

# Making Aid Work: Towards Better Development Results

## Practical guidance for parliamentarians on the role of parliaments in development effectiveness

First Edition<sup>1</sup>

Commissioned by the [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) in collaboration with  
the [Capacity Development for Development Effectiveness \(CDDE\) Facility](#)

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In response to this demand, the guidance note was included in CDDE's first annual work plan, as a joint IPU-CDDE partnership. It has been circulated for peer review at each stage to ensure it meets its audience's needs: terms of reference, outline, first draft, second draft, resulting in the current "First Edition". This term underlines that this remains a living note that will continue to benefit from the feedback of the community of parliamentarians and those who work with them.

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Alessandro Motter, Senior Liaison Officer  
Inter-Parliamentary Union

Aidan Cox, Regional Adviser Aid Effectiveness  
UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok

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## A. Introduction

### A1. Who and what this guide is for

1. Parliaments and parliamentarians have a crucial role to play in ensuring that governments are accountable for the decisions that they make about how resources – including aid – are spent. The scope parliaments actually have to play this role varies widely. Some parliaments benefit from large resources and a legal framework that back them in playing their oversight and legislative role. Many other parliaments, especially in developing countries, lack resources or power to play an effective role in promoting development or the more effective use of aid. Parliamentarians themselves come from all walks of life and do not share the same knowledge on these issues, and there is no consensus among parliamentarians or across countries on the ways and means by which they can enhance oversight of development policies and how development resources are used.
2. This Guidance Note addresses some of these challenges and seeks to provide parliamentarians and those who work with them with a common understanding and clear guidance on what they can do to promote more effective and accountable use of aid in particular and of development resources in general.<sup>3</sup> It is especially relevant for countries in which aid forms a significant share of total development resources, and where parliaments and parliamentarians must be involved in the discussion of aid resources and their appropriation as part of their role in promoting good governance and accountability.
3. The [Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness](#), held in Ghana in September 2008, highlighted the important role that parliaments can play in promoting faster progress towards the [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs) by influencing national development strategies, aligning resources behind them, and ensuring these resources are used effectively and accountability. But how can this be done in practice?
4. This Guidance Note draws on concrete experience from countries across the world to provide some practical answers to this question, as well as signposts for further information. It is also intended to assist other development stakeholders who share a concern with reducing poverty and increasing public accountability, including those within the government bureaucracy, development agencies, civil society organisations and researchers.
5. Progress on achieving the MDGs and reducing poverty requires that countries make effective use of all the resources available for development, including domestic resources provided from taxation, revenue from state-owned enterprises, private investment, and aid provided by development partners. As the Inter-Parliamentary Union's 2008 [Resolution on Parliamentary Oversight of State Policies on Foreign Aid](#) makes clear, by holding governments to account for the use of aid and other resources, parliaments and parliamentarians can and should play a key role in ensuring that resources are spent effectively in support of their countries' development priorities.

### A2. How to use this guide

6. This Note does not suggest a blueprint for how parliamentarians should engage in aid and development effectiveness, but aims to offer guidance on what might be possible in a range of

<sup>3</sup> Aid is one type of development resource that a country has available to reduce poverty and promote economic growth. Aid refers to grants and loans (Official Development Assistance) provided by governments to developing countries to promote economic and social welfare. Other development resources include a country's own development resources (eg from tax or customs revenue) or domestic and foreign direct investment, for example.

contexts. The note is divided into five sections which can be read independently of each other. Section B, [Parliaments and accountability for development](#), sets out why parliaments matter in terms of the effectiveness of aid and other development resources and outlines a simple three-stage model of the policy process, running from preparation, through implementation, to review. This section argues that effective accountability requires the engagement of citizens and their representatives across all three stages of the policy cycle, with parliaments and parliamentarians playing a central role.

7. Section C covers [Parliamentary engagement in the policy process: what you can do](#), and sets out practical guidance for parliamentarians and parliaments seeking to engage at each stage of the policy cycle. For example, it looks at how parliamentarians have inputted into the formulation and preparation of policy through national development strategies, how they have helped to shape the implementation of policy through approving laws and budgets to implement national development strategies and how they have monitored and reviewed the impacts of policy, for instance by monitoring progress towards objectives set out in poverty reduction strategies or similar national development plans. In each country, the challenges and opportunities for parliamentarians to participate in these three stages will vary.
8. Section D, [Parliaments in partnership: What you can ask others to do](#), sets out what parliaments and parliamentarians can expect from others, particularly their own governments and donors. In order to ensure that aid and other resources are spent effectively in pursuit of poverty reduction, and that parliaments are able to engage across the various stages of the policy cycle, parliaments need to work with others, and engage in donor-government coordination. This section offers some practical examples of how parliamentarians can effectively work with donors, with a focus on budget processes, transparency and access to information, as well as mutual accountability and support to strengthen parliamentary capacity.
9. Section E, [Cross-cutting issues: Corruption and Gender](#), examines the contribution that parliamentarians can make to combating corruption and to improving gender equality, cross-cutting issues which are crucial to realising the MDGs and ensuring that aid and other resources are used effectively for poverty reduction.
10. Section F, [Conclusions](#), summarises the key roles that parliaments and parliamentarians can play in ensuring greater aid and development effectiveness. This section sets out the key messages from the Guidance Note, structured around the three core stages of the policy process.
11. Ideas on further reading are given in [Annex 2](#).

## B. Parliaments and their role in promoting accountability for development

### B1. Ensuring that aid and other resources contribute to development

12. Progress towards the MDGs and reducing poverty requires that countries make effective use of *all* of their resources – both the domestic resources provided by taxpayers, as well as Official Development Assistance (ODA), more commonly referred to as aid, provided by development partners.<sup>4</sup> This Note has a special focus on **what parliamentarians can do to ensure the maximum development benefits from aid resources. ODA accounts for a significant share of budgetary resources in developing countries particularly in the least developed**

**Table 1 – Top ten aid dependent countries**  
(Data is being sought from OECD DAC)  
[ODA as a percentage of national budgets]

<sup>4</sup> This note focuses primarily on the use of domestic and external aid resources, though it is recognized that private investment plays a critical role in a countries development, and parliaments have a role to play in promoting a favourable context for private investment and integrity in its use.

*B2. Accountability matters – domestic accountability matters most*

countries (LDCs). Even when ODA is relatively small, it can act as an important catalyst for other development flows. Making aid work better inherently helps improve decision-making about development all around.

13. In many developing countries, parliaments are sidelined from discussions regarding ODA, resulting in low accountability of how aid is used and, in turn, in poor results. Parliamentarians can work to enhance the effectiveness of aid in two related ways. Firstly, by being active participants in demanding accountability by being involved in **dialogue and processes that specifically relate to aid, seeking ways** to ensure it is utilised in ways that meet the actual needs of the people.
14. Secondly, parliamentarians have **key roles to play in national processes and systems of planning, budgeting, anti-corruption, and audit**, among others. These processes influence the effectiveness and impact of *all* development resources, *both* aid and domestic resources. The better these work, the easier it is for decision-makers to allocate all resources so as to make the strongest contribution to reducing poverty and achieving the MDGs. Accountability is strengthened when parliaments and parliamentarians participate in and help strengthen the country's national development policies and the country's budget cycle (preparation, allocation, monitoring). While the degree to which parliaments are currently able to exercise these roles varies dramatically from country to country, Section C provides practical examples from countries where progress has been made.

**B2. Accountability matters – domestic accountability matters most**

15. There are many different types of accountability for aid or development effectiveness. *Domestic* accountability concerns the relationship between the governed (citizens) on whose behalf aid is managed, and those who govern (government) who manage and make use of aid. Mutual accountability refers to the relationship whereby donor and recipient governments hold each other accountable for their aid commitments. A wide range of actors are involved in both kinds of accountability, with parliaments as a crucial link between citizens and the executive (known as vertical accountability) as well as a key institution in holding the executive to account (known as horizontal accountability).
16. Domestic accountability exists not only in aid recipient countries but also in donor countries. Governments in donor countries, for instance, are accountable to their own taxpayers for the results achieved by the aid that they provide to developing countries – and their parliaments sometimes play an important role in ensuring this, for instance through the scrutiny role played by parliamentary Select Committees such as the [UK's International Development Committee](#). The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness emphasises the importance of a range of accountabilities in contributing to aid effectiveness.
17. Despite considerable progress in a number of countries, poverty reduction and sustainable development remain a major challenge for many countries. A vast amount of money has been spent on aid and serious questions have been asked about its effectiveness. In recent years, donors and aid recipient countries have sought to respond to these challenges. This culminated in the adoption of the [Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness](#) in March 2005 at a High-Level Forum organised by the OECD DAC (known as HLF-2). This Declaration established commitments for both donor and recipient countries to ensure more effective aid in a context of greater scaling up of aid, by 2010. The Declaration sets out five principles on aid effectiveness (see Box 1).

