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# Supporting Parliamentary Development

## An issue paper (2016)



Department for Democracy and Governance  
**Democratisation, Decentralisation  
and Local Governance**

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## 1. Introduction: Why this paper?

Parliaments are an essential element of a country's governance architecture, helping to render it effective, transparent, accountable and participative. Not only are they at the core of democratic political systems, but they also play a critical role in any democracy by providing oversight and accountability of government, by representing citizens, their expectations and their views, and by legislating. In brief, parliaments are a mirror of a country's democracy.

Democracy support through international cooperation entails transfer of know-how aimed at raising the capacity of actors in a democracy, including parliaments, to fulfil their roles and obligations, while fully enjoying their rights. The belief is that empowering actors leads to a better functioning of democratic structures to the benefit of all.

In this context, parliaments play a specifically important role: not only do they create the legal framework, in which democratic institutions function, but they are probably the most important and potentially powerful element of democratic control of the government. This makes them a key actor from the perspective of the institutional development of any country. The third role of legitimate representation of the citizens' will makes parliaments a key development actor, if they defend the interests of their constituencies.

For the SDC, development is closely linked to institutional capacity, the willingness to react to citizens' needs and to decide on policies accordingly. Furthermore, inter-institutional cooperation and coordination constitutes a characteristic element of democratic development, as well as the inclusion of citizens in decision-making processes. In all these instances, parliaments can play a central role.

It is thus surprising that a relatively small percentage of international democracy assistance is channelled towards this central element. Among donors, supporting the executive has been traditionally strong, while the judiciary enjoys the least attention, regardless of the crucial role it plays in the rule of law and the governance architecture in general. In addition, donor support in the past was more focused on the fourth and fifth powers of democracy – civil society and media, as well as processes like elections and decentralisation – while working with parliaments and political parties was considered politically sensitive.

This pattern is changing with the recognition that governance support has to be inclusive if it is to be effective. Democracy support needs to find balanced ways of addressing the entire spectrum of actors in a democracy. Otherwise, the risk of doing harm increases.

Firstly, this paper intends to raise awareness among actors within the SDC and among partner organisations about the opportunities, but also the challenges of greater involvement in parliamentary support. It provides information about current international practice, experience and lessons learned in assisting parliaments to date. Secondly, the paper intends to position the SDC's current engagement in this area. It undertakes a brief review of the SDC's involvement in parliamentary support and outlines possible avenues to pursue for its future engagement.

The paper is based on a process of consultation and discussions within the SDC network on democratisation, decentralisation and local governance (DDLGN), including the network's face to face meeting in Pemba/Mozambique in 2015 and a presentation and debate at the regional governance network in the Western Balkans in 2015. It is also based on discussions with other organisations engaged in parliamentary support, specifically the UNDP and the NDI. The discussion process and this paper benefited greatly from a mapping of parliamentary support, which was commissioned by the SDC and carried out by Democracy Reporting International (DRI), and the expertise of Franklin deVrieze.

On a final note, the authors of this paper have not consulted other Swiss stakeholders such as the Parliamentary Services or the Human Security Division. At this stage, this is an internal undertaking and will be taken to the next level once there is more progress in combining parliamentary support with work on electoral systems and, possibly, political parties.

## 2. The SDC as a donor

Even though Switzerland's involvement in parliamentary development support is not in its infancy, it remains a relatively new area of work that has received increasing attention in the context of the growing awareness surrounding the political dimension of development cooperation. The internal mapping (see [Annex 1](#)) revealed that the SDC's engagement with parliaments is surprisingly manifold and widespread. For the period 2012-2020 (according to data entered in September 2016) the financial commitment of the SDC amounts to about CHF 50 million, with programmes in more than twenty countries. However, these figures are to be used with caution, because in many of the listed examples parliamentary support constitutes only one element of the overall programme.

Although this paper is about the SDC's work on parliamentary support, other Swiss actors should be mentioned as well. In this context, it is important to underline a tripartite agreement concluded in 2015 between the SDC, the FDFA Political Directorate's Human Security Division, and the Swiss Parliamentary Services on closer cooperation and coordination. This is happening in a context in which the Swiss Parliament is looking at intensifying and systematising its international cooperation, an undertaking that will be utilised to the mutual benefit of the three parties involved. And, last but not least, the Swiss Parliament's engagement in organisations like the Interparliamentary Union (IPU), or the engagement of its MPs for example in the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) should not go unmentioned.

Returning to the SDC, work with parliaments often occurs in contexts of conflict and fragility. Parliamentary projects – in the event that their remit goes beyond providing technical support to the administration of parliament and engaging with the MPs – can contribute to strengthening a culture of dialogue among members of the main parties represented in a parliament. This is the case for example in Cambodia where the parliamentary institute serves to foster know-how among all MPs regardless of their party affiliation and might contribute to peaceful dialogue.

The repeated boycotting of parliaments by major opposition parties like in Cambodia or Macedonia can impact on the credibility of programmes. It is therefore of great importance to stay in touch with these parties and keep them involved in joint activities so that any appearance of being less than impartial is avoided. Beyond impartiality, Switzerland's political culture of dialogue can also have an impact in these situations. As an illustration of this, see the personal testimony in [Annex 4](#).

Sometimes, fragile contexts demand approaches that cross national borders. A good example of this is a trans-national project in southern Africa, which tries to address joint problems like HIV/AIDS in a coordinated way between the relevant parliamentary commissions.

All in all, the SDC implements a considerable number of activities related to parliamentary support and has built up a solid basis of experience over time. Compared to international organisations, the SDC has already developed a certain profile in this area; however there is still work to do in order to sharpen this profile and to reach the point where the SDC's mark in this field is recognisable.

On the positive side, it seems that the SDC generally adheres to international standards and practice. This is not surprising, given the general orientation of the SDC's work on democratic governance. But the aim is to adhere in future also to two major international sets of goals – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development from 2015, particularly goal 16, and the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) contained in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (New Deal) from 2011. Two binding policy papers produced by the SDC should be mentioned here, which also set the tone for engagement with parliaments: the SDC Policy on Democratisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance<sup>1</sup> from 2016 and the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Strategy for the SDC's work in fragile and conflict contexts<sup>2</sup> from 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> Find the DDLGN policy paper here:  
<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/Policy%20Paper%20DDLGN%20en%20lignee.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Find the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Strategy here:  
[https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/deza/en/documents/publikationen/Diverses/peacebuilding-statebuilding-strategy-sdc\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/deza/en/documents/publikationen/Diverses/peacebuilding-statebuilding-strategy-sdc_EN.pdf)

Given the work done so far, it is important to remember the advantages the SDC brings to the table when discussing parliamentary support interventions either with local partners or with other donor agencies.

- The SDC is careful to maintain an approach of **political impartiality**. This helps create acceptance in the beneficiary country for the content of the parliamentary support activities, respect for the role of the SDC, and greater sustainability in the event of political changes regarding the balance of power in the country concerned.
- Given its vast experience in the area of decentralisation and local governance, the SDC is recognised as an important actor in this field and enjoys the **credibility** of a committed donor, especially with the executive, the administration, and thanks to its various approaches towards citizen participation. This is an asset that should not be underestimated when starting to engage with the legislative on sub-national levels.
- SDC governance and parliamentary projects have a clear **policy on inclusiveness** towards various disadvantaged groups, including women and youth.
- SDC governance programmes have longstanding **experience with** both raising awareness about **gender equality** and its importance in democratic governance and with specific programming to implement gender equality. Parliamentary support can greatly benefit from this experience.
- The SDC recognises that parliamentary support, like many other governance interventions, requires a **long-term approach**. A change in the political or parliamentary culture cannot be expected within a limited timeframe and a longer-term commitment is required for results to become sustainable.
- A specifically Swiss approach to parliamentary support includes some of the key elements of the political culture and know-how in Switzerland, such as inclusive consultation, **dialogue** and **consensus-based decision making** or balanced geographic representation and **multilingualism**.



### 3. International practice of parliamentary support

#### 3.1. General emerging standards and main actors

The international discourse on emerging standards for democratic parliaments has been ongoing for more than a decade now. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) made a first important step in this process in 2006 when it issued a set of Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures.<sup>3</sup> With this document as a reference, a number of other organisations<sup>4</sup> engaged in identifying good practices and creating their own, often regional benchmarks.

