

Helpdesk Research Report: Integrating parliamentary and political party strengthening in sectoral programmes

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Query: Please identify examples of how donors have integrated work with, and provided support to, parliaments and political parties within major sectoral programmes (health, education, etc). If available, identify evidence on the impact of such an approach.

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1. Overview

There are limited examples of sectoral programmes that explicitly integrate support to parliamentary or political party strengthening in pursuit of sectoral goals (i.e. in health, education etc). The majority of donor activities in support of parliaments and political parties have the objective of strengthening parliaments for the broader purpose of improving democratic governance. Such programmes typically focus on generic training for individual parliamentarians (Lucas 2008), strengthening institutions and committees (Hudson and Wren 2007) or building administrative capacity in general (Hubli and Schmidt 2005), rather than addressing a specific issue or sectoral objective.

Although not widespread, there are some examples of parliamentary support programmes that aim to promote more specific policy goals, including poverty reduction, environmental protection, peace and reconciliation, human rights adherence, HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment (Tostensen and Amundsen 2010). Some experts argue such issue-based approaches can be an effective entry point to supporting parliaments and political parties (Tostensen and Amundsen 2010). A previous GSDRC helpdesk report in this area (McCloughlin 2008) found that parliamentary training programmes that focus on specific issues (e.g. gender budgeting), rather than on more procedural elements, have been well received

by recipients. A 2005 review of the Swedish International Development Agency's interventions noted, for example, the importance of issue-based approaches to parliamentary development on gender, human rights and conflict mitigation (Hubli and Schmidt 2005).

Though evidence of the impact of sector-oriented parliamentary programmes is slim, such approaches are regarded in the literature as having the potential to improve sectoral outcomes in a number of ways. It is sometimes argued that narrowing the focus and scale of capacity building efforts around a single issue can help to build consensus around that issue (McCloughlin 2008). Tostensen and Amundsen (2010) argue issue-related events or thematic programmes run the risk of being less effective where they are *not* linked to a parliamentary process. Moreover, they suggest that thematic experts and civil society representatives could undermine thematic programmes unless they are committed to the parliamentary process. Training programmes that address substantive issues and provide parliamentarians with policy-specific information can in some instances help reduce political sensitivity, build trust and pave the way for other, more politically sensitive types of intervention. Such programmes can also bridge party divides and promote inter-party consensus on important policy matters (ibid). Their study also notes that peer advice is generally more acceptable to aid recipients than is donor guidance. This can be undertaken through lesson-sharing from parliamentarians from other countries, for example, through parliamentary associations (ibid).

In spite of the relatively slim rigorous evidence of the impact of sector-oriented parliamentary and political party support programmes, a few examples have been identified in this report that indicate their potential impact.

Swedish-Norwegian Regional HIV/AIDS team in Southern Africa

This programme provided training to parliamentarians and encouraged peer-to-peer learning on HIV/AIDS. It involved working with parliamentarians from the Southern African Development Cooperation (SADC).

Evaluations of this programme indicate that the programme largely achieved its objectives. Specifically, it has helped deepen parliamentarians' knowledge and understanding of the impacts of HIV and AIDS at national and regional levels, and build the institutional capacity and political momentum within SADC to adequately support parliaments and parliamentarians (Sinkala Sikazwe, expert comments; Jones et al. 2010).

The Westminster Consortium

This initiative, led by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, has been actively engaged in capacity building to strengthen the governance role of parliaments, including with regard to issue-focused programmes in relation to improving prisoner health, combating human trafficking, environmental oversight and agricultural reform. The Westminster Foundation have said that evaluations of this work will be undertaken in 2013.

Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA)

Though not a donor programme, European Parliamentarians through AWEPA have worked with African Parliamentarians supporting aid effectiveness, climate change, gender issues and on strengthening regional parliaments towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. There has recently been a pilot programme to support agricultural reform in Africa. Associations such as AWEPA provide opportunities for donors to better link parliamentary and political party strengthening to sectoral programmes. However, it is unclear to what extent donor programmes currently undertake this.

2. Swedish-Norwegian Regional HIV/AIDS team in Southern Africa

The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) made 'exploring opportunities for supporting substantive policy goals in cooperation with parliamentary networks' an explicit objective in their *Parliamentary Strengthening* position paper (Sida 2006). The aim would be to 'support programmes with a credible issue-based focus and follow-up strategy targeting the development of substantive policy or reform objectives' (Sida 2006: 9).

With funding from Norway, Sida has supported a regional HIV/AIDS team based in Zambia, to work on HIV/AIDS issues in southern Africa. This team has supported the Southern African Development Community Parliamentarian Forum's (SADC PF) HIV/AIDS Unit since 2007. SADC PF allows member state parliaments and parliamentarians to participate in promoting the regional integration agenda. Through their support the team aimed to deepen parliamentarians' knowledge and understanding of the impacts of HIV and AIDS at national and regional levels, and build the institutional capacity of SADC PF to adequately support parliaments and parliamentarians.

Sinkala Sikazwe (expert comments) argues that the team's has:

- helped the development and approval of a SADC Model Law that countries progressively use as a yardstick for national HIV legislation;
- trained and placed ten researchers in southern African parliaments;
- contributed to improving parliamentarians' key messages in HIV-related debates, and improved the support to national committees;
- worked and continues to work with the SADC Lawyers' Association to provide technical support for private members' bills, which pursue the domestication of the Model Law; and
- supported the Zimbabwean parliament on lobbying the government to support local pharmaceutical companies for increased production of drugs, including antiretroviral drugs.

