Development programming should include several re-assessment milestones, in order to identify where the course needs to be corrected, and to ensure programme activities remain relevant** (see 2.3.4 below and **Annex 2**).

### 2.3.2 Strategy

For some parliaments, as suggested in the *Common Principles*,<sup>26</sup> **the second step will be to set out a self-development strategy – based on the needs assessment – that identifies agreed priorities, maintains focus on remedial activities, and ensures optimal resource use:**

Strategies help organizations think through what they want to achieve and how they will achieve it. Putting strategies into practice and acting strategically ensures that they are focused on the things that really matter – not buffeted by events or short-term distractions – and are able to allocate their resources accordingly.<sup>27</sup>

A “whole-of-organization” strategy should be designed to lift the work of the entire organization. The benefits of the strategy process should be allowed to play out in every area of parliamentary business (see **Annex 2**).

A self-development strategy may be focused within parliament, but its impact flows outward. It is a means of enabling parliament to strengthen the positive impact of the public value it provides – the “services and outcomes valued by the public”<sup>28</sup> – through its “core” accountability, representation and legislative functions.

### 2.3.3 No strategy

A successful parliamentary strategy requires appropriate management capacity. **Starting modestly, with a small number of development work streams, is a suitable option where such capacity has yet to be developed, or where there is no political consensus for a full strategy. Scaling up to a formal strategy can wait until strong management and political consensus are in place.**

Global Partners Governance began working with the Council of Representatives of Iraq in 2008, at a time when there was no parliamentary strategy. The experience set out in Box 16 demonstrates the potential for meaningful development in circumstances where a strategy is not used, or is not yet feasible.

#### BOX 16 Development in the absence of a parliamentary strategy

Global Partners Governance (GPG) started working with the Council of Representatives of Iraq in 2008. GPG adopted an innovative and flexible approach, which they describe as “politically agile programming”. The programme had three strands.

- **First**, it sought to support a handful of committees to improve their scrutiny and oversight of legislation and policy.
- **Second**, it worked with specific administrative departments in parliament to enhance internal capacity and secure institutional memory.
- **Third**, it worked with the Speaker, Deputy Speakers, and Secretary General to reform the legislative process and implement institution-wide practices.

23 For example, IPU, *Evaluating parliament: A self-assessment toolkit for parliaments*, 2008. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reference/2016-07/evaluating-parliament-self-assessment-toolkit-parliamentsntatives>

24 Douglass C. North (2005). *Understanding the Process of Economic Change*. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, p.20.

25 Colin Hay (2002). *Political Analysis*. Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, pp.163–167

26 *Common Principles*, p.16

27 UK Government (2004). *Strategy Survival Guide* (version 2.1). Cabinet Office, Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, p.6. [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20060214033713/http://www.strategy.gov.uk/downloads/survivalguide/downloads/ssg\\_v2.1.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20060214033713/http://www.strategy.gov.uk/downloads/survivalguide/downloads/ssg_v2.1.pdf)

28 *Ibid.*, p.6

There are five aspects of GPG's "politically agile" approach that may be useful for parliamentary assistance:

### 1) Enabling, not implementing

Although international assistance to parliaments has long emphasized the need for "local ownership," the vast majority of programmes still struggle to find ways of working that reflect a genuine collaboration. For political and parliamentary change to sustain itself, the people who are immediately affected by it have to believe in it, and make it work over the long run. This means that both the strategy and the logic of change behind it need to be developed in conjunction with local stakeholders. *The key change is for those providing assistance to parliaments to understand that their most valuable role is not to implement change, but to enable the people that they are working with to implement change for themselves (emphasis supplied).*

Given the issues with which the Iraqi Parliament was dealing in 2008, there was no meaningful overarching strategic plan that would inform support to the institution. Instead, GPG worked with each of the committees and parliamentary directorates to develop and then deliver against their own strategic objectives.

### 2) Partner-led problem-solving

Although it is important to have clear strategic objectives, the implementation of such plans is rarely smooth in political institutions, particularly those as complex as Iraq. Political reform is highly contingent, and will be shaped by a wide variety of interests and incentives inside and outside parliament. As such, programmes will need to respond to frequent shifts in the political context. Such changes can rarely be anticipated, and there is no neat plan for programmes to follow; rather, the focus of support projects should be a form of partner-led problem-solving, which enables local partners to adapt without losing sight of the longer-term objectives.

### 3) Get the small things right, but aim for long-term institutional resilience

Parliamentary assistance programmes frequently only get funded if they aim to cover as much ground as possible, and promise far-reaching political change within the next three years. There is little evidence that these projects succeed in achieving such big goals. And, when donor agencies land heavily in political institutions, they frequently remove any sense of local control. The effect, as described by one Iraqi parliamentarian was, "we feel like we're the ones being implemented".

Instead of aiming solely at big systemic changes, the project in Iraq sought to build from the base upwards. While the basics of institutional effectiveness such as job descriptions for staff, internal communication systems, clear lines of accountability and strategic planning are not sexy, they were fundamental to the operation of the Council of Representatives.

### 4) KAPE: Pockets of good practice, and the ripple effect

The KAPE rationale, developed by GPG, is based around helping partners to establish pockets of good practice within the parliament, and then get parliamentarians and staff themselves to disseminate them across the institution. KAPE reflects the four stages of project delivery – *Knowledge* transfer, *Application* of new techniques, embedding those new *Practices*, and spreading them through the parliament via a ripple *Effect*.