**Box 1: The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness – Five core principles**

- **Ownership:** partner countries exercise leadership over their development policies, strategies and coordinate development actions;
- **Alignment:** donors base their overall support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures;
- **Harmonisation:** donors' actions are more harmonised, transparent and collectively effective;

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▪ **Managing for development results:** managing resources and improving decision-making through improved performance assessment frameworks;

▪ **Mutual accountability:** donors and partners are jointly accountable for development results.

Full text available at: <http://www1.worldbank.org/harmonization/Paris/FINALPARISDECLARATION.pdf>

18. The Paris Declaration also specifically highlighted the importance of parliamentary oversight. In paragraph 48 of the Declaration, partner countries resolved to “strengthen as appropriate the parliamentary role in development strategies and/or budgets”. Three years later, at a follow-up High-Level Forum in Accra, parliamentarians were invited to participate alongside government, donors and CSOs, and parliaments were recognised as having a broader role to play in aid effectiveness and in overall development effectiveness. The [Accra Agenda for Action](#) implies that parliaments are the key actors in effecting domestic accountability for aid, as shown in its emphasis on the importance of recipient governments – and donors – committing to work with and open themselves up to scrutiny from parliaments.
19. In recent years, the commitments made at Paris and at Accra have also highlighted the importance of mutual accountability. Mutual accountability for aid concerns the two-way relationship between aid donors and aid recipients. Effective mutual accountability for aid entails identifying, monitoring progress towards, and meeting reciprocal commitments on the delivery and use of aid. Mutual accountability may take place at country and/or international levels, through a wide variety of mechanisms (see Section D4 for more on this). In practice, a recent study found that only seven countries had functional national mutual accountability mechanisms and that even in those, changes in behaviour by donors were uneven (see [ECOSOC 2009](#)). Both domestic and mutual accountability requires that there be transparency and good information about the resources available, how resources are spent, and the results achieved. This should allow those people affected by policy and spending decisions to hold to account those making the decisions – directly, or indirectly through parliamentarians and other intermediaries.
20. Discussions about accountability for aid have tended to focus on the relationship between donors and recipient governments, with donors keen to ensure that aid is spent in pursuit of poverty reduction and is not lost to corruption and mismanagement. However, donor agencies have tended to be more sensitive to their governments’ marching orders than to the requirements of recipient governments. This uneven relationship between donors and recipients needs to be corrected, with donors demonstrating greater accountability to recipient countries. If resources are to be spent in ways that respond to country priorities and in ways that strengthen democratic country ownership, it is critical that domestic actors, including parliaments, hold the government and donors to account for how aid and all development resources are used. This Note therefore seeks to highlight the opportunities for parliaments and parliamentarians to contribute to strengthening domestic accountability mechanisms and, where possible, mutual accountability mechanisms.

## B3. Accountability, parliament and the policy cycle

21. Strong domestic accountability requires that parliaments and others – including local level elected representatives and institutions – engage throughout the policy-making process and the associated stages of the budget cycle. Parliamentary engagement in policy is important since in many countries much of the aid received is not included into the national budget.<sup>5</sup>
22. The policy process can be thought of as a cycle involving three stages: (1) formulation and preparation of policy (e.g. a properly costed national development strategy), (2) implementation of policy (e.g. approving laws and budgets to implement a national development strategy), and (3) monitoring and reviewing the impacts of policy (e.g. monitoring progress towards poverty reduction

<sup>5</sup> Some suggestions for further reading on parliaments and the budget process are given in Annex 2.

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targets). The cycle is driven by the executive branch of government, but for it to be most effective and accountable, citizens and their representatives need to be engaged at all stages, with parliament and parliamentarians playing a central role. To improve accountability, parliaments and parliamentarians must be able to engage effectively in relation to budget processes, at each stage of the policy cycle, ensuring that there is a close integration of decision-making about policy and decision-making about spending.

23. Parliaments in many developing countries – as well as in some developed countries – face a number of challenges. The existing organization of political power and/or legal frameworks may fail to give parliaments adequate powers to influence the policy process so that, for example, Standing Orders may allow debates to be cut short or budget rules may limit the capacity of the legislature to amend expenditure bills. Parliaments may not have the capacity or resources to play their roles effectively, for example, if the parliamentary secretariat does not have an independent budget or staff. The executive – and even some donors – may prefer to exclude parliaments from discussions about how aid should be managed and spent. And citizen-voters may feel that their member of parliament ought to work primarily to deliver development to their community, rather than engaging in the policy cycle and holding the executive to account. However, there is an increasing recognition that parliaments need to be actively involved in the policy process, if the challenges of making aid more effective are to be met.
24. In 2008, the [Accra Agenda for Action](#) identified a number of challenges to realising aid effectiveness, and it recognised that parliaments – along with other actors including civil society organisations – have important roles to play in meeting these challenges (see Box 2). Within the Asia-Pacific region, the [Hanoi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness](#) acknowledged the importance of donors and the Government of Vietnam providing comprehensive budget reports to legislatures and citizens, while Cambodia's [2008 Aid Effectiveness Report](#) makes clear reference to the need to enable the National Assembly to take an active role in policy dialogues on aid and development, and to strengthen the capacity of key committees in monitoring and oversight of aid.

### Box 2: The three major challenges for aid effectiveness identified in the Accra Agenda for Action

#### 1) Increasing country ownership

Country ownership is key. Developing country governments will take stronger leadership of their own development policies, and will engage with their parliaments and citizens in shaping those policies. Donors will support them by respecting countries' priorities, investing in their human resources and institutions, making greater use of their systems to deliver aid, and increasing the predictability of aid flows.

#### 2) Building more effective and inclusive partnerships for development

In recent years, more development actors—middle-income countries, global funds, the private sector, civil society organisations—have been increasing their contributions and bringing valuable experience to the table. This also creates management and co-ordination challenges. Together, all development actors will work in more inclusive partnerships so that all our efforts have greater impact on reducing poverty.

#### 3) Delivering and accounting for development results

Achieving development results—and openly accounting for them—must be at the heart of all we do. More than ever, citizens and taxpayers of all countries expect to see the tangible results of development efforts. Signatories to the Accra Agenda will demonstrate that their actions translate into positive impacts on people's lives. Governments, along with their aid agencies, will be accountable to each other and to their respective parliaments and governing bodies for these outcomes.

## C. Parliamentary engagement in the policy process: what you can do

25. Parliaments and parliamentarians can and should engage at all stages of the policy cycle, from preparation, to implementation and review. Through their law-making and budget approval and oversight functions, parliamentarians can directly enhance domestic accountability for the use of aid and other resources. They can also indirectly enhance domestic accountability, for example, by

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facilitating the engagement of other key actors such as civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media through committee hearings and direct constituency engagement. Utilising parliamentary processes to shed light on public policy and budget processes and provide a forum for a more diverse range of community voices to be heard helps to open up the policy process, promoting accountability and a stronger sense of country ownership.

26. Although there is huge potential for parliaments to play a bigger role in aid policy, currently, in many developing countries, parliaments and parliamentarians lack the capacity and resources to engage effectively in the policy process. Also, as mentioned earlier, parliamentarians often find themselves marginalised from a policy process that is dominated by the executive and by donors. Recognising these constraints, but with the aim of pointing to what might be possible, this section sets out practical guidance and examples of how parliamentarians have been able to contribute at key points in the policy cycle.