Jones et al (2010) evaluated the work of the Swedish-Norwegian Regional HIV/AIDS Team in Southern Africa. The evaluation notes that the team initiated regional activities, such as the SADC Think Tank together with other donors, and financed key regional fora, such as the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA), the SADC Partnership Forum and Regional Network of African AIDS Non-Governmental Organizations (RAANGO).

Jones et al (2010) conclude that the team contributed directly to building the capacity of the HIV and AIDS Unit at the SADC. The team helped ensure political momentum, such as through the Maseru Declaration on Prevention and the Expert Think Tank meeting. The peer pressure on countries at a regional level helped generate national leadership where previously little pressure was being exerted.

3. The Westminster Consortium

From the UK, the Westminster Consortium for Parliaments and Democracy¹ has been active in capacity building to strengthen the governance role of parliaments. Their work is primarily focused on building capacity in the areas of parliamentary process and management, financial oversight and access to information, but their work has had some relation to sectoral programmes.

In support of improving prisoner health in the Ukraine the Consortium organised an 'Engagement with Parliament and Effective Participation in Legislation' training course (Westminster Consortium, 2012a). Also in the Ukraine, the Consortium was asked to support the Human Rights Committee to help draft a new law on combating human trafficking (Westminster Consortium, 2012b).

The Consortium supported the Mozambique parliament with environmental oversight through a workshop between British MPs and Mozambican MPs from the Social Affairs, Gender and Environment Committee, to share experiences on MPs role in conducting environmental oversight (Westminster Consortium, 2012c). To tackle issues of rural poverty in Mozambique through agricultural reform, the Consortium developed the 'Oficina' approach (Westminster Consortium, n.d.). This is a step by step process of developing relevant legislation and oversight using four committees and involving local partners, government departments, donors, civil society and the media in the process.

4. Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA)

AWEPA have worked with African Parliamentarians supporting aid effectiveness, climate change, gender issues, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and agricultural reform. The closest programmes to sectoral programmes relate to the work on MDGs. There has also been a recent pilot programme on agricultural reform which is regarded as having been successful.

¹ The Westminster Consortium is made up of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (the lead partner); Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, UK Branch; House of Commons, Overseas Office; International Bar Association; National Audit Office; Thomson Reuters Foundation; University of Essex, Centre for Democratic Governance; and National Council for Voluntary Organisations (Ukraine only).

Millennium Development Goals Programme

Though African parliamentarians are tasked with oversight of legislation, policies and development funds towards the MDGs they lack access to research on policy impacts, information on budgets allocations and foreign aid flows (AWEPA 2012). Through the MDG Programme, AWEPA aims to provide the necessary support to parliamentarians. AWEPA works with a number of regional parliamentary bodies: the Pan-African Parliament, the East African Legislative Assembly, the Economic Community of West African States Parliament, the Southern African Development Committee and the Economic Community of Central African States (CEMAC).

AWEPA (2012) states that through AWEPA support: African Parliamentarians are taken increasingly more seriously by governments in MDG-related policy discussions; qualitative amendments were made to the East African Community HIV and AIDS Prevention and Management Bill; increased engagement from CEMAC parliamentarians to play a role in the issues concerning the drying up of Lake Chad; and increased awareness by African Regional Parliamentary Bodies of the need to harmonise monitoring structures, in order to better track the outcomes of MDG Programme activities

African Parliamentary Support for Agriculture: Pilot Programme

AWEPA have worked with African Parliamentarians to support the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). AGRA aims to 'achieve a food secure and prosperous Africa through the promotion of rapid, sustainable agricultural growth based on smallholder farmers' (AWEPA 2011: 4). A pilot programme was undertaken to investigate how parliamentary agriculture committees can be supported. AWEPA (2011) concluded that this pilot programme has succeeded in testing the likely success of a long term parliamentary strengthening work on issues of agriculture, and in general achieving AGRA and AWEPA's objectives. The report indicates that it is possible to have a common framework for strengthening the work of parliamentary committees. Further conclusions are that more work needs to be done to develop the link between MPs and governments' agricultural services such as the extension services at constituency level. A future programme will need to put more emphasis on strengthening, or in some cases establishing, the links between parliamentarians between: parliamentary committees and the executive; different houses of parliament; and parliamentary committees and other stakeholders such as farmers' organisations and research institutions.

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Tostensen, A. and Amundsen, I. (2010) *Support to Legislatures: Synthesis Study*, Evaluation Report no. 2/2010, Norad, Oslo http://www.norad.no/en/tools-and-publications/publications/publication/_attachment/160865?_download=true&_ts=126d62d7e98

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Westminster Consortium (2012b) *Supporting Legislation to Safeguard Victims of Human Trafficking*, Westminster Foundation for Democracy

Westminster Consortium (2012c) *Strengthening Environmental Oversight in Mozambique*, Westminster Foundation for Democracy

Westminster Consortium (n.d.) *Case study on "Oficina" approach to train MPs and Parliamentary Staff of the Agriculture Commission*, Westminster Foundation for Democracy

6. Additional information

Related Helpdesk Queries:

Lucas, B. (2008) *Mapping donor activity on parliamentary strengthening and electoral support (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report)*. Birmingham, UK: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham.

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McDevitt, A. (2008) *Mapping M&E of Parliamentary Strengthening and Electoral Support Programmes (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report)*. Birmingham, UK: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham.

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<http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Helpdesk&id=494>

Suggested websites:

Agora Portal for Parliamentary Development

<http://www.agora-parl.org/>

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