To this end, GPG worked closely with half a dozen committees, supporting them with internal structures and staff job descriptions, as well as developing standard procedures for policy enquiries, evidence taking and committee reports. Working closely with small groups of politicians and staff was a way to achieve meaningful changes that sought to turn committees into beacons of good practice. The committees were encouraged to capture these lessons in periodic reports they published.

At the same time, GPG worked with the permanent staff of the parliament to ensure that effective ways of working were retained by the institution as whole. Supporting the Parliamentary Directorate, and the Research Directorate, they distilled the key lessons and turned them into principles that were distributed by parliament to all committees. In addition, GPG then supported the Speaker's Office in developing a parliament-wide assessment framework for committee performance.

### 5) Consistency and continuity are more important than intensity

Parliamentary development usually happens at walking pace. There are sometimes "critical junctures" when the possibility of seismic change occurs. But these are rare, and even then the ability to embed significant reforms that flow from such junctures into the wider parliamentary culture so that they stick, takes time and effort.

GPG's work with the Council of Representatives has been going on for a decade, with largely the same advisers working on the project in that time. Such longevity means that those advisers not only develop a huge amount of expertise, but also enjoy a level of trust and familiarity around which it is easier to work towards commonly shared objectives. Those tacit understandings are often key to achieving change in places like Iraq.

Donor funding though tends to prioritize the short-term and quick wins. If donor agencies want parliaments to commit to long-term reform in return for assistance, those same donor agencies should also show that commitment in their willingness to fund reform in the long-term.

*Source: Global Partners Governance*

There are many intermediate positions. For example, in the Senate of the Parliament of Poland, systematic development rests with the Secretary General's decisions in response to specific issues, such as the current transition to electronic document management.<sup>29</sup> The Parliament of Finland, meanwhile, is currently implementing parliamentary development plans authored by the Finnish Innovation Fund (Sitra), operating under the authority of Parliament.<sup>30</sup>

**There is no single starting point for implementing self-development. Some parliaments adopt a comprehensive (so-called "whole-of-organization") development strategy, while others begin with a smaller number of development-related work streams or proceed in other, more modest ways.**

Which of these approaches parliament takes will depend on myriad factors, such as staff experience and capacity, the availability of development resources, the current capacity of parliament to perform its "core" functions, the presence or absence of political consensus, the pressure of daily work, contextual stability and security issues, and more.

### 2.3.4 Implementing a strategy cycle

**The third step is to implement a strategy cycle, since strategies gather dust if they are conceived as mere documents rather than dynamic processes.** Strategic operationalization arises naturally from the decision "in principle" to pursue self-development (see 2.1.1 above) and is achieved by means of:

- **An annual strategy cycle (ASC)** embedding the strategy at all organizational levels and comprising a number of closely linked tools, chief among which are an **annual corporate plan (ACP)**, **departmental annual work plans (DAWPs)**, **individual job descriptions and personal development plans** – such a strategy roll-out is not an "add-on" to normal working routine but comprises that routine.
- **Allocation of appropriate staff resources** to manage the strategy cycle – *the strategy must be "owned" by all staff in general, but management of the strategy must be a clear and specific part of everyday duties for certain staff.*
- **Management structures** designed to be consistent with and mutually supportive of self-development – *for example, regular high- and lower-level management meetings to track key development-related and other relevant activities.*
- **A strong allegiance** between parliamentary leadership, parliamentarians and staff – *as noted previously, no strategy will succeed unless these groups have accepted the self-development and change management approach.*

The National Parliament of Solomon Islands has drawn up a five-year parliamentary strategy, which uses the ASC approach and incorporates the features noted above (see **Annex 2**).

#### BOX 17

#### Operationalizing strategy in the National Parliament of Solomon Islands

- Since 2012, all development in the National Parliament of Solomon Islands has been organized around an **annual strategy cycle**. The cycle has two main parts allowing for needs to be identified, implemented and adjusted at corporate, departmental and individual staff levels: monitoring achievement of objectives in the *current year*, and preparing revised annual objectives for *subsequent years*. Two features of the cycle have been particularly important for success and exemplify parliament's self-development approach:
- The **first** is the three-person **Strategy Support Unit (SSU)** led by the Deputy Clerk. As head of the SSU, the Deputy Clerk reports weekly to the Clerk and **Executive Group** – Parliament's top administrative management. SSU staff own the annual strategy cycle process, reflected formally in their job descriptions. The SSU is responsible for all aspects of operationalizing the strategy. Tasks at the level of individual secretariat officer and departmental level cascade directly from the strategic plan priorities and activities.
- The SSU (with the BIC, see Box 10 above) provides Parliament's link with Solomon Islands Government and external partners on development-related matters under the direction of the Clerk. It is the focal point for liaison on development with parliamentary stakeholders such as the Members' **Parliamentary House Committee** on training and development requirements for Members and Members' services and staffing. The SSU is instrumental in organizing **steering committees** of staff to oversee particular development projects that may have strategic priority. This reinforces staff ownership of development activities.
- The **second** comes in the form of target-driven **departmental annual work plans** subject to monthly heads of department (**Management Group**) accountability sessions with the Speaker and Clerk, at which departmental heads set out achievements and explain any barriers to meeting targets. This permits a great deal of transparency within the management structure. In addition, these plans are subject to formal **reviews** with the SSU and adjusted as necessary.

*Source: National Parliament of Solomon Islands*

## 2.4. External development partners

External partners may feature at all stages of parliament's development. They come in many different forms, including other parliaments, modestly sized niche non-governmental organizations (NGOs), commercial/non-commercial national and international development bodies (political foundations, universities and colleges, and others), as well as individual practitioners offering a range of services and expertise.<sup>31</sup> A parliament's home government is often an important development partner.