### ***C1. Policy preparation and formulation – meeting the country's development needs and representing citizens' interests***

27. The first stage of the policy cycle is that of preparation, planning and formulation. As representatives of the people, with a direct link back to their constituencies, parliamentarians are particularly well-placed to use their on-the-ground knowledge of the issues facing their constituents to inform and shape policy responses. Facilitating a connection between the people and the executive government is a key strength of parliamentarians.
28. A country's developmental priorities are usually set out in a few key documents. These might include plans for making progress on the Millennium Development Goals, Poverty Reduction Strategies, national development strategies, and sectoral plans health or education, for instance. In practice, many of these plans may be developed by recipient country executives with donors' support, with few or no inputs from parliamentarians. But as the examples in this section show, parliaments can and should engage in the production of these various plans, to ensure that the interests of the citizens that they represent are adequately taken into account. If parliaments fulfil this role effectively they will help ensure that development results are more responsive to the most vulnerable and those otherwise excluded from both the planning process and the benefits of development.
29. If aid is to be effective in terms of poverty reduction, then it is essential that the processes through which decisions are made about how to spend aid and other resources take account of the needs and interests of the poor. To allow for good decision-making about how resources should be spent – particularly as part of the budget process – and to enable accountability about how resources are spent, it is essential that policy plans are realistic, taking into account the country's current and predicted future revenues. All plans must be properly costed. Ideally, budget proposals need to be provided within a multi-year expenditure framework, which many countries still fail to produce. Budgets should also be presented to parliament in good time, for example at least two-months before parliament has the task of approving the budget.

#### **Preparation and planning: Key messages**

**Proactively engage the executive and donors in inclusive consultations:** Parliamentarians and parliamentary committees should make a concerted effort to engage in consultations with the executive and its relevant ministries, and donors, around national development strategies and plans for meeting the Millennium Development Goals, as well as around sector-specific plans. Some countries have established Parliamentary Committees on the MDGs which have provided a mechanism for parliamentarians to influence the design of MDG-based national strategies and the implementation of budgets behind MDGs. In other countries, where the executive has not been receptive to such consultation or dialogue, parliamentarians have taken the initiative, holding their own consultations and conducting their own analysis.



**Explore partnerships with civil society organisations, where appropriate:** Parliamentarians and parliamentary committees may find it useful to work with civil society organisations such as universities, NGOs, faith-based organisations, traditional governance bodies, the private sector and the media, to access useful information and resources, to encourage the representation of a greater number of views, and to assist in analysing the budget in detail.

### C1.1 Pro-actively engage the executive and donors in inclusive consultations

30. Very often, the executive and donors formulate development plans without any input from parliamentarians. To counter this, parliamentarians should actively seek to engage in consultations. In practice, they seek to identify useful entry points for engagement, such as Donor Roundtables, or annual donor planning consultations. They should also seek to specifically identify and work with receptive actors (eg. particular donors, particular ministries or particular individuals). As long as the executive and donors continue to undervalue parliamentary input, parliamentarians should also proactively work to persuade other actors of the value that parliamentary engagement can add to this stage of the policy process.
31. Working as an individual parliamentarian and/or through Parliamentary Committees to input into the production of various development plans, such as national development strategies or plans for meeting the MDGs, can help to ensure that citizen's interests are properly represented. At the very minimum, parliamentarians can use various moments during plenary debates (e.g., Question Time, in the Westminster model) to ask probing questions about the status of key development policies and plans. Following major aid meetings or donor conferences, parliamentarians can also ask that agreements be tabled for discussion or can question governments on how they intend to implement agreed commitments. In Tanzania, for example, parliamentarians have been involved in consultations with government bodies and donors to develop and set priorities for the National Strategy for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty, and have been able to emphasise that such strategies must be based on sound data that reflects regional variations in poverty (see Box 3).

#### Box 3: Parliament setting priorities (Tanzania)

The involvement of Tanzania's Parliament in setting priorities for the national development strategy exercise resulted in marked savings for the country. During the strategy discussions with Members of Parliament (MPs), education was often perceived as the fundamental element in poverty reduction. The MPs agreed strongly that this was the area in which they had the greatest positive policy impact. Expansion of basic education in Tanzania has been dramatic, driven by the elimination of school fees as part of the national development strategy. The net enrollment of children aged 7 to 13 was 58.5 percent in 2000, this rose to 85 percent in 2002, combined with recruitment of 7,300 new primary teachers and building of 13,000 new classrooms. This success story reflected MP mobilization efforts in their constituencies: the proposed budget was three billion shillings, but the work was completed for 1.7 billion shillings due to the ownership and oversight of Parliament.

Source: Staphenurst and Kroon, 2008

32. In many developing countries, donors – usually with the executive – will have established sectoral working groups. These may be run by a lead Ministry, but can involve non-government stakeholders as well as members of the civil service. Parliaments should investigate whether they might be included in such groups, emphasising to donors and the executive what parliaments and parliamentarians can bring to the process. Zambia provides an example of parliamentary engagement at the sectoral level, where parliamentarians worked directly with donors to facilitate their engagement in consultation for the health sector. In that case, increased parliamentary engagement was enabled through the creation of a Parliamentary Forum bringing together Parliament and the various UN agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF and the WHO) active in the health sector, with the UN agencies providing technical support to Parliament to facilitate its engagement in the planning process. In Ghana the Parliamentary Committee for Health has been involved in the consultation process to develop an annual plan and budget for the Ministry of Health. Where engagement in sectoral working groups is considered by parliament or the executive as operating at too detailed a level, an alternative is for the relevant parliamentary commission to be represented at a more strategic level in the regular cross-cutting or "macro" level government-donor meetings.

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These often take place every few months, and may feed into a national development forum or similar event every year or two.

33. Although parliaments may continue to find themselves excluded from this stage of the policy process, facing major legal, technical and political obstacles to enhanced engagement, nevertheless, there may still be opportunities to demand greater consultation and engagement of parliamentarians in development plans. The example from Ghana in Box 4 sets out one approach which appears to have been successful, with parliamentarians' persistent demands to engage with the National Development Planning Commission eventually paying off. The commitments made in Paris and Accra provide political support to push for greater parliamentary engagement.

#### Box 4: Parliamentary persistence pays off (Ghana)

Parliament – in collaboration with CSOs – has enhanced its engagement with the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), the government agency responsible for poverty reduction. There were no clear mechanisms for Parliament to make an input into the production of the country's development plans, but Parliamentary committees including the Parliamentary Committee on Poverty Reduction have persistently demanded the right to engage with the Commission. As a result, Parliament was able to provide greater input into the production of Ghana's Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II.

Source: Draman et al, 2007

### C1.2 Explore partnerships with civil society organisations, where appropriate

34. Parliamentarians can find it useful to work with others outside parliament. For example, parliamentary engagement in the preparation and planning phase of the policy process has, in many cases, been strengthened by working with civil society organisations (CSOs), such as NGOs, universities, faith-based organisations, traditional institutions, the private sector and the media. That said, it is important to be clear that parliamentarians are elected to represent the breadth of their constituents' interests, whereas CSOs often focus on particular social, political or economic interests. As such, careful thought needs to be given to whether, when and how it makes sense for parliamentarians to collaborate with CSOs.
35. There can be a number of benefits from such collaboration. Firstly, CSOs can provide parliament and parliamentary committees with useful information and resources. For example, in the Philippines, parliamentary engagement with the Center for Legislative Development provided useful information which helped Congress to assume greater responsibility in its dealings with the executive and in the process of policy formulation (Alternative Budget Initiative, 2008). To successfully work with CSOs, it is important to identify the types of information and resources which will be of most use to Parliament and then to identify the key CSOs who may be able to help provide that information. Think tanks and research institutes can also be useful sources of information in many countries.
36. Secondly, parliamentarians can help CSOs to engage more effectively in holding the executive to account, encouraging the representation of a greater number of views. This might involve proactively encouraging expert organisations to participate in parliamentary committee hearings, strengthening constituency office outreach, or holding constituency hearings on key development issues, so that CSOs and others can present their views and so that these views can be considered by parliamentarians.