While the discussion will surely continue for some time, a number of standards seem to have already crystallised. They mostly refer to the key elements of a well-functioning parliament: procedural fairness, democratic legitimacy and representation, parliamentary organisation, and core legislative and oversight functions. In time, these standards are supposed to become the basis for self-evaluations conducted by parliaments when implementing reforms towards more **accountability** and **transparency**, the latter being key areas of interest for Switzerland's activities in the field of governance. It is interesting that the third core function of parliaments, representation, does not play a central role here.

Ideas are emerging on how parliamentary support should be shaped. It should be built around the specific context and circumstances of each parliament, looking at it as one part of a larger accountability system as much as looking into its inner workings. When working with parliaments, they must own the reform processes right from the actual conception phase. And last but not least, reform can only work if the activities are designed to make the reforms an integral part of the parliamentary system.

Parliamentary support is covered by an increasing number and variety of actors.<sup>5</sup> They can be categorised as follows:

1. **Multilateral organisations:** United Nations Development Program (UNDP), European Commission, World Bank Institute, OSCE.
2. **National governments** as bilateral donors: USA, UK, Norway, Sweden, Canada, France, Australia, Germany, Switzerland.
3. **National parliaments** as project implementers: US Congress; France (both houses), UK (both houses); Germany (both houses); Australia (national and regional parliaments).
4. **International parliamentary institutions (IPIs) and parliamentary networks:** European Parliament (EP), Interparliamentary Union (IPU), NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF), Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA), Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe (RSPC SEE).
5. **Political party foundations:** National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (NIMD), Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) etc.
6. **Non-profit institutions and professional organisations:** Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), Democratic Reporting International (DRI), Parliamentary Centre (PC), British Council (BC) etc.
7. **Academic institutions and universities.**
8. **Private contractors and consultancy companies.**

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<sup>3</sup> CPA (2006), Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures: A Study Group Report, London, CPA <http://www.agora-parl.org/sites/default/files/CPA%20-%20Benchmarks%20for%20democratic%20legislatures.%20A%20study%20group%20report%20-%202020.12.2006%20-%20EN%20-%20Standards.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Some of these organisations are: the Interparliamentary Union (IPU), the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF), the World Bank Institute (WBI), UNDP, the European Commission (EC) and the European Parliament (EP).

<sup>5</sup> See Global Mapping and Analysis of Parliamentary Strengthening Programs, a report commissioned by the SDC: [http://democracy-reporting.org/files/dri-global\\_mapping\\_and\\_analysis\\_of\\_parliamentary\\_strengthening\\_programs\\_04-2015.pdf](http://democracy-reporting.org/files/dri-global_mapping_and_analysis_of_parliamentary_strengthening_programs_04-2015.pdf)

**Donors** themselves are one important and partially problematic driving force for the parliamentary support agenda. A few – such as the USA or the UK and the EU – are powerful enough to actually influence the discussions in a meaningful way, and often in accordance with their own political agenda. Given this situation, the need for guidance on parliamentary support and of standards for the same is more than obvious. A few more recent attempts shall be described in the following.

A guide<sup>6</sup> on parliamentary support published by the European Commission in 2010 looks at a few areas that influence the design of parliamentary support programmes: the constitutional power of parliaments, procedural clarity and consistency of parliamentary rules, capacity and resources, experience and expectations, parliamentary culture, common practice and acceptable standards of behaviour, and last, but definitely not the least – politics.

An OECD/DAC paper on accountability<sup>7</sup> dedicates a chapter to parliamentary support. Building upon the abovementioned EC report, it makes concrete recommendations to donors (see [Annex 2](#)). The paper underlines the importance of context specificity, the importance of outcome-oriented design and especially the question of timing.

In line with these emerging standards, the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) agreed in October 2014 to a set of common principles for parliamentary support (see [Annex 3](#)). These follow the Busan principles<sup>8</sup> of aid effectiveness, especially regarding the call for inclusiveness, local ownership and contextualisation of parliamentary development support.

In light of these standards, this chapter will now take a descriptive look at the rules and institutional/legal framework as well as at the three core functions of parliaments, while trying to identify possible points of entry for parliamentary support.

## 3.2. Key support strategies

In general, and according to current international practice, parliamentary support typically includes the following dimensions: rules and legal framework in which parliaments are embedded in the respective country; the three main functions of parliaments (legislative, oversight and representative); and finally organisation and institutional development of parliaments. Thereby sub-national and supra-national parliamentary structures have specific needs. And last, but not least, the gender dimension is important as a cross-cutting issue as well as a theme in itself.

### 3.2.1 Rules and legal framework

The institutional and legal framework, in which a parliament is embedded, i.e. the constitutional processes (creation or reform of a constitution), and the creation or reform of framework laws resulting from the constitution, is an important area to ensure the legality and legitimacy of the parliament and its work. At the same time it already frames many of the incentives having an effect on the parliaments' impact.

Depending on the form of the state, i.e. whether it is a presidential or parliamentary democracy, a pluripartite or monopartite system, the positions of parliaments will differ. The basic structure and the role of parliaments as well as their key characteristics are usually defined in the text of the constitution. This includes the setting out of **parliamentary powers** in relation to other political institutions; the election or appointment of members of the other two powers (executive and judicative); the **organisation of parliament**, such as the number of chambers, MPs, size and number of districts, selection of the parliament administration, etc.; and the manner in which **basic functions** are to be carried out, such as the right to legislative initiative or a clarification of oversight functions.

In addition, the legal framework touches upon issues such as the electoral system, the parliament's role in the budget process, access to information, etc.

The internal rules of parliaments are the second set of guidelines that defines their work, efficiency and impact. Rules of Procedure define the day-to-day functioning of parliaments, i.e. how often they

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<sup>6</sup> European Union (2010), Engaging and Supporting Parliaments Worldwide: Strategies and Methodologies for EC action in support to parliaments, Brussels, European Commission.

<sup>7</sup> Accountability and democratic governance: Orientations and principles for development, OECD DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, 2013: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/governance/docs/For%20WEB%20Accountability%20and%20democratic%20governance%20Orientations%20and%20principles%20for%20development.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> The Busan Partnership agreement: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/49650173.pdf>

meet in plenary, how commissions work and how often they meet, how various functions are defined and the respective representatives are elected/appointed, etc. These rules are essential in shaping the role of parliaments as credible institutions and as instruments of good governance. Provided they follow the principles set out in the constitution and the legal framework – and also provided they function in line with the governance principles of effectiveness and efficiency, participation, transparency, accountability, rule of law, equality and non-discrimination – parliaments can be a main engine of democracy and good governance in their respective societies.

Providing support to the legal framework and to the rules and regulations for parliaments can address the following issues:

- Ensure parliaments are embedded in internationally sanctioned frameworks and standards( such as those of the IPU, OECD DAC, EU, etc.;
- Ensure adherence to governance principles of both framework and internal rules;
- Ensure that legal environment, e.g. electoral and political party legislation are conducive to a credible and functional institution.

### 3.2.2 Parliamentary functions

Supporting the three main functions of a parliament – **law-making**, **representation**, and **oversight** – offers a variety of entry points for a dialogue on possible support.

#### Law-making

The legislative function of parliaments consists in introducing legislation on their own, and in amending, approving or rejecting government proposals. The degrees to which these functions are exercised vary between the different types of parliamentary systems. The role of individual MPs, caucuses and parliamentary committees also vary.

But parliamentary legislative work directly impacts on the setup and functioning of other state institutions. The responsibility to deliver legislation in line with the needs of the country and ultimately the people is hence essential. Besides, in development contexts, parliaments play a potentially crucial role in the advancement of national development strategies and policies.

Very often, parliaments are faced with a strong executive and the main challenge is to reach and maintain the level of equal partner in the government setup. For this to be the case, MPs and parliament staff need to have specific skills: while parliamentarians need to be able to read, understand and review legislation, staff needs to be proficient in drafting and in understanding parliamentary processes. As MPs and staff are rarely thematic experts, external expertise needs to be crafted into the process, especially into the work of parliamentary committees.