<sup>29</sup> Submission: Senate of the Parliament of Poland

<sup>30</sup> Submission: Parliament of Finland

<sup>31</sup> *Common Principles*, pp.14, 26–28

### 2.4.1 Collaborative working

External development bodies engage with parliaments using a range of technical and contractual approaches, such as embedded projects and remote intervention based on memoranda of understanding. “Peer-to-peer” relationships – where established parliaments provide direct assistance – are often an excellent source of support because they enable parliaments, in the words of the Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia, to “learn from the experience of others and ... share skills and knowledge”.<sup>32</sup>

#### BOX 18 “Peer-to-peer” parliamentary development

The Bundestag bases its development activities explicitly on the *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments*. Activities are funded from its own resources, but also utilizing external funds when partnering with national or international partners such as GIZ, NDI or the EU on long-term projects. Parliament operates an annual plan for development support, signed off by the President and his deputies, with the Secretary General having flexibility to decide on special requests in-year. The Bundestag seeks the active cooperation of partner parliaments in which:

- Recipients have a clear strategic vision for parliamentary reform set out in a development plan
- There is a steering/coordination committee comprising politicians and administrative staff, and
- Partner parliaments ideally participate in programme design.

Source: Bundestag

**When working collaboratively, the challenge for parliaments and external partners is to match and manage requirements with resources in such a way as to achieve locally meaningful positive results.**

This can only be achieved if the stakeholders clearly understand their distinct roles, and how those roles fit together. Where parliament itself is unclear about its needs, or fails to articulate them clearly, external partners will find it difficult to offer appropriate inputs: As the *Common Principles* state: **“To promote sustainability, partner support activities must be a clear part of the developmental process agreed and driven by parliament itself”** (emphasis added).<sup>33</sup> Where such a development process does not exist, but is sought by parliament, external partners should support its creation.

### 2.4.2 Communication

Potential difficulties – especially over-ambitious programming at the programme delivery stage – may be avoided by working to a realistic and fully up-to-date needs assessment. This depends on a mutual willingness to coordinate activities and establish sound communication.

<sup>32</sup> Submission: Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia

<sup>33</sup> *Common Principles*, p.24

<sup>34</sup> Above, Box 16(5)

#### BOX 19 Common Principle 8

##### **Principle 8: Parliamentary support partners and parliaments commit to effective coordination and communication**

Using aid resources well is an ongoing international priority. Aid provided for parliamentary support is no different, and good coordination of efforts and “open door” partner communications pays dividends in improving the quality of outputs.

The interests of parliaments are clearly served by cooperation, not competition, among support partners from different organizations. Parliamentary support partners should, therefore, engage in close cooperation to avoid duplication and working at cross-purposes.

Source: *Common Principles*, p.36

Communication between parliaments and external partners needs to be cultivated steadily.<sup>34</sup> Major cultural differences mean it cannot be taken for granted.<sup>35</sup> For instance, social, economic and political institutions (such as markets, elections, civil society and government) may share common titles, and even appear similar, but they operate differently from one context to the next. This makes effective external intervention inherently complex.<sup>36</sup>

Political economy analysis from the needs assessment (or self-assessment) may illuminate some of this complexity by exposing partially submerged relationships relevant to decisions about effective external intervention.<sup>37</sup> Such analysis must necessarily involve local collaboration, because effective interventions rely on having situational information that is as complete as possible.

**Where parliamentary needs assessments are conducted by external assessors, the secretariat of parliament must be involved. Selected staff may need prior training so they can participate effectively.**<sup>38</sup> It may also be worthwhile involving non-parliamentary nationals with appropriate expertise, as the Parliament of Kenya did.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.4.3 Resources

Many parliaments work with multiple development partners. In such cases, parliament should ensure that resources are handled rationally, transparently and to best effect. For example, a well-designed and ethically aware self-development structure will promote complementarity in the handling of partners’ contributions.

<sup>35</sup> Douglass C. North and others (2006). *A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w12795>. Douglass C. North and others (2013). *In the Shadow of Violence: Politics, Economics, and the Problems of Development*. New York and Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.1–24, 328–349.

<sup>36</sup> Douglass C. North and others (2009). *Violence and Social Orders*. New York and Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.137–140.

<sup>37</sup> David Hudson and Adrian Leftwich (2014). *From political economy to political analysis*. <http://www.dlprog.org/publications/from-political-economy-to-political-analysis.php>. Claire McLoughlin (2014). *Political Economy Analysis: Topic Guide* (2nd ed). <http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/pea.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> *Common Principles*, p.33

<sup>39</sup> Above, Box 13

**BOX 20**  
**Common Principle 9**

**Principle 9: Parliamentary support partners act in an ethical and responsible manner**

Parliaments and parliamentary support providers should be transparent about the types of assistance received and provided. The effectiveness and efficiency of such support requires parliaments to deal fairly with all stakeholders and not use one against the other or seek similar assistance from multiple partners without disclosure.

Source: *Common Principles*, p.39

on the agreed priorities of a programme with a narrower focus. In either case, the strategy or priorities should be determined by a needs assessment.

Whichever approach is used, **it is essential to ensure that programme activities – at the corporate, departmental and individual levels – contribute transparently, whether directly or indirectly, to parliament’s “core” tasks.** An annual strategy cycle (ASC) can be used to ensure consistency of focus (see **Annex 2**).