#### Box X: Utilising parliamentary committees to discuss national security policy in Solomon Islands

In Solomon Islands, in July 2008 Parliament referred the international security support (known as Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands – RAMSI) led by Australia and New Zealand to the Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee for inquiry, review and report. The inquiry was considered a landmark in terms of scrutiny and review of RAMSI's intervention. The inquiry was the first formal review of RAMSI undertaken by the National Parliament and provided the first opportunity for the general public to voice their opinions and concerns about the intervention and the related aid programmes being implemented by RAMSI. The inquiry extended over almost one and a half years and involved 35 public hearings and hundreds of witnesses across the country. It reported back to Parliament in November 2009.

37. Most development policies come with a price tag attached. During the planning and formulation stage, parliamentarians may find it useful to work with CSOs in relation to the budget aspect of such

## C1. Preparation and planning – representing citizens' interests

policies. This might mean opening up consultations on the budget to CSOs and others. For example, in Cambodia, in 2006, a first consultation conference was held in relation to the national budget, organised by Parliament and involving CSOs (Parliamentary Centre, 2007). This can help to generate debate and discussion over the budget. Or it might mean drawing on the expertise of particular CSOs in analysing and interpreting the budget. In the Philippines for example, an innovative approach called the Alternative Budget Initiative has done much to open up the budget process and enable wider participation (see Box 5). Where parliamentarians may lack access to resources, time and capacity to analyse the budget in detail, working with CSOs in this way can be useful.<sup>6</sup>

### Box 5: An Alternative Budget (Philippines)

In 2007, the crafting of the budget led to the establishment of a partnership between a number of parliamentarians (4 senators, 4 representatives of minority parties, and 1 representative of a party that was part of the ruling coalition) and 22 civil society organizations led by the *Social Watch* Philippines, which took the lead role in analyzing the budget for 2007 and in proposing alternatives. This exercise officially crystallized the term "alternative budget". The partnership, which initiated legislator-civil society partnership for better allocation for social development, centers on the concept of people's participation in the budget process. The Alternative Budget Initiative (ABI) uses the MDGs as its framework of analysis to propose corrective funding for glaring deficiencies in achieving targets. Gaining substantial media coverage and promoting incremental policy gains for the poor, the ABI consortium for 2009 currently amounts to a 60 non-government organizations. In the current health budget, out of the 11 ABI proposals four were approved, including the increased allocation of provisions for a pool of 60 resident physicians, health promotion, and formulation of policies, standards, and plans for hospital and other health facilities. Furthermore, it has now become an essential tool in budget advocacy, giving all stakeholders a sense of ownership of the proposals.

Source: Alternative Budget Initiative, 2008

<sup>6</sup> See the [International Budget Partnership](#) for excellent resources on how parliaments and CSOs can work together to make budgets work better for poverty reduction.

## C2. Policy implementation, legislation and budget scrutiny – responding to citizens' demands

38. The second stage of the policy cycle is that of implementation. For parliaments, implementation primarily entails debating, amending, passing or rejecting enabling legislation, including the Budget Bill, which is drafted to serve the interests of citizens. There are a number of ways in which Parliaments and parliamentarians can engage in this stage of the policy process, including through debate and/or amendment of Bills, close scrutiny of proposed budget allocations, including through specific sectoral analysis, or oversight of proposed external loans. Parliamentary committees can be used to oversee the implementation of government and/or development partner policies, programmes and expenditures. In many countries, the requirement that Parliament approve the national budget represents the clearest point of parliamentary control over the policy cycle. In practice, however, the ability and willingness of Parliament to exert its power in this way is often severely limited.

### Implementation, legislation and budget scrutiny: Key messages

**Scrutinise, debate and pass legislation:** Parliamentary Committees and Parliament as a whole should scrutinise, debate and pass legislation for poverty reduction and progress on the MDGs that respond to citizens' interests.

**Exercise effective budget oversight:** Parliamentary Committees – including Committees with a focus on Budgets, Finance, Public Accounts and Poverty Reduction – and Parliament as a whole should conduct effective oversight of budget allocations. Parliaments should also consider establishing independent Budget Offices and collaborating with CSOs with technical expertise on budget monitoring.

**Scrutinise foreign loans:** Parliamentary Committees and Parliament as a whole should seek to involve themselves in the scrutiny and approval of foreign loans and donor assistance programmes.

**C2.1 Scrutinise, debate and pass legislation**

- 39. When a government plan is developed, legislation will often be needed to underpin its implementation. For example, a gender and development policy may require legislative reform to ensure gender equality (e.g. equal pay legislation so that women are paid the same as men for a similar type of work, or legislation extending inheritance rights to women). Or a policy designed to improve working conditions in the informal sector may require legislative changes in labour/wage laws, business regulations or property rights. Law-making is a key function of a legislature and parliamentarians should use their powers in the chamber to ensure that legislative outcomes are pro-poor and serve the interests of their citizens.
- 40. Significantly, in some countries, rather than waiting to legislate on specific sectoral issues, parliament has actually taken action to respond to the MDGs as a whole. For example, in Mongolia, the Parliament passed a resolution adopting Mongolia-specific MDGs (see Box 6). Mongolia – along with other countries including Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, Kenya and Nigeria – also provides a good example of a country where a specific Parliamentary Committee, sub-Committee, or caucus was established to scrutinise the policy process as it relates to the MDGs and poverty reduction and to act as a focal point for parliamentary engagement with poverty reduction. As well as playing a formal scrutiny role in relation to legislation, MDG-specific parliamentary structures can play an important role in keeping an eye on the entire policy process in relation to poverty reduction and alerting other relevant parliamentary bodies and parliamentarians as a whole to important developments that they might otherwise miss. Such focal points can also become useful resources where parliamentarians can access expertise and knowledge on issues around aid and development.
- 41. Not all countries will have the resources – or the political will – to establish a specific MDGs parliamentary committee. Indeed, such committees may not be necessary in those parliaments where the MDGs are being mainstreamed effectively throughout the existing committee structure. Nonetheless, consideration can be given to tasking one or more existing sectoral parliamentary committee with oversight for issues relating to the MDGs, poverty reduction, the national development strategy, development partner programmes or donor loans. With most countries requiring parliamentary approval of budgets, it can be useful to make the Parliamentary Committee that deals with budgets and finance – or a sub-committee of that committee – the focal point. For instance, in Senegal, the Budget and Finance Commission of Parliament, and specifically its President, has become the focal point for Parliamentary engagement with the process of implementing the national development strategy (Draman et al, 2007).

**Box 6: Legislating for country-specific MDGs (Mongolia)**

In April 2005, the Parliament passed a resolution on Mongolia-specific MDG targets, with an additional MDG 9 on strengthening human rights and fostering democratic governance. The resolution made provisions for the allocation of necessary resources in the annual budgets. In 2005, the Parliament Standing Committees were asked to ensure the implementation of MDGs. In order to ensure attainment of Mongolia’s MDGs, the Parliament under its Standing Committee on Social Policy, Education, Culture and Science has set up a MDG sub-committee and a Steering Committee assigned to review implementation progress, define indicators, ensure use of international statistical methodologies, and develop and approve new measurable indicators where necessary.

Source: Government of Mongolia, 2007

- 42. Budget analysis and oversight can also benefit from being viewed through a human rights lens. During the annual budget process and debate, consideration could be given to whether sectoral budgets promote the realisation of rights (e.g. right to health, right to education). Money could also be allocated to specific human rights bodies and/or for human rights activities. For example, funds could be dedicated to training of police to ensure that they do not unfairly discriminate against minority communities and that they properly handle domestic violence complaints. The recommendations from UN treaty bodies could also be used as a basis for prioritising budget allocations.
- 43. Another overarching perspective in the budget process has to do with gender. The special role that women play in development is not generally reflected in the budget document and in aid allocations

in general. Parliaments and parliamentarians must work most urgently to help change this. (See Section E2 for further guidance.)