Adhering to the governance principles<sup>9</sup> helps parliaments to properly perform their legislative function. In this context, one of the crucial elements of credibility is the openness of parliaments towards the participation of expert communities, civil society organisations (CSOs) and individual citizens or citizen groups. Therefore, the skillset of MPs and staff should ideally also include skills to conduct public hearings and consultations on draft legislation.

And last, but not least, another important and often overlooked set of parliamentary activities pertain to their legislative function: legislative impact assessment and post-legislative scrutiny. This is of specific interest to the SDC, as both elements are comparatively well developed in Switzerland and Swiss experience could be brought to bear in other contexts.

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<sup>9</sup> The governance principles followed by the SDC: effectiveness and efficiency, participation, transparency, accountability, the rule of law, and equality and non-discrimination.



Supporting activities for the law-making function of parliaments generally include:

- Development or strengthening of thematic parliamentary committee work;
- Training in legal drafting and legislative review for MPs, but especially for parliament staff;
- Development or strengthening of parliamentary research and analytical services, library and information systems;
- Creation of expert databases and engagement procedures for external expertise to the committees' work;
- Development of procedures (e.g. public hearings and consultations) to open up parliamentary work to relevant expertise, such as CSOs, universities, think tanks, etc. by way of partnerships, intern programmes, etc.
- Support to gender-sensitive legislation and policymaking.

Switzerland provides support activities for the law-making function of the parliaments in Mongolia and Nicaragua, where they receive support to improve participative legislative drafting processes. General support for the legislative function is offered in Laos, Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine.

### **Representation**

Regardless of the electoral system, parliaments are supposed to represent people. The closer they are to them, the more effective and credible the representation function is. Besides, parliaments' legitimacy stems from their ability to represent and articulate public concern. Another dimension is the representativeness of parliaments, i.e. the question whether their make-up represents society in its entire diversity.

To fulfil their representative function, parliaments as institutions need to be a neutral, inclusive and empowering venue for open and non-violent dialogue, discussion, and debate between often diametrically opposed opinions. Also, the institution's representative function can be enhanced by having a higher degree of citizen participation in parliamentary work. On the other hand, MPs themselves have to exercise this function by engaging in a permanent dialogue with their constituency in order to be able to voice citizens' needs and translate them into policies. The other side of parliamentarians' representative work is communicating their achievements to the citizens and, more importantly, delivering constituency services, such as solving problems faced by citizens or representing the interests and economic needs of their constituency.

Supporting the representation function of parliaments is typically channelled through the following types of activities:

- Increasing parliaments' representativeness by adapting the electoral system and potential power-sharing arrangements;
- Increasing the number and quality of parliamentary consultations over policy proposals and legislation;
- Introducing or enhancing services designed to assist the capacity of MPs to communicate with CSOs, the government, and other stakeholders;
- Constituency relations and constituency development, including economic and environmental dimensions, reporting and accountability to voters, as well as more and better quality consultations over policy proposals and legislation;
- Development or strengthening of outreach capacity, including communication strategies and tools (IT, media, etc.). This could include outreach offices, more people visiting parliament, mobile parliamentary information buses, parliamentary radio/TV stations, websites, social media appearances, etc.;
- Engagement in civic education activities on active citizenship and the role of parliaments.

Switzerland supports the Georgian Parliament with its representation function with capacity-building activities on gender equality for local councils; in Laos it provides general support to the parliament in terms of representation; and in Serbia, Switzerland lends support by strengthening parliamentary outreach to citizens e.g. via what are known as mobile committees.

## Oversight

This is the main accountability function of parliaments, which essentially covers the following areas: monitoring transparency and lawfulness of government activities, including the security sector; monitoring the implementation and impact of government policies; and financial accountability, i.e. financial oversight and budget scrutiny. It is an important and powerful function that enforces the balance of powers and is crucial for upholding the rule of law; at the same time it is also a good indicator of the state of a country's democratic governance.

In order to carry out this function, parliaments can make use of some of the following mechanisms: plenary or committee meetings, motions of censure, interpellations, parliamentary questions, ad-hoc inquiry commissions, etc. This means that there is a need to strengthen the effectiveness of committees and the committee system and to strengthen the staffing and organisation of these committees, their priorities and objectives.

Parliaments also receive reports from supreme audit institutions (to complement their own budget oversight and scrutiny) and ombudspersons. Hence, links between parliaments and state audit institutions and regulators who have the capacity to carry out the detailed scrutiny of spending in specific policy areas are essential. Sometimes, parliaments also have a say in the review of executive appointees.

And last, but not least, parliaments can play a central role in combatting corruption. This can happen implicitly by carefully and thoroughly exercising their oversight function. However, an explicit anti-corruption policy and objective can be useful.

Supporting the oversight function of a parliament is often directed at the following aspects:

- Access to (government) information by parliaments;
- Building accountability relationships with the government and links with state audit institutions and regulators;
- Building capacities among MPs and services to conduct inquiries into government work, including financial oversight and budget scrutiny, analysis of government expenditure, oversight of ministers and budget amendments; oversight of government performance in gender equality (in legislation, budgeting, etc.);
- Building parliaments' capacity to combat corruption and illicit financial flows;
- Dialogue with constituency on oversight activities, i.e. building elements of social accountability into parliaments' work;
- Improving the effectiveness (staffing, organisation, priorities and objectives) of committees and the committee system.

Swiss activities concerning oversight as a function of parliaments are underway in:

- Afghanistan, where provincial and district councils exercise oversight over the work of sub-national government administrations;
- Burkina Faso, where a group of MPs receives indirect support to investigate corruption;
- Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, where parliamentary committees receive support to exercise systemic oversight in the management of public resources in HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and food security.
- Serbia, where national and local parliaments receive support to strengthen their overall oversight function (inter alia).

### Organisation and institutional development of parliaments

Apart from the three core functions of a parliament, there are other aspects of parliamentary work that are important for its functioning and thus also offer points of entry for parliamentary development assistance.

A strategic planning process for the institutional development of parliaments and the strengthening of the parliamentary culture are sensitive issues. However, assistance can have a good impact here. One essential element of this parliamentary culture is the functioning of parliamentary committees, where MPs from different parties ideally come together and work in a cooperative, solution-oriented way.

A professional, efficient, well-equipped and impartial parliamentary administration is one of the crucial pillars of a functioning parliament. The administration fulfils several functions at the same time: it runs the day-to-day business of parliament; it puts know-how to the disposal of MPs in areas such as analysis, advice on legislative drafting; etc. Also, the administration manages and archives information and monitors whether parliamentary rules are respected. Archives and research facilities in particular need the appropriate infrastructure in accordance with current technological requirements.

A high level of knowledge is required to manage such diverse outputs as libraries, research units, communication products, own media outlets. The use of ICT has become crucial for the entire work of

Supporting the work and structure of the parliamentary administration can be directed to the following areas:

- Creation or enhancement of transparent, inclusive, gender-sensitive and independent recruiting, monitoring and evaluation, and management processes, including professional development and career structures;
- Creation of institutional development plans;
- Introduction of ICT systems for e-parliaments, including infrastructure, training, security systems, etc.;
- Capacity building/training to improve management and research skills;
- Creation or support of programmes and facilities for continuous staff on-the-job training;
- Creation or support of internal or external research centres, including their infrastructure;
- Cooperation programmes with civil society organisations, think tanks, research institutes etc.

parliaments.

Two specific Swiss activities at national level are currently under way in Macedonia and Cambodia, where the SDC supports the setting-up and functioning of parliamentary institutes. In the case of Macedonia, this included the construction of the actual physical infrastructure inside the Parliament building.

### 3.2.3 Multilevel approach

#### Sub-national parliaments

Parliamentary support does not only deal with national parliaments. The various sub-national tiers play an important role in exercising local governance. However, their situation differs considerably from that of national parliaments.

**Proximity to people.** Elected local representatives (typically councils) are the form of government closest to the people. Hence, the interaction and levels of participation would ideally be high. This is however not the case in many countries and decentralisation reform often neglects this dimension of political decentralisation.

**Dependence of central level.** The functioning of local governments as a whole very often depends to a high degree on fiscal transfers from the state budget and on policies decided at central level. Predictability of fund disbursement and inclusive policymaking are important elements of empowering the local level. Local councils have a potentially important role to play in defending the interests of local governments.