The rationale for detailed (lower-level) programme activities will typically be set out in a contextual analysis, which will normally include a “theory of change”.<sup>40</sup> This analysis is an intrinsic part of the needs assessment process. The justification for proposed activities may, however, need to be elaborated at a later stage when final programming decisions are made.

Where a parliament has invited external partners to contribute to its development, proposals must be properly evaluated to make sure they are a good fit for the parliament’s self-development plan. Where a parliament has more than one external partner, close coordination will be important. **Parliament will need a robust process to ensure that development proposals are thoroughly evaluated for suitability, soundly coordinated and properly monitored** (see **Annex 2** and **Annex 3**).

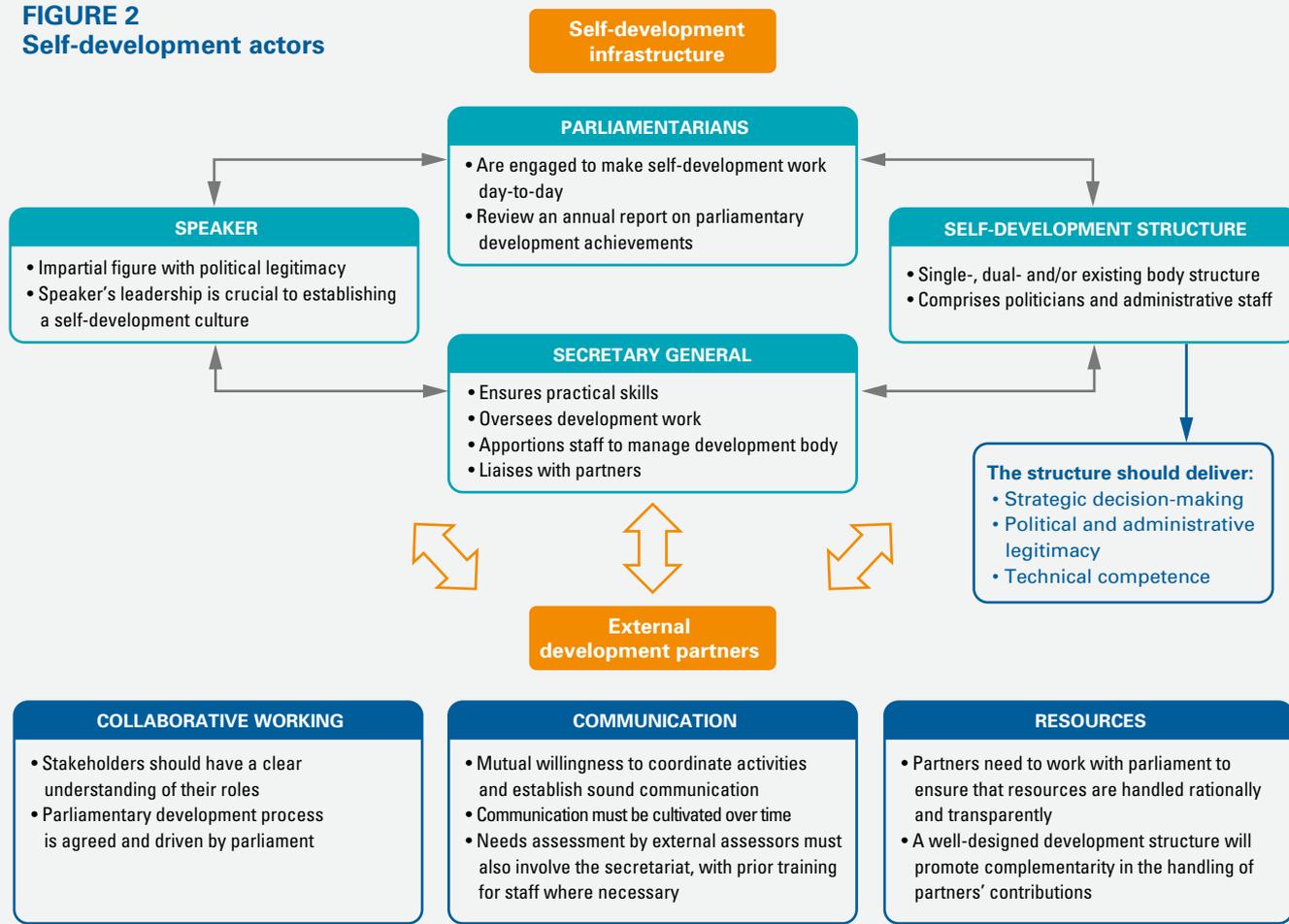
**2.5. Programme delivery and results**

Programme delivery and results must be consistent with the high-level strategic objectives set by parliament.

**2.5.1 Programming**

Development programming will normally be based on the strategy adopted by parliament or, where no such strategy exists,

**FIGURE 2**  
**Self-development actors**



40 See: Craig Valters (2015). *Theories of Change*. Overseas Development Institute. <https://www.odi.org/publications/9883-theories-change-time-radical-approach-learning-development>

The Myanmar Assembly of the Union has adopted the following in-house coordination arrangements for development programming.

### BOX 21 Coordinating development programming in the Myanmar Assembly of the Union

All development support received by the Union Assembly of Myanmar from development partners (DPs) is coordinated by the **Joint Coordination Committee for Parliamentary Development (JCC)**, chaired currently by the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. It is composed of parliamentarians, Directors General and Deputy Directors General of the offices of the three Houses, and technical experts.