### C2.2 Exercise effective budget oversight

44. Parliamentary engagement in budget decisions is relatively widespread, if not always of the highest quality, in both developing and developed countries. In some countries the constitution gives Parliament clear powers not only to approve the budget but also to amend it, while others can approve or reject any mid-year changes to budget allocations (as in Uganda, for example). In other countries – even in presidential systems where one might expect the legislature to be relatively powerful in terms of budget approval – constitutional reform may be required to provide parliament with the formal powers necessary to ensure effective parliamentary engagement at this stage of the budget and policy process. Formal powers do not always translate into real budgetary power, but in their absence the marginalisation of Parliaments from the budget process and the policy cycle is likely to continue.
45. In recent years, there have been some encouraging examples of progress in strengthening the budget powers of some legislatures. In Vietnam for instance, Parliament’s ability to engage in the budget process has been strengthened by the passing of a new State Budget Law, with the establishment of the State Audit of Vietnam as an independent organisation, and the involvement of Provincial Peoples Councils in the budget process (Cuong et al, 2008). Progress has also been made in Cambodia, where the legislature has improved oversight of the budget process and budget allocations and their alignment with the National Strategic Development Plan (Parliamentary Centre, 2007).

#### Box X: Improving budget oversight in Vietnam and Cambodia

Insert box

46. Most legislatures will usually have at least one existing parliamentary committee with a focus on budgets, finance, public accounts or expenditures. Such committees – alongside sectoral committees where they exist – can play a key role in strengthening parliamentary engagement in budget oversight. In the Asia-Pacific region, parliamentary committees in Sri Lanka have become increasingly vocal in demanding more transparency and accountability in the budget process to prevent the transfer of development funds (International Budget Partnership, 2008). Where possible, key money committees should be chaired by opposition MPs, as this can help to increase their independence and improve their ability to exercise effective oversight. In Tanzania, for example, a move to make opposition MPs chair of the all-important Public Accounts Committee appears to have paid dividends – alongside training provided by the World Bank Institute and others (World Bank Institute and the Parliamentary Centre, 2002).
47. As part of the effort to exercise more effective budget oversight, Parliaments should also work more closely with their countries’ accountability institutions, in particular, supreme audit institutions, but also ombudsmen and anti-corruption commissions. The role of supreme audit institutions is to provide independent and objective analysis to ensure that public funds are used effectively, that financial management is sound, that administrative activities are properly executed and that information on financial management and administrative matters is communicated to public authorities and the general public. Likewise, Ombudsmen and anti-corruption commissions are tasked with identifying weaknesses in administration and political processes, many of which result in poor financial management. The outputs produced by these institutions – institutions that are expected to be above the political fray – can help Parliaments, parliamentarians and in particular Public Accounts Committees to ask governments more searching and better informed questions about the management of aid and other public resources. The Paris and Accra commitments include

## C2. Implementation, legislation and budget scrutiny – responding to citizens’ demands

a focus on greater donor alignment with country systems and this implies strengthened roles for national accountability institutions.<sup>7</sup>

48. Recognising the special role that donor funds play in many developing country budgets, parliaments might also consider establishing a specific oversight committee for Official Development Assistance. In the Philippines for instance, a new Congressional Oversight Committee on Official Development Assistance has been established to ensure that Parliamentary oversight extends to aid as well as non-aid resources. If such a committee is to do its job effectively, it needs to be provided with good information both about aid that is provided on-budget and aid that is provided outside the budget framework. A partial picture of aid does not allow Parliament to exercise effective oversight.

### **Box X: Promoting budget transparency through access to information legislation**

Effective oversight requires that parliamentarians have easy access to up-to-date information on the policy and legal options which they are considering. To this end, parliamentarians are often given relatively strong rights to compel disclosure from the executive. For example, parliamentary committees can compel the production of documents during committee inquiries. Members can also use Question Time to request information from the government. In the context of poverty reduction, parliamentarians need to be proactive in seeking out information on aid flows – from government if not directly from donors. It is important that information is also disclosed regarding any conditions attached to aid, so that it is clear to Parliaments how much aid is received, from whom and for what purpose. To support all this, legislatures should consider adopting comprehensive freedom of information legislation with a view to making aid, budget and other government information available to all. In India and Mexico for example, freedom of information laws require the proactive disclosure of budget information on a regular basis.

49. In a number of countries, the capacity of Parliament and its relevant Committees to engage with budget implementation and approval has been significantly enhanced by the establishment of non-partisan, independent Budget Offices that have the technical capacity to analyse the budget and to help Parliament and parliamentarians to understand what can be complex technical documents. Parliamentary Budget Offices are traditionally more common in developed countries, but they are also increasingly common in developing countries. Budget Offices come in different sizes (in terms of staffing and operating budgets) and may be endowed with different degrees of authority. Even where resources are limited, small parliamentary budget offices can be established with just a few members of staff, who may initially work primarily with outside think tanks for additional support. Currently, such offices exist in a range of developing countries, including Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, the Philippines and Uganda. Several other parliaments are currently considering the establishment of such offices, including Liberia, Nigeria, Thailand and Vietnam (AWEPA, 2008; Tsekpo and Hudson, 2009a and 2009c).
50. The typical mandate of a parliamentary Budget Office is to review and analyse draft annual executive budgets, final accounts, and public funds management plans, estimate costs of bills introduced by Members, perform economic forecasts and revenue estimates, and evaluate government programs (see [here](#) for more information on the approach taken in Korea). The Budget Office may produce regular reports, studies and issue briefs for the whole of Parliament or relevant Committees, but it can also respond (confidentially) to requests from individual Members of Parliament for more in-depth analysis into specific subjects. Depending on overall capacities, the Budget Office could also organize seminars and workshops for parliamentarians on the budget process. In order to ensure objective and non-partisan analysis, it is important to consider the appointment of the director and location of the unit in relation to the parliamentary structure, as this may affect the independence of the Office.

### **Box 7: Strengthening parliamentary engagement in the budget**

#### *Strengthening the legal framework:*

- Reviewing legislative powers to provide Parliament with the legal basis for meaningful engagement with the budget process. This might include legal reforms that require the Executive to gain parliamentary approval of budgets and mid-year changes to budgets.

<sup>7</sup> See the [World Bank’s site on Supreme Audit Institutions](#) for further information.

- Enabling legislative input during medium-term budget policy formulation.
- Building capacity for engagement:*
- Expanding the role of Parliamentary Committees such as those with a focus on Budgets, Finance, Public Accounts and Poverty Reduction so that they can better call for transparency and ensure oversight.
  - Establishing independent budget research capacity – a Budget Office – to provide individual MPs and committees with research into the nation’s finances and economy, research into estimates of the government (i.e. planned expenditure), and estimates on the financial costs of any proposal on issues over which parliament has jurisdiction.
  - Broadening access to information, including information on aid flows from donors and of conditions attached, so that it is clear to Parliaments how much aid is received, from whom and for what purpose. Parliamentarians should also seek to input into negotiations, for example over loans, where certain conditions may impact on citizens’ interests. Adopting adequate freedom of information legislation is also an important part of making aid information available to all.
  - And, to make budgets gender sensitive, taking a gender perspective on the budget (see Section E).

51. As with the preparation and planning stage of the policy cycle, collaboration with CSOs can play an important role in strengthening Parliaments’ ability to engage in an informed manner in relation to the budget. Parliamentary Committees and Groups can engage with CSOs around particular sectoral issues or to gain additional insights when preparing budgets. CSOs can be helpful in providing additional information and resources to inform the budget process, particularly for pre-budget hearings and reports. Holding public meetings allows for greater citizen engagement and participation in the budget process, as well as facilitating a broader debate about the budget. Parliamentarians should seek to encourage these forms of engagement, including through working with CSOs. There are a number of examples where this is already working effectively.
52. In Malawi, for instance, the Budget and Finance Committee has worked closely with CSOs and the media to strengthen its engagement with the budget process, through the production of pre-budget reports and budget commentaries, and by holding public hearings as well as traditional committee meetings (Draman and Langdon, 2005). Similarly, in Uganda, CSOs such as the Uganda Debt Network have for many years engaged with Parliament in order to improve budget processes and have more recently participated in public hearings (de Renzio et al, 2006; Eberlei, 2007); while in South Africa IDASA has for a number of years done much to support Parliament’s engagement at the budget approval stage and beyond (Shapiro, 2001).