**Strong executive.** In many countries, the mayor is the strongest factor in local government, followed by the local administration. Local councils often lack experience, capacity and the means to properly exercise their role, especially with regards to oversight of the mayor's and the administration's work.

**Political interference.** Local councillors are often exposed to political interference and pressure on several levels, thus narrowing the room for manoeuvre available to them.

Supporting sub-national parliaments can be directed to the following areas:

- Enhancing the role, functions and power of local councils via municipal statutes beyond the minimum regulated by law;
- Enhancing the oversight capacity of local councils;
- Enhancing the outreach to and participation of citizens;
- Empowering local councillors in their position vis à vis mayors and the local administration.

The SDC tries to foster participative and consultative processes at sub-national levels and to open up parliamentary work towards citizens in general. Some programmes, for instance in Kosovo, are designed to assist local parliaments in performing their tasks better by including citizens in planning processes and asking their opinion about the implementation of services.

Working with associations of (local) MPs helps enhance the role of these organisations. The SDC does this for example in Armenia and Macedonia.

#### Supra-national structures

Many MPs participate in supra-national parliamentary assemblies and networks. Linking national parliamentary development goals to regional programmes may help increase awareness of common institutional challenges. Parliamentarians from the same region can engage more easily together than alone on sensitive or controversial issues. Good examples are the parliamentary assemblies of the Council of Europe, OSCE, or Pan-African Parliament. Examples for parliamentary networks are the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB), the Central African Parliamentary Network (RE-PAC) or the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC).

Providing support to supra-national parliamentary structures can take the form of regional capacity building programmes or contributions to already existing programmes.



### 3.2.4 The gender dimension

Good practices in gender mainstreaming already exist in many parliaments. In 2012, the IPU adopted a reference document, the Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments<sup>10</sup>. It acknowledges that the gender dimension also represents a value in itself and needs to be addressed accordingly – for example through the creation of policies and programmes for the political empowerment of women and for gender equality, advocacy and law-making to introduce compulsory quotas for women’s parliamentary representation, training for women parliamentary candidates, civic education and voter awareness raising on the value of women in politics and of gender-balanced institutions.

In order to be effective, these measures need to touch upon several levels and all functions of parliament. Parliaments are responsible for creating a legal and institutional framework for the goal of women’s political empowerment throughout society. This includes electoral regulations, legislation pertaining to the functioning of state institutions, political parties and civil organisations, the media, etc.

While gender is or at least should be a crosscutting theme in all SDC programmes, some of them ad-

Support for gender-related measures usually take the form of:

- gender legal reviews;
- promotion of gender-sensitive laws;
- induction and mentoring programmes on gender issues;
- awareness campaigns to counter gender stereotyping of candidates;
- outreach programmes for women and for the participation of women in parliamentary work.

dress the issue directly, like for example working with women candidates and local councillors in Bhutan and Armenia, or building capacities within local councils to address gender issues in Georgia.

### 3.3. New challenges for parliaments

The global inter-connectedness of the social and political sphere and the exponential increase of information available present new challenges to parliaments, which are rooted in a traditional form of representation within the confines of state borders, national politics and policymaking.

#### 3.3.1 Global issues

Parliaments today do not function in the isolated space of national states anymore. Most are part of regional or global networks and organisations with their own parliamentary assemblies. MPs are often members of both. The emergence of supra-national structures in particular presents a specific challenge to parliamentarians: decisions affecting their constituencies are no longer taken exclusively within the context of their own country, but increasingly on supra-national level. This is true for standard setting in a variety of networks and organisations, but progressively more also for non-binding decisions and binding legal acts. The challenge for MPs here is the vast amount of knowledge they need to have or have access to in order to be able to make informed and valid decisions. Good examples for this increasing impact of global issues on national parliaments (and here the sub-national levels are concerned, too) are the recently passed 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

#### 3.3.2 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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<sup>10</sup> IPU Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/action-gender-e.pdf>

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>11</sup> is the universal framework for global and national efforts to support human development in conjunction with environmental durability. It has been created with substantial input and participation by parliaments. Therefore, parliaments should play a central role in creating policies for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – for example by proposing and passing the respective legislation (including national policies and strategic plans), ensuring appropriate budgeting, receiving government reports, and by monitoring and reporting on its implementation. This involves close cooperation with the executive, but also with expert institutions and organisations and a number of other stakeholders.

### 3.3.3 Ubiquity of information

Support can be channeled towards mechanisms which parliaments can employ to assist with the implementation of the Agenda 2030, such as:

- Adopting and amending legislation;
- Making use of oversight mechanisms to steer government work towards implementation of the SDGs;
- Initiating parliamentary debates on issues linked to the SDGs, including information on targets & indicators, and the monitoring framework;
- Inviting sectoral experts to committee hearings;
- Creating cross-party discussion platforms or thematic caucuses on the SDGs;
- Seeking cooperation with civil society, the private sector and investors in the spirit of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda<sup>1</sup>;
- Participating in international networks and forums dealing with the 2030 Agenda;
- Exchange on implementation of and reporting on the SDGs among peers in regional and supra-national parliamentary structures.

The rise of the internet and electronic means of communication has exponentially increased the amount of information available to a broad population (given the basic right of access to the internet can be exercised). But beyond that, the combination of mobile technology, the internet and the emergence of social media have rendered this information ubiquitous. Parliamentarians - like a growing number of other branches and professions – are faced with the challenge of having to be up to date and digest the ever increasing amount of information available to them, but also with managing the increasing expectations e.g. from their constituency media to react in real time and on social media at an appropriate level of quality.

### 3.4. Agreed principles of international good practice

Providing support to parliaments is not new but has benefited from increased attention from the donor community in the wake of the latest waves of democratisation. Donor engagement however has had its shortcomings: it has tended to be short-lived, technical in its essence and has addressed the symptoms rather than working in a wider context on removing the causes of poor parliamentary performance. Also, there is no real track record of how donor involvement has led to improved parliamentary performance.

Over time, a process of rethinking the approach to parliamentary support emerged – the main reason behind the discussions on standard setting. There is growing consensus among donors, implementing organisations and practitioners that donor activities need to improve. These views build on key components of sustainable strategies for parliamentary development.

Based on current gaps and insights the development community came to the following conclusions as to what the key principles of a contemporary approach to parliamentary support are.

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<sup>11</sup> For an overview of the 2030 Agenda, see here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

### 3.4.1 Political answers to political issues

There is a clear need for a detailed analysis of the political context before designing any governance programmes, including parliamentary programmes. Formal rules (constitution, electoral system, rules of procedure, etc.) and individual and organisational capacity play an essential role in the effectiveness of parliaments. However, there are numerous other factors playing an important role here:

- **Contextual factors:** historical contingencies impacting on nation building, such as differences based on ethnicity, geography, religion, etc. and which continue to be played out within state and society.
- **Systemic factors:** the system of government and the *de facto* balance of power between executive and legislature, the nature and quality of political parties and the relations and linkages between parties in parliament, criminal and corrupt interests sometimes being shielded by parliamentary immunities, the existence of frameworks for relations between civil society and political parties/MPs, electoral politics and expectations of/from MPs.
- **Behavioural factors:** the nature of patronage politics and resources that key figures inside and outside parliament (e.g. president or executive, speaker, committee chairs) have at their disposal to influence the behaviour of MPs; the 'winner-takes-all' nature of politics and the short-term perspective this generates, as contenders and their supporters face a significant risk of being completely excluded from the spoils of office after the next electoral contest; widespread apathy and cynicism regarding public affairs, particularly the use of public resources.

Proposed activities therefore need to be **better contextualised**. There is no generic, one-size-fits-all approach to parliamentary strengthening. This is due on one hand to the variety of parliamentary structures, political systems, party systems, and electoral systems that exist. On the other, politics and parliaments are dynamic and require flexibility over time.

**Political Economy Analysis (PEA)** has become an essential tool. In fragile contexts particularly, but not exclusively, parliaments are often driven much more by informal power relationships than by formal rules.

However, often enough there still is a gap between the information received from conducting a PEA and its programmatic consequences. Although the information is there, donor involvement remains at a risk-averse level of purely technical capacity building. Often, this involvement depends strongly on the political agenda of the donor organisation, ignoring the contextual reality and thus widening the gap.