The mandate and composition of the JCC ensures the inclusion of key internal stakeholders in the decision-making process on all matters relating to the planning, implementation and oversight of development activities at the Assembly. The JCC is supported by the **JCC Office**, which provides a single-window mechanism to ensure smooth and streamlined communication and liaising with DPs including UN agencies, as well as other external stakeholders such as donors and civil society organizations. All communication from interested DPs – plans, proposals/ invitations vetted and submitted to the Chairman for guidance on further action – is routed to the JCC Office.

For those DPs with continuous and longer-term engagement, **memoranda of understanding (MoU)** are signed to provide a stable implementation platform with streamlined operating procedures and established basic principles for smooth delivery.

The Assembly is now in the first year of its second Strategic Plan for Parliamentary Development (2019–2022) and DPs are encouraged to refer to this broad framework when designing their own programmes, projects and work plans. A new feature being initiated in this second Plan is the design and formulation of a common monitoring framework and reporting system by the JCC in collaboration with DPs.

DPs' annual (calendar year) work plans are collated and amalgamated through a consultative process whereby development partners discuss and agree among themselves, and with the JCC, on how best to harmonize their support in order to achieve maximum impact, avoid overlaps and fill in gaps.

This process has promoted transparency, mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's efforts. It has facilitated collaboration between and among various development partners. In addition, the JCC mechanism has afforded parliament the means to appraise all proposed support within the framework of the current Strategic Plan.

*Source: The Union Assembly of Myanmar*

## 2.5.2 Results

**Assessing results of parliamentary development is as challenging as it is essential. Parliament is responsible to the electorate for producing sound scrutiny, representation and legislative “public goods”. It follows that parliament has the largest stake in ensuring that development activities designed to improve its performance are realistically assessed.**

**Results must be evidence-based.** Before assessing them, parliament should therefore have gathered data about its “core” administrative activities. Moreover, as a part of the self-development process, it should have:

- **Established** sound baselines for areas targeted for future development
- **Identified** clear objectives and a strong outcome
- **Ensured** that it is in a position to measure and/or assess the impact of delivered activities
- **Weighed** the relative importance of different types of information

Taken together, this comprises the core evidence, or “data basis”, on which successful development will later depend.

**A useful approach to the task of identifying and assessing results realistically is to see them sitting along a spectrum – ranging from activities that can easily be counted (measured) to those requiring qualitative evaluation (assessed).** It is important to be clear about which is which, and to give each due weight. Importantly, although counting “activities” has its place, it should not be overvalued.

An assessment system will only be worthwhile if it promotes rigour and honesty, reflects awareness of international practice, and demonstrates local relevance (see **Annex 3**). **Secretariat staff responsible for self-development must have training in relevant assessment skills** (see **Annex 1**).

It is also good practice to arrange for a transparently procured **independent external audit of results**. Such an audit gives an appropriate level of assurance for programme and project results, and should be published on parliament's website.

Lastly, poor or otherwise disappointing results are particularly valuable because they can make parliament's leaders aware of potentially intractable issues requiring further attention. Alternatively, such results may be evidence of over-ambitious planning that needs recalibration. In other words, any instance where the stated objectives were not achieved should never be ignored and should always be scrutinized.

## 2.6. Summary

**Individual parliaments will build their capacities in response to their unique situations and define their self-development plans accordingly. Internal factors and the wider context will determine the extent to which parliament is able to commit to setting up a development structure, as well as its design and scale. So while self-development**

contexts differ from one parliament to the next, the elements discussed above are likely to be central features of most structures. Likewise, managing them well will be critical to success.

The Parliament of Pakistan has implemented a change management process that reflects many of the self-development aspects discussed so far in this *Guide*.

**BOX 22**  
**Parliament of Pakistan: Self-development arrangements**

Funding for parliamentary development comes primarily from national resources. The amounts allocated for it from Parliament’s budget is a matter for Parliament itself. Parliament’s capital development is conducted by means of relevant government agencies. The Chairman of the Senate leads the development process based on initiatives proposed by the Secretariat under the direction of the Secretary General. The Speaker of the National Assembly is a key decision-maker.

The development framework is provided by a **five-year Strategic Plan** aligned with national policy. The Plan is created under the direction of a **Strategic Plan Oversight Committee** comprising cross-party representation. The formulation of the Plan is a matter for Parliament, something recognized by external partners and donors. The Secretariat runs an internal monitoring and evaluation mechanism but this does not include any evaluations of work conducted by external partners.

The **Office of the Focal Person of the Senate Secretariat** is primarily responsible for collaboration between external development partners and internal development stakeholders. A Secretariat **Project Management Unit** provides central coordination for strategic planning, identifies development areas for cooperative work, and ensures a match between national and international partners (e.g. government, civil society organizations and academics) and those requirements.

A number of important permanent parliamentary bodies exert a strong influence on development both in their areas of competence and so far as cross-cutting work is concerned. These include the **House Business Advisory Committee** (comprising all leaders of political parties represented in Parliament), the **House Finance Committee**, the **Administrative Committee** and the **Council of Committee Chairpersons**.

Parliament engages with **external partners** on a technical level through the Project Management Unit and convening periodic **donor conferences**. These have the objective of avoiding duplication of effort and seeking sustainability. Initiatives from both sides are welcomed and mutual funding takes place.

*Source: Parliament of Pakistan*

**FIGURE 3**  
**Self-development process summary**



# 3 Model

National parliaments are each unique  
... Nevertheless, some aspects of  
parliamentary practice are universal.<sup>41</sup>

## 3.1 Purpose

**Modelling a self-development structure clearly shows the detailed process by which a parliament operationalizes the approach set out in Section 1 of the *Guide*, using the elements covered in Section 2.**

### 3.1.1 Parliament's global scope

While detailed forms of democratic parliamentary self-development are virtually infinite – as many as there are parliaments – the basic process of setting up and operating such a structure has strong common features. These are set out in 3.2.