### C2.3 Scrutinise foreign loans

53. Aid can be provided in many forms, including in grants or as loans. Some donors provide the majority of their aid as loans. These loans often entail a number of conditions, which need to be carefully scrutinised – including by Parliament. Therefore, beyond passing legislation supportive of national development strategies and MDG plans, Parliaments can also play an implementation role through their scrutiny of the affordability of loans as well as of conditions attached to such loans to the government, and taking legislative action as appropriate (i.e., approval, modification, or rejection). When scrutinising loans, it is particularly important that all the conditions involved and their likely impacts are analysed before loans are agreed.
54. Whenever the legal framework allows it, introducing legislation to demand parliamentary involvement in loan negotiations or final approval is another action that parliamentarians could take to strengthen their oversight role. Parliaments can also take decisions that may influence future loan agreements between government and donors in the long run, such as decisions on safe debt ratio, aggregate level of loans and their structure, as well as the ration of annual repayment.

**Box 8: Examples of Parliamentary Scrutiny of Loans**

To date, only a few countries recognise a role for parliament in approval of loans. This is the case in Costa Rica, in Ghana where the Finance Committee has the task of approving loans, and in Mozambique where a Parliamentary Administrative Tribunal has this responsibility (Parliamentary Centre and the World Bank Institute, 2002; World Bank, 2007). In the Asia-Pacific region, bills have been passed in the Philippines requiring prior congressional approval of loans, as well the establishment of a Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council to ensure that the views and concerns of Congress about inter-governmental negotiations are channelled to the executive (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2005).



### C3. Review – monitoring outcomes and conducting effective oversight

55. The third stage of the policy cycle is that of review; monitoring the impacts of policy to assess its effectiveness in terms of achieving the MDGs and reducing poverty, so that the executive can be held to account on citizens' behalf. Monitoring also helps draw important lessons that can inform the preparation and development planning within the next policy cycle. Parliaments have struggled to play an effective role in terms of monitoring the impact of policy, but there are a number of examples that Parliaments might learn from.

#### Review and monitoring: Key messages

**Plan to monitor results:** Parliament and parliamentary committees should insist – in the preparation and implementation/approval stage of the policy cycle – that plans and strategies for poverty reduction include efforts to monitor results, for example through the preparation of reports or through the attendance of ministers and officials before committees for testimony.

**Access progress reports and review these in a Parliamentary Committee:** Parliament should insist on being provided with regular progress reports on the implementation of plans and budgets, with such reports including information about results.

**Engage with citizens for community-level monitoring:** Parliamentarians and parliamentary committees should engage citizens in monitoring results at a community level, through their constituency links and through engagement with activities such as 'Citizens Report Cards' or 'Community Score Cards'.

#### C3.1 Monitoring results: access progress reports and review these in a parliamentary committee

56. Parliamentarians can play important roles in pushing for a greater focus on monitoring the impacts of aid and other development resources. This might mean pushing for fuller financial reporting and better financial information from both government and donors. Parliaments can also call for access to regular and timely progress reports on the implementation of plans and budgets, with such reports including information about results. Monitoring the impact of aid and other resources involves examining a wide number of factors, including policy, actual expenditure against original allocations and value for money. For example, in the education sector, this might mean looking at levels of enrolment and attendance against school investments. In such a case, while the ministry of education may have primary responsibility for producing relevant monitoring reports, including statistics demonstrating impact, parliamentarians can call on government ministers to table such monitoring reports in the legislature, so that they can be publicly available for review and discussion.
57. The Paris Declaration specifically emphasises the importance of monitoring results. The Declaration commits recipient countries to "establish results-oriented reporting and assessment frameworks that monitor progress against key dimensions of the national and sector development strategies". Donors committed to rely as much as possible on these frameworks. At various stages in the budget cycle, particularly around budget execution and progress reporting phases, parliamentarians should request access to these frameworks for measuring results. Timor-Leste's new Budget and Financial Management Law provides a good example of a legislative measures which specifically empower parliament with stronger powers to review progress.

#### Box X: East Timor financial management reforms strengthen aid oversight

Timor-Leste's 2009 Budget and Financial Management Law provides a clear definition of the powers of the Government and Parliament on matters concerning budget and financial accountability. Among other things, the new law supports the establishment of the High Administrative, Tax and Audit Court (already nominally provided for in the Constitution). With respect to the budget process, the budget documentation submitted to Parliament for scrutiny must include a list of donor-funded programmes and projects, though the executive does not submit progress reports on how these were implemented and the results achieved. In response to this, parliamentarians have consistently demanded progress reporting from the executive on donor funded programmes under the 'combined sources budget'.

58. Parliamentarians can engage in monitoring the impact of policies put in place to make progress towards the MDGs, and/or to implement national development strategies. In practice, parliamentarians will usually need to proactively demand progress reports from the executive on



### C3. Review – monitoring outcomes and conducting effective oversight

programmes and projects funded by donors. Parliamentarians also then need to ensure that they systematically access and scrutinise progress reports, reviews and other evaluations produced by their governments and donors. There are a number of examples where parliaments have called for better reporting. For example, in Ghana the Finance Committee of Parliament has pressed for fuller financial reporting (Parliamentary Centre and the World Bank Institute, 2002); and in Tanzania, parliamentary scrutiny of the Auditor General's reports on health-care spending has been enhanced by inputs provided by the Health Equity Group of CSOs.

59. In some countries, national MDGs reports are produced regularly, providing an update on progress. Such reports can be tabled in draft for consideration and input by relevant parliamentary committees and/or they can be tabled once finalised to trigger parliamentary debate on progress and potential policy ideas for improvements. Focussing on the MDGs, in Mongolia a Parliamentary Committee and associated sub-Committees have been established to oversee progress (see Box 6, above). In so doing, the policy cycle continues to evolve – with monitoring feeding into new or revised planning and implementation.
60. In many countries, there is actually a legal obligation for the executive to report annually to parliament on development issues. For example, in Mozambique, the Constitution requires that Parliament is provided with an annual report on progress in relation to the country's national development strategy (see Box 8). Ideally, these annual reports should be timed so that they feed into parliamentary discussions of the following year's budget, to ensure that parliamentary monitoring also has budget implications for government spending, ensuring the closer integration of decision-making about policy and decision-making about spending. Parliamentary engagement in this manner has – as recent experience in Vietnam suggests – the potential to strengthen the monitoring of outputs (Graves, 2008).

#### **Box 8: Results-based parliamentary engagement in Mozambique**

Mozambique has integrated the monitoring and evaluation of its national development strategy into existing government mechanisms, improving the performance data included in the constitutionally-mandated annual reports presented to Parliament that serve as the poverty reduction strategy annual progress reports. The National Assembly, which approves the annual budget, receives regular reports on budget execution and implementation of the poverty reduction strategy. Reporting links budget execution and implementation progress. The Administrative Tribunal reports directly to the National Assembly on budget execution, use of public funds, and public administration.

Source: World Bank, 2007

### **C3.2 Engage with citizens for community-level monitoring**

61. In a number of countries, parliamentarians and parliamentary committees have established initiatives to conduct monitoring of the performance of national development strategies at a community level, taking advantage of the links that they have with their constituencies. This can be a particularly valuable way of engaging citizens in this review stage of the policy process, and ensuring that their experiences feed into subsequent policy revisions. For example, in Benin and Mali, community monitoring has been carried out by the countries' Parliamentary Networks for Poverty Reduction ([African Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network](#), 2007). In Ghana, community-based hearings on the poverty reduction strategy and its impacts have been initiated by the Committee on Women and Gender and by a sub-committee of the Public Accounts Committee (Draman and Langdon, 2005; see also Box 9).

#### **Box 9: Community-level monitoring of progress on poverty reduction in Ghana**

Monitoring of poverty reduction results has emerged as a priority for Ghanaian MPs. A special Committee on Poverty Reduction has been formed to consider and report to Parliament on the content, focus and adequacy of the poverty reduction strategy. The Committee draws its membership from five standing committees which specifically address poverty issues. Through a Community Monitoring Program on Poverty Reduction, which is administered by the Institute for Policy Alternatives, Tamale, Ghana, parliamentarians are monitoring the attainment of poverty reduction results at the constituency level. There are also plans for local government officials to carry out short-term secondments to Parliament in order to better understand the operation of the legislature. Ghanaian MPs are also engaged in the Capacity Strengthening Program on poverty and expenditure management with support from the Canadian Parliamentary Centre.