A way of closing this gap is to add a dimension of **policy advice and political coaching** to parliamentary programmes. Recipients of this could be the key players within a parliamentary structure: the parliament speaker/president, secretary general and committee chairpersons.

Parliamentary work takes place in a broader context of incentives and disincentives that need to be considered. If the **political context** does not provide **meaningful incentives for MPs** to play a significant political role, parliamentary strengthening projects are not likely to have an impact. Donors need to be aware that their own overall relations and policies towards a country impact these incentive structures.

In such a context, sometimes a well-designed parliamentary monitoring project may have more impact than support activities, by exposing critical weaknesses that run counter to a parliament's own presentation or a state's narrative of democratic governance. Thus, monitoring can create incentives for better performance.

### 3.4.2 Integrated systemic approach

Support for parliamentary development should be complementary to other governance efforts such as constitutional reform, electoral reform, role of political parties, justice sector reform, sound public financial management, anti-corruption programmes, civic education, media and gender programmes.

To have transformative impact, it is essential to invest in deeper democracy and embark on an integrated approach. This would combine technical and institutional support to democratic institutions (parliament, political parties, electoral management bodies and oversight institutions) with support to develop softer, behavioural skills.

### 3.4.3 Synergies with supporting electoral systems and political parties

As legislators, parliaments play an important role in designing and defining the framework in which electoral processes take place. They decide upon the number and type of actors involved in them – political parties and electoral management bodies. They have to strike a delicate balance, since the outcome of their decisions defines the parliaments' composition.

As accountability and oversight bodies, parliaments are responsible for securing financial means for the entire electoral process and its actors, as well as watching over their use. The same sensitive balance applies here. In addition, parliaments can hold election executives to account and exercise control over electoral management bodies.

It is therefore essential that parliaments are informed about international standards and various models in order to ensure the legitimacy of their decisions and the efficiency of the electoral systems they legislate for. It is equally important that they possess enough capacity to make strategic decisions based on compromise and in the interests of the entire country.

There are reasons to look for programmatic synergies in relation to providing support to parliaments and political parties:

- Parties often provide MPs with the main route to election and the means to a political career. Parliamentarians look primarily to their political party for **advice and guidance** on how they should operate or vote in parliament.
- Parties provide the **basis for parliamentary organisation**. While parliamentary rules organise the work, the parties determine the content of the discussions in parliament. The interaction between parties and parliament determines if parliament can operate smoothly.

The quality and character of political parties have a significant impact on the **effectiveness of parliament**.

- Strongly disciplined parties may mean that the parliament is entirely dominated by the ruling party or the executive;
- A multitude of parties with little discipline or internal cohesion makes parliament unpredictable and difficult to organise;
- Political parties usually organise their parliamentary caucus. This impacts on how policy positions are pursued in parliament and how manifesto commitments are implemented through the legislative process. A party's electoral appeal is based, at least in part, on its record in parliament.<sup>12</sup>

Given the level of interdependence, the **support given to parties and parliaments should be better linked**, also between donors if necessary, and **objectives and outcomes better aligned**. Parliamentary projects often tackle institutional deficiencies by building capacities to fulfil certain functions. That however is a limited vision. To understand a parliament's weakness, one needs to understand the power balance among parties. The **organisation of caucuses** could be a way of working with political parties in a non-partisan approach.

It is essential that political parties as major players in the political setup of a country be subject to PEA when a parliamentary support programme is designed, as well as during its implementation.

### 3.4.4 Long-term commitment

Because political change happens slowly, support to parliaments must be based on a multi-year commitment. Projects should seek to have a wider impact, and attempt to impact upon structures and procedures of the institution. For example: establishing a model of good practice in one specific parliamentary committee should be accompanied by dissemination and incentives for emulation across the

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<sup>12</sup> De Vrieze, F., Mapping and study on performance indicators for EU support to political parties, Brussels, Published by B&S Europe / European Commission, January 2014

other committees.<sup>13</sup> This way, sustainability has a better chance. This approach however requires a long-term commitment to the institutional development of that particular parliament.

### 3.4.5 Demand-driven donor support

The basis of any parliamentary support programme needs to be a thorough needs assessment produced in conjunction with the parliament concerned. However, parliaments are not monolithic entities, and mostly operate with a dose of patronage. Demand expressed by the leadership may thus not always reflect real needs. Programme planning should, therefore, bring on board the parliament's permanent staff (partisan and non-partisan), MPs, the political parties and other relevant stakeholders. A steering committee comprising a variety of interests represented in parliament ensures this type of inclusion.<sup>14</sup>

Programmes should be based on locally-owned strategic plans for parliamentary development. Bringing in interested stakeholders outside of parliament, e.g. CSOs, will strengthen this ownership.

### 3.4.6 Institutional approach

Because it is the easier option, donors often centralise support in the office of the speaker/president, thus minimising the ownership of the project. Effective parliamentary development requires openness for plural approaches, giving space to building skills of ruling party and opposition MPs, human resources departments and specialised committee clerks, civil society and media, etc.

A parliamentary development strategy must be the result of an inclusive and multiparty process and consider the absorption capacity of the parliament. It should be designed by parliament and include incentive structures to motivate MPs to live up to the development goals. And finally, **governments should not play a direct role** in approving, managing or overseeing parliamentary development programmes.

### 3.4.7 Target-group specific support

**Parliament staff** can receive training and transfer of skills from colleagues from other jurisdictions of the administration, or from external consultants. Some countries have a parliamentary training institute, enable internships abroad, or support participation in post-graduate programmes for parliament staff.

Support to **members of parliament** requires another approach. Knowledge building and skills transfer can be best conducted by fellow MPs (peer-to-peer support) or via executive knowledge programmes. Sometimes, peer-to-peer support for MPs can come from MPs from the same region. Sometimes and due to political reasons, MPs from a region further away would be more advisable. In both cases, the approach applied needs to be politically savvy and focus on the behavioural change of MPs rather than on skill transfer only.

### 3.4.8 Policy issues as entry point

MPs are often in need of information about specific policy areas. Hence, issue-based approaches provide useful entry points for parliamentary support. However, thematic activities should not be stand-alone efforts. Linking them to parliamentary work, such as preparing laws or policy papers, and including various parts of parliament (commissions, staff, research units) will increase their impact. Besides, channelling external thematic expertise into parliament only contributes to parliamentary strengthening if it helps enhance the parliament's use of the information and build its own knowledge hub in a sustainable way.

### 3.4.9 Risk and flexibility

There is little tolerance for risk in parliamentary project design. Many donors still focus on quick and tangible activities in the short term. Risk-aversion tends to favour focusing on form rather than substance, mainly ensuring that the resources have been allocated according to the right procedure and

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<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *How to Note on Parliamentary Strengthening*, Copenhagen, DANIDA, 2010, p. 6

<sup>14</sup> NORAD-commissioned Study by Chr. Michelsen Institute, p. 49



that the implementing agency complies with the accountability rules, rather than the impact of the work.

For a parliamentary support project to be successful, the risk of failure needs to be assumed. Whether the reasons are political or programmatic, it is often necessary to substantially adapt and/or to change the timeline for implementation in order to reach the goals of the programme.

The following elements are clearly needed:

- Allow risks but ensure regular thorough analysis and monitoring of the political context;
- Stay flexible to react to upcoming challenges and new opportunities;
- Define benchmarks (red lines) for breaching common principles and keep the flexibility to put the programme on hold if needed.

## 4. Recommendations for SDC support for parliamentary development

Based upon analysis commissioned by the SDC and exchange within the DDLG network, TU DDLG makes the following suggestions for future policymaking. They are meant to guide future SDC parliamentary support activities:

1

In a systemic approach, parliamentary support will **create stronger links to other, already existing governance programmes, or create** – where necessary and feasible – **specific complementary activities**.

Such activities can be: the electoral cycle, constitutional support and support for the political party system (political parties legislation, legislation to regulate party financing, inter-party relations by facilitating multi-party dialogue processes), but also support for civil society, media and possible efforts on civic education.<sup>15</sup>

In order to achieve maximum impact, it is essential to base such activities on a solid **Political Economy Analysis** (PEA).

2

**Parliamentary support will be coordinated with support for electoral systems** to ensure that it takes into account and is aligned with the electoral cycle, and with possible engagement in electoral system reform.