Since the elements discussed in Section 2 are common features of most democratic parliaments (albeit with local adaptations), the self-development structures derived from them share basic design similarities. **Self-development recognizes the overlapping local and international nature of parliament, and is enriched by both.**

## 3.2 Set-up

The set-up process involves building and implementing a self-development structure containing the elements discussed in Section 2 of this *Guide*. One advantage of this structure is that it is embodied by the main political and official levels of parliament (parliament management). It draws legitimization, motivation and practical support directly from that context.

### 3.2.1 Integration

**Key self-development activities can be integrated into the existing portfolios of political and official members of parliament management**, although additional limited, specific human resources may be required in some cases.

### 3.2.2 Self-development takes no account of size

**No parliament is too big or too small to incorporate a self-development structure.** In fact, smaller institutions may have an advantage because, training costs aside, staff numbers will normally be modest. Where resources are at a premium, parliament may apply to various external partners for funding.

### 3.2.3 Motivation

Section 1 of this *Guide* discusses **the reasons why a parliament may be incentivized and motivated** to pursue self-development. Although the exact reasons will vary from parliament to parliament, relative dissatisfaction with parliament's current capacity to undertake its constitutional tasks, and a desire to improve, will usually be important factors.

At every stage of the set-up process, and especially during the needs assessment phase, it will be important to ensure that **deficiencies are assessed accurately**, and that **parliament's development proposals are credible**. Active leadership by parliament's core political and official structures (whether supported externally or not) will ensure the set-up process is a success.

## 3.3 Model

**Figure 4 below contains a 10-step linear model of formal set-up activities.** The template is very much a general approach. Individual parliaments will have their own way of implementing each stage (such as stage 5: obtaining parliament's approval). Experience suggests that the entire set-up process can take up to 24 months.

Parliament may wish to consider bringing in external experts to assistance with the set-up process. **Yet parliament management must retain overall control from the outset. All activities, particularly those carried out by external partners, must be directed to building and strengthening – not substituting – internal capacity.**

<sup>41</sup> *Common Principles*, p.26

### 3.4 Self-development dividends

**A self-development structure can yield significant dividends for parliament:**

- **Providing parliament with the means to generate and operationalize relevant internal capacity-building** – an embedded structure encourages a consistent approach to development, avoiding episodic, haphazard and uncoordinated interventions and recognizing parliament’s people-centred and complex nature.
- **Offering parliament management a powerful leadership tool. Parliament’s right to determine its development is rarely challenged in principle. Yet transforming this principle into practice is often frustrating** – a self-development approach, and the associated structures, offer parliament the means to transform nominal parliamentary leadership of development into practical strategic and operational control.

- **Enabling external partners’ contributions to lock into a clear and realistic framework that reflects parliament’s priorities** – the clearer the roles of parliament and other stakeholders within the self-development structure, the more effective external input is likely to be.

**A parliament that follows the recommendations of this Guide is likely to:**

- find itself able to connect meaningfully with the global parliamentary community
- be increasingly agile in handling local political challenges
- enjoy increasing staff morale
- deploy financial and human resources responsibly, and
- perform its “core” functions dynamically and effectively.

**FIGURE 4**  
Building a self-development structure (to be read in conjunction with Annex 3)



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## Annex I: Staff skills for self-development

1. Parliamentary self-development involves considerable changes to the management practices of parliament, as well as significant human capacity enhancement.
2. **Human capacity enhancement is critical because it is people – the political leadership of parliament, parliamentarians and staff – who manage, generate and operationalize responses to change. Sustainable and constantly refreshed working practices are the hallmark of a self-development approach aimed at agile reorientation, rather than a superficial overlay of previous practices. This requires serious investment in parliamentary staff.**
3. Appropriately motivated and trained staff members are therefore essential to implementing self-development. The numbers involved directly in managing the structure are likely to be modest (**Annex 2**). Yet these individuals are critical to successful self-development. Effective change management will require parliament to match requirements and skills when making the appointments and, thereafter, to source appropriate continuing training for them.

### Identifying requirements, matching skills and temperament

4. Parliaments should undertake **a comprehensive mapping exercise** to ensure a good match between the requirements of setting up and operating the self-development structure, and required staff skills. Professional HR assistance should be deployed where available.
5. Appropriate staffing depends as much on temperament as it does skills. Development staff should be at ease acting as “champions” of self-development, have the resilience to manage a process of change, and demonstrate a practical approach to their work. Staff directly responsible for maintaining the self-development structure are likely to exhibit a mix of the following characteristics, knowledge and skills:<sup>42</sup>
  - An appreciation of change and a strong commitment to mainstreaming the management of change in their own work and throughout the organization generally
  - An understanding of how parliament works and how it relates to other key organizations of democratic government, a good grasp of the way the economy and society work, and the nature and importance of democracy, and an aspiration for an “open society”

#### BOX 23 Staffing the Parliament of Pakistan

- Parliament has reformed its human resource arrangements by establishing an HR department and providing staff with job descriptions, and promotion, retirement and succession plans.
- Recruitment of National Assembly staff has been shifted from Parliament to the Federal Public Service Commission, taking advantage of transparency, merit and fairness procedures.