The Centre for Budget Advocacy, an NGO, is working with District Assemblies to bring citizen's voice into the budget formulation process both at district and national levels.

Source: Sharkley, 2006

62. Participating in, or facilitating, approaches such as 'Citizens Score Cards or Report Cards' or 'Community Score Cards' can be one way of engaging with citizens for community-level monitoring. Citizens Score Cards or Report Cards provide feedback on user perceptions of public services (for example, on their quality, efficiency and the extent to which they met users' needs). Information is commonly collected through questionnaires. Community Score Cards – with information commonly collected through focus groups – also allow for local level monitoring of services, projects and potentially government administrative units by communities themselves.<sup>8</sup>. Where parliamentarians have access to Constituency Development Funds, they may wish to use such funds to underwrite the costs of such constituency-level monitoring.
63. The Canadian Parliamentary Centre has been delivering training in Africa to parliamentarians and parliamentary staff on community monitoring tools such as these. Following this training, participants from Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe conducted pilot projects in their respective countries focusing on a range of issues including education, literacy, HIV-AIDS, and micro-credit programmes. These pilot projects provided opportunities for parliamentarians and their staff, alongside CSOs, to identify how effective government-funded projects had been, as perceived by a given community (African Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network, 2007).
64. Another concrete way in which MPs can help monitor the results of development projects, particularly those donor-funded projects that have yet to be brought on budget, is by conducting field visits to assess how projects have performed. These visits could also be organized jointly with local civil society representatives and donors. A performance evaluation could look at the project's own standards of success (for example was it on time, were there cost overruns and so on) as well as, most critically, whether the project met the needs of expected beneficiaries. This is an approach that has been taken in a number of countries. In Nigeria, for example, members of the Committee on the MDGs of the National Assembly undertake such field visits on a regular basis (see the [Nigerian National Assembly's MDGs Committee website](#) for further information).

<sup>8</sup> See the [Africa](#) and [East Asia and the Pacific](#) affiliated networks for social accountability for more information and toolkits.

## D. Parliaments in partnership: what you can ask others to do

65. This Guidance Note focuses primarily on the ways in which parliaments, parliamentary committees and parliamentarians can help to make aid more effective by engaging at various stages of the policy process. But, if they are to do this effectively, governments and donors need to play their part too. This section of the Guidance Note briefly outlines the sorts of requests or demands that parliamentarians can make of others, with a particular focus on the executive and donors.
66. The executive will commonly lead on the relationship with donors in a given country, but parliaments also have roles to play. Parliaments need to strive for partnerships with donors which contribute to greater aid effectiveness. Partnership entails fulfilling your own responsibilities while asking or demanding that others fulfil their responsibilities too. Working with donors in this way – and ensuring greater mutual accountability – can be particularly challenging, as donors in practice may have greater power and influence (as they are able to provide aid). Moreover, donors are also accountable to their own taxpayers and parliaments, which can undermine or skew their accountability to recipient countries. Understanding these potential tensions, and finding ways to work with donors that take account of these differing accountabilities, is therefore key.

### D1. Include parliaments in the relationship between the executive and donors

67. Parliaments and parliamentarians should make the case that one of their key roles is to represent their citizens' interests. Recognition of this by the executive – and by donors – would go a long way to addressing the fact that parliaments have tended to be excluded or marginalised from donor-government negotiations within the policy process, both by the executive and by donors that provide significant contributions to resources for poverty reduction. Parliaments and parliamentarians should remind governments and donors of the commitments made under the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action to involve parliaments more fully in the process, while recognising that it is not appropriate for parliaments to seek to 'micro-manage' the executive-donor relationship. The [Capacity Development for Development Effectiveness Facility](#) provides a useful example of parliamentarians in Asia-Pacific being supported to become more engaged in aid effectiveness processes, through peer-to-peer events and support, and as part of broader initiatives on mutual accountability and aid effectiveness (see Box 10).

**Box 10: The Asia-Pacific Capacity Development for Development Effectiveness Facility**

MPs have taken part, alongside government and representatives of civil society and donor agencies, in developing and launching the Capacity Development for Development Effectiveness (CDDE) Facility in the Asia-Pacific region in 2009. MPs have contributed to several CDDE-sponsored peer-to-peer events and processes that have sought to strengthen the accountability of aid and its focus on results. MPs from Bangladesh, Mongolia and Nepal took part in the Asia-Pacific consultation on the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) (see [www.aideffectiveness.org/aims](http://www.aideffectiveness.org/aims)) and representatives from Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam fed into the recommendations developed by the CDDE initiatives on mutual accountability (see [www.aideffectiveness.org/CDDE-Mutual-Accountability.html](http://www.aideffectiveness.org/CDDE-Mutual-Accountability.html)). A peer review group of parliamentarians have contributed to the development of this Note as an important output of the CDDE.

68. Parliaments should seek greater involvement in dialogue between donors and the executive at key stages of the planning process. At an overarching level, parliamentarians should demand the development of a specific national aid management policy, either as part of a country's national development strategy or as a stand-alone document, which can guide the overall relationship between the government and the donor community. Parliament should be able to input in the development of such a policy – including setting out a clear framework for how the legislature should be involved in aid management and oversight – and should be given the opportunity to debate and approve the policy. Parliament can then monitor to ensure that it is being carried out consistently.
69. Many governments, particularly in Africa (such as Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) have developed Joint Assistance Strategies, in partnership with donors, which highlight actions required to improve aid effectiveness and a requirement to mutually monitor progress on these actions (for further information on results frameworks and joint assistance strategies see the Aid Effectiveness portal [here](#)). Similarly, many recipient countries (including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Papua New Guinea, and Viet Nam) seek to implement aid policies through national aid effectiveness action plans or performance assessment frameworks developed jointly with donors (for further information on such action plans, please visit the Aid Effectiveness portal [here](#)). Although there is little evidence that parliamentarians have been involved to date in the development or monitoring of such Joint Assistance Strategies, Plans and Frameworks, there is scope for parliaments to get engaged. Parliaments can annually review progress made by both the executive and by donors to implement these agreements and, in strengthening domestic accountability for their implementation, giving additional impetus to these reform measures.
70. Where donors or the executive are reluctant to involve parliament, parliamentarians should use the commitments made at Paris and Accra to push for greater engagement in donor-government dialogues, or, as a 'second best' option, request that donors share with parliament the reports that they produce for the executive so that parliament is in a better position to exercise effective oversight of aid. In addition, sector-level working groups or the macro-level meetings and national

## D2. Put more aid on budget so that parliament can exercise effective oversight

development forums referred to in section C1.1 above may provide a good entry-point for parliamentarians to engage in monitoring activities across sectors or in specific sectors.

### D2. Put more aid on budget so that parliament can exercise effective oversight

71. In many countries a large share of the aid they receive is not factored into the country's national or sectoral plans, nor is it included in the national budget. This reduces the scope for parliament to exercise their oversight powers. Some factors which influence what share of aid is "on plan" or "on budget" (meaning captured in national plans and budgets) can be influenced by parliaments and the executive, and others less so. Humanitarian aid, for example, is often programmed with very little consultation with government, and is usually poorly reported to government and poorly captured by government. Similarly, much aid that goes to NGOs is not captured in national plans or budgets, even though it may account for a large share of health or education service provision. Thus the *type* or *modality* of aid affects how easy it is to include in national plans and budgets, and, by extension how easy it is for parliament to oversee.
72. Where donors contribute funds directly to a country's budget (through what is called general budget support) or when donors directly support a national programme in a sector (e.g. through the "sector-wide approach") it is usually automatically included in national plans and budgets. General budget support and sector-wide assistance is therefore easier for parliament and parliamentarians to influence through policy process (see Section C1) and budget (see Section C2). However, when donors finance individual projects ("project aid") the aid is often not included in national plans or budgets.
73. However, governments and parliaments can also help increase the share of aid which is on plan and on budget by improving the quality of their aid management and of their public financial management systems. There are some clear benefits in using a country's own systems, such as reduced transaction costs, better alignment with development plans, and easier monitoring and reporting. The better a country's management systems works, the more donors can be pressed to channel their aid through those systems. Clear recommendations in this regard were set out in a Good Practice Note on Using Country Budget Systems.<sup>9</sup> An example of an improvement that is within parliamentary control concerns the "special MPs funds" or constituency funds, which operate outside the national budget and are typically badly accounted for.
74. Donors and governments committed to putting more aid on budget and using programme based aid modalities at the Accra High Level Forum in 2008, and parliaments and parliamentarians need to hold both to account for following through on these commitments. The 2008 survey found that only 48% of all aid was recorded in national budgets, only marginally up from a survey two years earlier and dramatically short of the 2010 target of 85%. Only 47% of all aid used programme-based approaches, far short of the 2010 target of 66%.
75. Ensuring that more aid is on-budget is crucial. Even where aid cannot be passed through national systems or the national treasury it can be recorded on the budget or at least recorded and accounted for in national and sector plans is crucial. Strengthening the capacity of parliaments to exercise effective oversight of the budget is important, but will only be effective to the extent that aid is actually made visible to parliament by making sure more aid is on budget and on plan.<sup>10</sup>