This can be done e.g. by including a component on parliament outreach to voters and citizens after elections, by looking for specific and innovative approaches such as strengthening the use of new media or social media in parliament communication, by support for platforms or other initiatives on electoral reform, etc.

3

**The provision of support to the executive on the development of sector policies and legislation will be complemented by thematic support for the corresponding parliamentary committee.** This shall also be reflected in the projects' results frameworks.

This is important in a two-fold way:

- it recalls the necessity to remind ourselves of the important role of parliaments in the SDC's sector programmes;
- it serves to strengthen the role of parliament. This is why it should also be beneficial to and include the parliament staff, parliament administration structures and a wide group of MPs.

4

**Inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches** are both values per se and guiding principles of the SDC's work. As mentioned above, they also contribute to the credibility of the SDC as a donor. The same principles will apply to working with parliaments. This might include working with women candidates and elected women representatives in a women caucus in parliament or working with young people and with economically, socially, ethnically, linguistically and religiously marginalised groups in order to ensure they have a voice as citizens.

5

**Supporting parliament outreach will include components dedicated to real citizen input and public participation in parliament's work, in debates and hearings.**

<sup>15</sup> Mapping and Study on performance indicators for EU support to political parties, published by the European Commission and B&S Europe, January 2014, Brussels, 135 p.

For example, when supporting the launch or redesign of a parliament website, all information must be available and the outreach must be comprehensive. There needs to be an opportunity for citizen to provide input: draft laws can be put on-line for citizens to comment on and their input would have to be validated.

For other innovative approaches that are further being developed in many parliaments see the *Global Parliamentary Report*<sup>16</sup>.

6

**Support innovative parliamentary projects.** In order to distinguish itself, the SDC will strive to support innovation in the work of parliament in all its facets.

This can be done in the following areas:

- Providing support to parliaments and CSOs working on parliament monitoring to jointly develop modalities and/or software to facilitate the sharing of information and its aggregation<sup>17</sup>.
- Working with constituency offices and integrating them e.g. in educational curricula.
- Encouraging mobile parliament committees going to their constituencies and discussing issues face to face.
- Legislative evaluation and post-legislative scrutiny is an area of specific Swiss experience and expertise that could be relevant in various contexts.

7

**Cooperation with the Swiss Parliamentary Services and the Human Security Division.** In the spirit and on the basis of a mutual agreement signed in 2016, the SDC will actively seek cooperation with the Swiss Parliamentary Services and the Human Security Division (HSD) in terms of tapping into Swiss experience with parliamentary work.

8

**The SDC will strengthen its international engagement in the area of parliamentary development.** This could involve more interaction with the main players in the wider parliamentary development community (main donors, UNDP, etc.); participating in cross-agency consultations, engaging with regional parliamentary cooperation initiatives,<sup>18</sup> considering support for knowledge building and knowledge sharing at global level,<sup>19</sup> considering support for long-term parliamentary staff training programmes,<sup>20</sup> and considering cooperation with and/or support for thematic parliamentary networks such as the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC)<sup>21</sup>, Climate Parliament<sup>22</sup> or Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.agora-parl.org/node/9005>

<sup>17</sup> For some examples see here: [http://www.agora-parl.org/sites/default/files/briefing\\_note\\_pmos\\_final.pdf](http://www.agora-parl.org/sites/default/files/briefing_note_pmos_final.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Study on Parliamentary Cooperation - International Parliamentary Institutions and Parliamentary Networks in the Western Balkans and South East Europe, published by European Commission, Brussels, February 2015, 166 p. [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/enlargement\\_process/2015-02-17-mapping\\_and\\_analysis\\_report.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/enlargement_process/2015-02-17-mapping_and_analysis_report.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> E.g. the portals [AGORA](#) and [IKNOWPolitics](#), the International Knowledge network of Women in Politics, etc.

<sup>20</sup> Mc Gill University, together with the World Bank, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Assembly and the Canadian Parliamentary Centre, have established a long-term parliamentary staff training programme: <http://www.mcgill.ca/continuingstudies/programs-and-courses/leadership/courses-and-workshops/parliamentary> and <http://joomla.parliamentarystrengthening.org/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://gopacnetwork.org/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.climateparl.net/home.do?lang=en>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.pgaction.org>

## 5. Annexes

### 5.1. Annex 1: SDC programmes or parts of programmes for parliamentary support 2012-2020 (according to data entry in September 2016)

Please note that a number of additional programmes are under development at the time of finalising this paper.

Country	Name of project	Brief description	Budget CHF	7F-number	Level	Implementer	Period
<b>Afghanistan</b>	National Institution Building Programme (NIBP)	Capacity building for provincial councils and strengthening of national institutional capacity	1,850,000	7F-05237.03	Provincial (with a central government component)	UNDP	2010-2014
<b>Armenia</b>	Improvement of the local self-governance system of Armenia	Empowering women local councillors; Capacity building for Union of Local Councils (ULC)	1,100,000	7F-08595.01	Local/National	GiZ, CoE, UNDP	2014-2018
	Democratic Governance Programme DG+	Direct support for women candidates for 2016 local elections	100,000	7F- 08868.01	Local	Bhutan Network for Empowering Women	2016
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	Support to strengthening the capacities of the civil society	Indirect support for group of MPs investigating corruption	400,000	7F- 04283	National	RENLAC	2013-2016
<b>Cambodia</b>	SUPIC - Support of the Parliament in Cambodia	Parliamentary institute	2,950,000	7F-08932.01	National	PIC	2014-2016
<b>Egypt</b>	Developing a new regulatory act for the Egyptian Parliament through a dialogue process	Consolidate democratic transition through transforming the procedures of the parliament from a single-party legislature into a	65,130	7F-08456.01	National	Regional Centre for Mediation and Dialogue	2014-2015

Country	Name of project	Brief description	Budget CHF	7F-number	Level	Implementer	Period
		pluralistic one.					
<b>Georgia</b>	Fostering local and regional development in Georgia	Capacity building for parliament committee in charge of decentralisation to ensure institutionalisation (planning, policy dialogue, policymaking)	200,000	7F-08528.01	National	UNDP	2012-2017
	Market alliances in the Lesser Caucasus region of Georgia (LCP)	Capacity building on gender equality for local councils	50,000	7F-06626.02	Local	Mercy Corps Georgia	2013
<b>Haiti</b>	Renforcement d'IDEA phase Unique (RI-DEAU)	Contribution to International IDEA's objectives, among which: Renforcer la capacité des principales institutions démocratiques, particulièrement le Parlement, les partis politiques et l'organisme de gestion électorale (technical capacity building and focus on quotas for women)	Part of a total of 1,500,000	7F-09638.01	National	International IDEA	2016-2018
<b>Kenya</b>	An example of several small-scale projects working directly with MPs, which will eventually emerge into a larger project: Pastoral Parliamentary Group (PPG) secretariat capacity support	To support communities in the pastoral areas to benefit from government support in effective service delivery through effective advocacy work and positive leadership by the PPG.	30,000	7F-08700.02.20	Regional (sub-national)	Dryland learning and capacity building initiative	15.11.2015.-30.06.2016



Country	Name of project	Brief description	Budget CHF	7F-number	Level	Implementer	Period
<b>Kosovo</b>	Decentralisation and Municipal Support (DEMOS)	Capacity building in financial management and stronger democratic checks and balances (incl. bias towards women councillors) of municipal assemblies	One element of a total of 12,000,000	7F-08473.01	Local	Helvetas	2013-2017
<b>Laos</b>	National Assembly Strategic Support Project	Increase National Assembly's capacity in areas of law-making, support service and citizen participation.	1,400,000	7F-08710.01	National	UNDP	2014-2015
	Citizen Engagement for Good Governance, Accountability and Rule of Law (CEGGA)	Outcome 2: Strengthened representative, legislative and oversight functions of the National Assembly	1,900,000	7F-07082.02	National	GiZ	2016-2020
<b>Macedonia</b>	MPI, support for the establishment and development of the Macedonian Parliamentary Institute	Establishment of a parliamentary institute	5,054,000	7F-06767.02	National	NDI	2009-2014
	Support for the establishment and development of the Parliamentary Institute	Establishment of a parliamentary institute	2,533,000	7F-06767.03	National	NDI	2015-2017
	Empowering municipal councils	Support for municipal councils to assume their oversight, representation and legislative role	4,000,000	7F- 08397	Local	UNDP	2014-2025
<b>Mongolia</b>	Capacity strengthening of local self-governing bodies	National training programme for local elected representatives	2,850,000	7F-08608.01	National/Local	UNDP	2013-2016