*Source: Parliament of Pakistan*

<sup>42</sup> In addition to the profile and fundamental skills required of any competent parliament secretariat member: intellectual curiosity, sound general education, numerical/non-numerical data management, leadership capacity and ICT literacy.

- An aptitude for creative work and management, together with the requisite skills for handling tasks such as information management, work streams/project/programme design, strategic planning, budgeting, results orientation, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation.

### Sourcing appropriate training

6. In many cases, parliaments looking to source skills for staff training will need to reach out to “peer” parliaments with relevant expertise, to external parliamentary support partners, and to fellow parliamentarians, support bodies and practitioners. During the early phases of structure development, while parliament is developing its internal capacity, external partners with appropriate experience and commitment to the *Common Principles* can be especially helpful in clarifying likely requirements and supporting initial training.

### “Hiring away” and realistic remuneration

7. In a development context, appropriately skilled human resources are rare commodities. External partners must not compete with parliament for scarce staff resources. A tenet of the *Common Principles* is that external partners do not “hire away” staff from parliament.<sup>43</sup>

Equally, parliaments and governments have a duty to ensure that staff are remunerated realistically and do not suffer economically by working for parliament. Pay should be set at a level that enables parliament to hire and retain suitable staff, and that reflects its importance.

**There is often unhealthy competition between parliaments, international support organizations and governments for the service of trained and talented staff. Partners need to take a broad view of such challenges, recognizing the undesirability of “hiring away” talent from national institutions.**

*Source: Common Principles, p.35*

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43 *Common Principles*, p.39

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## Annex II: Case study: Operating an Annual Strategy Cycle

1. The National Parliament of Solomon Islands has operated an annual strategy cycle (ASC) successfully since 2012.
2. **The ASC represents a series of activities initiated through the year by the Strategy Support Unit (SSU), a team of officials with day-to-day responsibility for the strategy. Politicians and other officials (the senior management of the secretariat, the Speaker, the House Committee and the plenary) are closely involved. The cycle is a continuous process: as Cycle 1 matures, preparations for Cycle 2 get underway, and so on.**
3. **The ASC is a granular representation of the way Parliament enhances its “core” functions, as set out in Parliament’s high-level strategy.** For example, the departmental annual work plans (DAWPs) track a department’s contribution to the year’s strategic plan priorities as reflected at mid level by the annual corporate plan (see Figure 4). The DAWPs are broken into monthly segments, reviewed on a four-weekly basis by the Speaker and Clerk at the regular monthly heads of department (Management Group) meeting. In addition, more sustained major/minor reviews of DAWPs are conducted by the SSU in the course of the cycle (see Figure 5 below).
4. Using the ASC, strategic plan activities and priorities become the routine work of each secretariat department and staff member. **The work of the SSU ensures that strategic development considerations and processes consistently define, discipline and support parliament’s daily work at the departmental and individual levels.**
5. SSU staff are members of the secretariat and report direct to the Secretary General/Clerk. In this way, they are better able to retain an organization-wide perspective than if they were attached to a specific department. The SSU comprises the Deputy Clerk and two colleagues, all of whom have separate additional functions.
6. **Most effective professional development takes place internally in parliament as parliamentarians and officials undertake their “core” business. This includes continuous internal professional development, “on-the-job” training, and formal and informal peer mentoring. This may be reinforced, when required, by “off-desk” training (i.e. training that happens away from parliament). An important function of the ASC is to facilitate these essential internal knowledge exchanges by making professional development a routine part of the daily work of parliamentarians and staff.**

**FIGURE 5**  
Planning cycle



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## Annex III: Partnerships: Working with external partners

1. Much of this *Guide* focuses on setting up a self-development structure. Parliament is likely to work with external partners as part of that process. Once the structure is set up, parliament may also work periodically with external partners to operate it. **Working with external partners – during self-development structure set-up and operation – raises a number of issues for parliamentary authorities. This Annex discusses these issues, some of which have been touched on previously.**

### BOX 24

#### A responsible development partnership between parliament and external partners

- Nurtures mutual respect and trust by finding a common capacity-building language open equally to local and international understanding.
- Accepts parliament's self-development structure and strategy as the sole platform on which to conduct the working relationship.
- Ensures external contributions are locally meaningful, and that external partners' contributions slot coherently into parliament's strategy.
- Adheres to the *Common Principles for Support to Parliament* (2014).

### Parliament must evaluate all external development proposals systematically

2. Parliament will need to set up and apply a **proposal evaluation process** in order to test the relevance of proposed external contributions.

### BOX 25

#### Parliament's evaluation of external proposals

Proposals will be processed by secretariat members responsible for development, and assessed against parliament's development priorities/resource constraints as set out in its development strategy/project document:

- *Presentation of proposal to secretariat:* covering aspects required in advance by parliament.
- *Secretariat technical review:* applying transparent decision-making criteria and taking account of strategy priorities and other work in progress.
- *Formal consideration:* by the Speaker and parliament management.
- *Decision:* made.

**In summary, parliament will have an evaluation process that enables it to determine the suitability of external development proposals against its agreed priorities.**

## Parliament must set appropriate terms of engagement with external partners

3. The working arrangements between an external partner and parliament – the terms of engagement – are critical to the success of the partner’s programme.