Country	Name of project	Brief description	Budget CHF	7F-number	Level	Implementer	Period
	Support for participatory legislative processes	Assistance to Parliament in improving legislative drafting processes through policy analysis and stakeholder dialogue and in the improved access of citizens to their elected representatives	235,000	7F-08183.01.02	National	UNDP	2013-2014
	Strengthening of representative bodies in Mongolia	Capacity building for subnational parliaments to being able to fulfil their representational and oversight mandate. Offering assistance for their engagement in meaningful deliberations in order to advance gender mainstreaming in national and local policies. Support for the Parliament Secretariat to develop new technical skills that will enable it to review the impacts and costs of new draft laws, and to monitor the implementation of laws.	3,135,000	7F-09639.01	National/Local	UNDP	15.12.2016-2020
<b>Nicaragua</b>	Apoyo al Fortalecimiento Institucional de la Asamblea Nacional de Nicaragua	Develop capacity of MPs on human development; support for Parliament on legislative work, strategy and outreach	60,000		National	SDC UNDP	2014-2015
<b>Niger</b>	Programme d'Appui aux Collectivités Terri-	Support for municipal and regional councils for inclu-	2,758,000	7F-09079.01	Local/Regional	In planning	2015-2019

Country	Name of project	Brief description	Budget CHF	7F-number	Level	Implementer	Period
	toriales (PACT)	sive and participative approaches					
<b>Serbia</b>	Strengthening oversight function and transparency of Parliament	Strengthen Parliament's financial oversight and outreach capacity	1,000,000	7F-08398.01	National (with local component)	UNDP	2012-2015
	Strengthening oversight function and transparency of the Parliament	The National Assembly and the local assemblies of Serbia strengthen their representative, oversight and law-making functions and fulfil their role as key institutions of a representative democracy	2,000,000	7F-08398.02	National (with local component)	UNDP	2015-2019
<b>Southern Africa (Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia)</b>	Strengthening social accountability and oversight capacity for rights-based public resources management in health and agriculture in southern Africa	Strengthen the social accountability roles of parliamentary committees to be more responsive, accountable and capable to exercise systemic oversight in the management of public resources in HIV/AIDS, SRHR and food security in the four target countries	500,000	7F- 08562.01	National (with transnational dimension)	The Partnership for Social Accountability (consortium)	2016-2019
<b>Southern and eastern Africa</b>	Strengthening the legislative in Africa through an institutional partnership with AWEPA	A travers un partenariat institutionnel avec AWEPA, la DDC contribue à promouvoir la paix et la stabilité dans les Grands Lacs en renforçant les capacités des institutions législatives et en soutenant les échanges entre parlementaires de la ré-	1,510,000	7F-08067.02	National	Central State Authority Other NGO int foreign north Swiss private sector	2016-2020

Country	Name of project	Brief description	Budget CHF	7F-number	Level	Implementer	Period
		gion, européens et suisses.					
<b>Tunisia</b>	Renforcement des capacités de la Radio Tunisienne dans son mandat de service public de proximité	Les citoyens tunisiens disposent d'une couverture équilibrée des débats politiques (Assemblée Nationale Constituante (ANC), campagnes électorales, travaux parlementaires)	110,000	7F-08451.01	National	Fondation Hironnelle	2012-2014
<b>Ukraine</b>	Strengthening the capacity of local authorities in Ukraine	Package of immediate measures in order to contribute to the strengthening of democratic institutions and to prevent further destabilisation	200,000	7F-0651 0.01	Local, National	CoE	2014-2015
	Support for decentralisation in Ukraine SOC priority theme: democratisation, DESPRO, Phase III	Provision of expertise, technical support to conducting various events as well as participation in a number of discussions, workshops, sessions and round tables of the Committee on State Building, Regional Policy and Local Self-Government	956,000	7F-04661.03	National	Skat	2013-2017
	Contribution to the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2015-2017	Communication in the decentralisation process between national, regional and local stakeholders; support in drafting legislation for the implementation of sectorial policies	2,400,000 Parliament only one of target groups	7F-09326.01	National	CoE	2015-2017

Country	Name of project	Brief description	Budget CHF	7F-number	Level	Implementer	Period
	E-Governance for Accountability and SDC priority theme democratisation, participation (EGAP)	Support formulation of national policies on e-governance and e-democracy; facilitate the adoption of best e-enhanced solutions and practices. Target, amongst others: Parliamentary Committee on Information and Communication	481,000	7F-08031.01	National	InnovaBridge Foundation	2015-2019

## 5.2. Annex 2: OECD DAC Principles for Parliamentary Assistance

The following principles are neither exhaustive nor comprehensive, but provide a possible starting point for guidance on parliamentary support projects:

- 1. Integrate objectives.** Support to parliamentary institutions should be integrated with wider efforts to support domestic accountability. Given that parliaments could and should sit at the centre of a web of domestic accountability, the interaction among parliaments and other institutions should be a key feature of support programmes. Support programmes should seek to increase the extent to which parliaments engage with outside institutions (such as the supreme audit institution), and ensure that other programmes designed to strengthen other mechanisms of accountability feed into and strengthen the parliament.
- 2. Ensure institutional change leads to behavioural change.** Ultimately, the effectiveness of the parliament will be determined by the behaviour of the individuals within it. The purpose of a support programme should ultimately be to change that behaviour so that parliamentarians understand their role in holding government to account, have the resources and capacity to use the relevant procedures effectively, but also have the incentive to perform their accountability function.
- 3. Understand the parliament's incentive structures.** Many support programmes assume that all parliamentarians would like a stronger parliament and that donor assistance will inevitably be welcomed. This is rarely the case. A politician's attitude is likely to depend on a number of factors, including party allegiance, whether their party is in government or opposition, whether it affects their chances of re-election, and how it affects their working conditions and pay. Support programmes need to understand the various incentive structures within a parliament, how they are currently shaping political behaviour and how they might be used to generate cross-party backing for the initiative.
- 4. Don't ignore political parties.** One of the strongest influences on behaviour in parliament will be the political parties. However, fears of "political interference" often discourage donors from engaging directly with parties. A stronger parliament will depend on politicians behaving as parliamentarians rather than simply party representatives. But, to encourage a less partisan role, programmes will need to understand and work with the political parties in parliament. Programmes should provide them with the opportunities and incentives to engage on a cross-party basis, without compromising donor neutrality. Promoting inter-party dialogue outside the parliamentary limelight is also an option for donors to strengthen co-operation, trust and confidence between political parties across the political spectrum.
- 5. Identify and address the causes of parliamentary weakness.** Programmes must be clear about the underlying causes of the parliament's underperformance. It may be immediately apparent that the parliament is poor at financial oversight, but support projects need to assess whether this is to do with the parliament's constitutional position, its procedures, resources, experience or political complexion. Most often, it is a combination of several factors. Even if projects cannot address all of them, they need to identify and understand them in order to have an impact.
- 6. Ensure parliamentarians own the problems – and the solutions.** Local ownership is a key tenet of the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (OECD, 2005), but is particularly significant in trying to foster political and behavioural change. Political change rests on the parliament recognising the benefits of adopting new patterns of behaviour and embedding them in the institutions, perhaps through rule changes or institutional reforms, so that they eventually become part of the accepted political culture. Given the complexity of getting change through a parliament, there should be 1) a widespread concern that parliament is underperforming; 2) cross-party agreement on the reasons for that weakness; and 3) some internal consensus that the project's objectives are the best way to address those problems. As such, parliamentary support projects need to be developed in partnership with key interlocutors within the institution, often politicians and staff.
- 7. Keep gender in mind in tackling parliamentary performance.** The under-representation of women in political decision-making structures has implications at many levels. Evidence shows that more women in parliament not only affects the tone and culture of parliamentary debate, but also the range of issues that are debated. Support to parliamentary institutions should be conceived within this context. There are two distinct, but inter-related challenges. The first is to increase the number of women elected to national parliaments and promoting



their influence within the institution. The second is to improve the impact of parliaments in developing policies that take into account their effect on women and men, and seek to address the imbalances that exist.

- 8. Design projects around outcomes rather than activities.** Critically, programmes should maintain a clear sense of what they are designed to achieve. Too often this obvious point is lost during the lifetime of a project. The initial analysis of a parliament might identify areas where support should effect change (for example, the improvement of financial scrutiny) and the means for delivering this (providing training and support to MPs and staff, additional resources and the creation of a budget support office, etc.). But frequently process and outcomes are confused with one another, with donors measuring activities (e.g. the number of training sessions, existence of a budget office) instead of the impact they were originally designed to have. An outcome-driven approach would need a much greater degree of flexibility in the design and delivery of programmes, requiring co-ordinated interventions in different parts of the parliament, designed to achieve the same end.
- 9. Set realistic objectives and a realistic timescale.** The conditions for achieving parliamentary change will vary between institutions, but donor-supported programmes need to work from the understanding that in most parliaments change will be haphazard and unpredictable, and that the interests of MPs will wax and wane over time. Parliaments are rarely amenable to neat designs or detailed reform plans, which has three implications for project design. First, it should not be assumed that specific activities will inevitably result in particular outcomes. Second, the scope for political change is often limited, and projects which seek discrete objectives will frequently be more effective than institution-wide reform. Third, political change happens slowly. At a Wilton Park conference in early 2010, one participant's comment resonated around the room when he begged the representative of a major donor organisation as follows: "What we need", he said, "is less money and more time."
- 10. Set the right indicators.** Once indicators are in place they tend to determine subsequent project activity – with the wrong indicators, projects do the wrong things. Project objectives may lend themselves partly to quantitative measures, such as the number of bills passed, the number of committee reports published, the amount of public evidence compiled or the number of questions asked of ministers. However, these do not capture the quality of oversight or accountability. Much is likely to depend on a more thorough form of analysis which involves stakeholder perceptions of performance through interviews and opinion polling of the public, civil society, the media and special interest groups. This sort of monitoring and evaluation needs to be built in at project design stage, and should be a regular and on-going feature of parliamentary support programmes. From this perspective, peer-learning and South-South collaboration could be good mechanisms to directly involve stakeholders and build up owned evaluation processes and shared indicators.
- 11. Get the timing right.** The timing of any project will be a key determinant of its success. For example, the best point to establish new ways of working is immediately after an election. At this point there is likely to be a large number of new MPs, the committees will have a new complexion and the government ministries they monitor are also likely to have changed personnel. Induction programmes should aim to establish new patterns of working and reinforce key principles. By the same token, working with MPs just before an election is likely to have very little effect, as most will be thinking about their election campaign – and many will not return.

### 5.3. Annex 3: IPU Common Principles for Parliamentary Support

The principles seek to improve relevance, sensitivity and effectiveness of parliament assistance. They provide a framework of cooperation between development agencies and parliaments towards “sharing a fundamental approach for the design and implementation of parliamentary support”<sup>24</sup>. Good communication and co-operation at local, regional, and global levels forms one base for the approach. The second base is the idea that the different partners’ roles are transparent, mutually agreed, and complementary. The framework is supposed to

- Reflect an effective, practical approach to support for parliaments.
- Take full account of the uniqueness of each parliamentary institution, while recognizing emerging international standards encompassing all democratic parliaments.
- Emphasize inclusive parliamentary ownership over its development and change process.
- Advance a culture of partnership, trust and mutual respect.

The following is a short enumeration of the principles<sup>25</sup>:

#### **General Principle:**

Effective parliaments are essential to democracy, the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, and economic and social development. Parliaments require access to excellent technical support in order to contribute fully in these areas

#### **Specific Principles:**

1. Parliamentary support partners are guided by the needs of parliament
2. Parliamentary support partners are attentive to the multiple, overlapping social, economic, and political contexts in which parliaments operate
3. Parliamentary support aims for sustainable outcomes
4. Parliamentary support is inclusive of all political tendencies
5. Parliamentary support is grounded in emerging international democratic parliamentary standards
6. Parliamentary support addresses the needs and potential of women and men equally in the structure, operation, methods and work of parliament
7. Parliamentary support utilizes locally and regionally available expertise
8. Parliamentary support partners and parliaments commit to excellent co-ordination and communication
9. Parliamentary support partners act ethically and responsibly

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<sup>24</sup> IPU (2014), Common Principles for Support to Parliaments, p.3 <http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/195/common.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> For the entire, detailed text: IPU Common Principles for Parliamentary Support <http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/195/common.pdf>

## 5.4. Annex 4: Macedonia: Lessons learned from the Parliamentary Institute Project

### Testimony by Lilian Kandikjan, National Programme Officer, Swiss Embassy

1. Taking an approach to fully integrate the Parliamentary Institute (PI) as part of the Parliament at the very beginning – thereby fully abiding by the national laws for civil service – and at the same time ensuring that quality and impartiality are not compromised, **requires significantly more time and significantly more resources on the side of the SCO and the Swiss embassy** compared to a standard project owing to the need for regular political discussions and negotiations, and owing to the potential effects it can have on bilateral diplomatic relations. Fully integrating services directly into a state institution from the very onset of the project has rarely been attempted before in Macedonia. As such the approach was novel both for the SDC and for the Parliament as a partner, and therefore, required a great deal of problem solving and the design of customised solutions (from the form and text of contracts between the SDC and Parliament to the design of the hiring process, and beyond). It was also necessary for both sides to learn a considerable amount about the other's detailed procedures. All of this took a long time and disproportionately more human resources at the SCO (about 40% of Head of Cooperation time and almost 100% NPO time) and at the embassy (Ambassador and his secretary) compared to a standard project of this financial size.
2. Working with parliaments in general regardless of the approach also seems to require much more time: compared to central government or local administration, Parliament is a body that does not have just one 'head', so everything needs to be done on consensus basis, which requires significant time to be invested in informing all parties involved in additional meetings between various MPs of the SC, additional informal meetings etc. And in the Balkans, where early elections and opposition activities can happen quite often, and where parliaments remain paralysed for up to half a year when elections occur, delays in the implementation of projects should be expected and calculated from the very beginning. From our experience, owing to the need to develop and adopt all the legal acts, various early elections and boycotts, and then a 6 months freeze due to irregularities in the carrying out of the first hiring cycle, and the need to follow the legally binding timeframes for hiring, it took us four years just to get the staff hired.
3. Working with parliaments requires implementers skilled in political discussions and lobbying in order to be able to move the reform agenda forward and with close contacts to the key political persons both incumbent and in opposition in the country. The selection of an adequate implementing partner that has specific lobbying skills beyond pure technical knowledge is crucial for project success. However, this comes at a price – when you hire an implementer skilled in negotiating and with good contacts with high-ranking people in the country, they usually also have their own political agenda and they are not easily steered towards adhering fully to SDC objectives. In addition, when you hire an implementer highly skilled in negotiating, they can also use this skill against the SDC/SCO in order to promote their own interests towards us – which calls for yet much more time and effort to be invested by the SDC/SCO in dealing with the implementer.
4. The regular informing of and support from international partners in the country that actively cooperate with the parliament is crucial to ensure that the SDC has adequate weight during critical moments when the parliament may try to take the easy way out and disregard core principles defined in the SDC Parliament partnership. Beyond the support we have received from international partners that had a stronger political weight in Macedonia (in our case the US, EU and the British), we believe that the EU Accession process and the annual monitoring by the EU in their EU Progress report – which paid particular attention to the institutional reform activities in the Macedonian Parliament and specifically commented on the Parliamentary Institute in each EU Progress report – played a key role in ensuring the continuous commitment of Parliament to reform.
5. Dealing with a sensitive and complex partner like a parliament in a country where further work is needed to establish full observation of democracy requires that the SDC assume a higher level of risk acceptance and readiness to fail, as well as the readiness to make bold decisions in such situations. Otherwise, our position would not be credible towards the partner and we would not be taken seriously. We are happy to have had the full support of WBA/Cooperation with Eastern Europe in making one such decision in this project – to freeze the project when there were problems with the first process of hiring – but also to resume the project once the partner specifically asked for such a continuation and fulfilled the conditions set by the SDC.