### BOX 26 Criteria for intervention design

External interventions must be designed with the unique context of each parliament in mind:

- There is no “one-size-fits-all” model for parliamentary development. **A lack of contextual understanding can lead to inappropriate development approaches.** Consequently, external consultants must be given sufficient time to understand the context in which parliament operates. This does not mean extending engagement periods unreasonably. Indeed, continuity and careful deepening of engagement between parliament and an external partner, over several consecutive projects, can help to foster mutual understanding in ways that increase the likelihood of appropriate solutions being agreed and applied.
- Complex interventions involving several work streams, multiple personnel and long estimated lead times are likely to require an **embedded project** with the team lodged on-site. Alternatively, niche work, or strictly time-bound interventions, may be supplemented by periodic visits based on a **memorandum of understanding** (MoU).
- The choice of intervention design is a trade-off. For example, an embedded project has the advantage of continuous site presence. But parliament may risk losing staff to projects, contrary to the good practice set out in the *Common Principles*. Moreover, such projects can inadvertently appear intrusive. A different arrangement – such as periodic visits – will lose the continuous contact advantages but will have a lighter footprint.
- **Parliament’s relative maturity** will be an important consideration. Parliament may benefit from an embedded project in the early stages of self-development, whereas periodic interventions may be more appropriate for parliaments at a more advanced stage.
- Proposed work should take careful account of **parliament’s nature**. For example, all development interventions need to demonstrate flexibility to take account of parliament’s sitting pattern and frequently fluid timetable. These constraints will largely determine the availability of parliamentarians and officials.
- In many parts of the world, **infrastructure and logistical contexts** can be highly challenging. Careful planning and significant resources may be needed to deliver development (especially outreach) programmes effectively in these circumstances.

## Parliament must be aware of its internal operations: satisfactory monitoring and appropriate development are only possible in an information-rich environment

4. **Parliaments need information to make decisions about effective development interventions. They must be able to answer a series of questions: Why has performance dropped below what is desirable? How has this happened?** In order to shape a parliamentary culture that is open to such questions, it is vital to have accurate institutional information, as well as a willingness to act on that information, and to monitor progress using the resulting information and data. Such a culture is vital to the success of self-development.<sup>44</sup>

### BOX 27 Information and monitoring considerations

- Effective monitoring can only happen with sound management information. The strategy or programme will therefore need to include an information collection protocol. Staff responsible for parliament’s strategy (such as the MED in the National Parliament of Timor-Leste, and the SSU in the National Parliament of Solomon Islands) will also be responsible for assembling measurement information and proposing any required adjustments. This information has institution-specific (internal) aspects. Yet it also has an external dimension, since it concerns the relationship between parliament and its social context. Both are equally important to parliaments in regulating their self-development and contributing to the institutional improvements identified and measured by SDG 16.
- It is important to distinguish between two types of information. The first concerns quantitative (measurable) activities, such as numbers of training sessions and meetings held, or numbers of documents produced. The second relates to indications of significant improvements in “core” functions, and is usually likely to imply changes in human behaviour. Assessing such changes will normally involve the exercise of informed judgment. Routine quantitative measurements should not be invested with exaggerated importance.

<sup>44</sup> Simon Banner (4 November 2016). *Measuring performance delivered through others*. National Audit Office Blog. <https://www.nao.org.uk/naoblog/measuring-performance>. Katrina Sharkey and others (2016). *The Role of Legislatures in Poverty Reduction*. World Bank Institute, p.11. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/336331468338343838/The-role-of-legislatures-in-poverty-reduction-experience-and-future-directions>

## Identifying “results” is inherently complex

5. **The desired results of parliamentary development programmes are frequently viewed, regrettably often in hindsight, as over-ambitious, unsustainable or otherwise unrealistic,**<sup>45</sup> often because stakeholders have limited information about parliament. It is important, therefore, that parliament is not sidelined while early critical programme design and external intervention resource decisions are being made.
6. For example, parliament may not have been invited to contribute to programme design or, when engaged, may – in the absence of self-development experience – have been unable to make a truly meaningful contribution. This can result in imperfect information flows between parliament and external partners which, in turn, can lead to misunderstandings about what the proposed programme can reasonably deliver. This is clearly undesirable. **Parliament, implementing external partners and donors must therefore work together on programme design – as closely and as early as possible – in order to set reasonable expectations.**

### BOX 28 Results

- Results identified by parliament and external partners should be mutually consistent and relate directly to those in parliament’s self-development strategy.
- Identifying credible programme results involves reconciling the programme objectives of donors (working in a political context and seeking timely returns), implementers (grappling with the long-term nature of parliamentary development), and parliament (under political pressure to deliver more effective “public goods”).
- The objective of parliamentary development work is to build parliament’s capacity to fulfil its constitutional role. It follows that the key high-level measures of self-development are demonstrable improvements in parliament’s delivery of its “core” functions. Examples include the impact of select committee reports on government policy, the capacity of parliamentarians to contribute qualitatively to legislative provisions, and improvements in parliamentarians’ ability capacity to manage constituency case work.

7. Identifying meaningful parliamentary development results is not straightforward. Success will depend upon, and brings into focus the benefits of:
  - **Encouraging strong communication** between parliament, implementer and donor, to expose and resolve distinctions of approach or expectations both before work-stream results arrangements are finalized, and thereafter.
  - **Focusing consistently on “ultimate” improvements**, i.e. those that have a discernible positive impact on parliament’s “core” functions. The question “How will this improve legislation, accountability or representation?” should be a constant refrain, especially where the relevance of proposed interventions to these “core” functions is not immediately obvious.
  - **Accepting that parliamentary development is a long-term, indeed virtually open-ended, process** – a consideration that parliament should keep in mind in when planning self-development. “Whole-of-organization” adaption to change is likely to be best achieved through a long-range, evolutionary, comprehensive and coherent programme of self-development.

<sup>45</sup> Above, Box 16(3)





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