#### Box X: Progress in bringing aid "on budget"

<sup>9</sup> See the *Putting Aid on Budget* study led by Mokoro in 2008, and the related final draft *Good Practice Note*, available at <http://www.mokoro.co.uk/aob.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> See Stapenhurst et al, 2008 and the World Bank Parliamentary Staff Training Programme's [module on effective financial scrutiny](#).

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**Deleted:** , though it could be if governments strengthened their aid and public financial management systems and donors were more systematic in providing information.

## D2. Put more aid on budget so that parliament can exercise effective oversight

In a number of countries, progress has been made in putting a greater proportion of aid on budget. Rwanda is an interesting example as its aid policy specifies that all aid should be on budget and on-plan, with – in the meantime – a consolidated list of national accounts covering both on and off-budget aid (Government of Rwanda, 2006). In Timor-Leste, all aid is now included in a Combined National Sources Budget. In Sri Lanka, the scope for Parliament to exercise effective oversight of aid has also been enhanced, with Fiscal Management Reports to Parliament since 2008 including information on aid (Wood et al, 2008).

## D3. Provide regular, detailed and timely information

76. Parliaments should remind donors and the executive of their commitments to transparency. Under the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, governments in developing countries committed to facilitating parliamentary oversight by disclosing revenues, budgets, expenditures, procurements and audits. Similarly, donors are committed to disclose regular, detailed and timely information on the volume, allocation, and results of development expenditure to enable more accurate budget, accounting and auditing in developing countries. Yet governments often do not systematically provide parliament with their reports on aid expenditures or results. Donors also need to redouble their efforts to report regularly and comprehensively on their aid flows using the format or systems that governments have established.
77. Many governments, often with donor support, have introduced Aid Information Management Systems to improve the quality and availability of information about aid – both on budget and off budget. Such systems can help increase the share of aid which is recorded on budget, improve aid’s transparency, and strengthen accountability for results. Parliamentarians should have the opportunity to access these systems and be systematically provided with the reports and analyses from such systems. (For practical guidance on Aid Information Management Systems and information on how to access such systems see the Aid Effectiveness portal [here](#).) Examples of progress in this area include Malawi, where since 2006/07 a database has tracked both aid that is on-budget and aid that is off-budget, and Mozambique, where an aid database – ODAMOZ – has been created (OECD, 2008; Eurodad, 2008). Unfortunately, aid databases are open to the public and parliament in only 24 of the 46 countries that have aid management systems (IATI Scoping Paper).
78. Parliamentarians in those countries where the aid management systems are not available to parliament should request that they are made available. Parliamentarians should be aware of the fact that *availability* per se does not necessarily mean *accessibility*. Aid databases and other such systems should be easily accessible to non-specialists from parliament and civil society. For example, to make donor information truly accessible it will often have to be translated into national languages. Aid information should also be available in a timely manner for parliamentarians and other stakeholder to use effectively during the relevant policy and budget cycle. In short, donors are not entirely exonerated when they simply place information on their own websites or some other facility open to the public that is far from comprehensive and difficult to search.

### Box X: Promoting More Transparency in Aid

79. There has been some encouraging progress as regards aid transparency with donors and developing countries signing up to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). IATI’s main objective is to help formulate and implement common standards among donors on how to share and disseminate aid information in a way that people can easily understand. This will also support parliaments in getting better access to aid data to hold both government and donors to account for how aid is allocated and for the results that it delivers. The guiding principles of the Initiative, to which many

*D2. Put more aid on budget so that parliament can exercise effective oversight*

donors have already subscribed, were set in Accra and are available here: <http://aidtransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/iati-accra-statement-p1.pdf>

**D4. Establish mechanisms for greater mutual accountability**

80. Transparency is absolutely necessary for effective accountability, but transparency alone will not deliver. This is the case both for domestic accountability and for mutual accountability, in which donors are held accountable for their role in the aid partnership. The 2008 Paris Declaration Monitoring Survey reported that a mutual review of aid effectiveness – donors and recipients of aid assessing each other’s progress on meeting their aid effectiveness commitments - had been conducted in a number of countries, including Afghanistan, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Moldova, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Senegal, Tanzania and Vietnam. However, some doubts have been raised about how widespread substantive mutual accountability really is and whether there are real sanctions for poor donor performance (Wood et al, 2008, pp.24-28).
81. Mechanisms to agree and monitor progress on aid effectiveness are in place in a number of countries – for instance through Country Action Plans, Performance Assistance Frameworks and Joint Assistance Strategies. However, parliamentary engagement with such mechanisms has been limited, with a recent review noting that “virtually no national-level mutual accountability mechanisms debate frank and independent performance information with parliaments, local government agencies or civil society” (ECOSOC, 2009). More positively, in an innovative example of south-south learning, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam have established a joint initiative to help each other to strengthen their country-level mechanisms for mutual accountability (for more information on this initiative, see the Aid Effectiveness portal [here](#)). Donors have also committed to supporting the strengthening of domestic accountability in recipient countries, for example through capacity development. Donors and the executive should be reminded of these commitments and asked what they are doing to meet them.
82. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the power imbalance at the heart of the aid relationship, there appear to be few clear examples of effective mutual accountability mechanisms having been set up. There are however, a handful of examples of attempts to improve mutual accountability, for instance in Indonesia, where the Jakarta Commitments seek to establish a mechanism for mutual accountability (see Box 12).

**Box 12: Mutual accountability matters (Indonesia)**

In January 2009, 22 donor countries and multilateral agencies signed with the Government of Indonesia the Jakarta Commitments, an agreement aimed at strengthen government ownership over development and focus on delivering and accounting for development results. The Commitments hold donors accountable for better alignment with national programmes and priorities, increased use of country’s PFM, and a reduction in parallel monitoring activities, which should be aligned with its Medium-term Development Plan. Individual indicators have been established and are being monitored by government and the findings made public at the regular government-donor national development forums.

Source: Capacity Development for Development Effectiveness Facility, 2009

**D5. Provide support to strengthen parliamentary capacity**

83. Donors committed themselves in the Accra Agenda for Action to supporting efforts to strengthen the capacity of parliaments to engage in the policy process, including in relation to the budget. There are a number of examples of parliamentary strengthening initiatives across the world conducted by bilateral donors and multilateral agencies alike. A typical illustration of this work, and its challenges, comes from Cambodia, where a project supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) aimed to enhance the legislative capacity of Parliament, improve the responsiveness of Members of Parliament to their constituents, and build the capacity of the Secretariats of the National Assembly and Senate (Tsekpo and Hudson, 2009d). Among the various service providers,

#### *D4. Establish mechanisms for greater mutual accountability*

UNDP is one of the largest with parliamentary support projects in some 60 countries. The IPU also operates a technical cooperation programme under which it assists national parliaments to improve the organization of their work and strengthen their infrastructure. The programme assists elected parliamentarians and parliamentary staff as well.

84. In a number of countries including Bhutan, Timor-Leste and Kyrgyzstan (UNDP, 2006) parliamentary strengthening programmes have focussed on enhancing transparency and improving parliamentary outreach, while a particular focus in many countries has been to support parliamentary engagement in the budget process. In Vietnam, for instance, a multi-donor project has provided support to the Economic and Budget Commission of the National Assembly, helping to give the Assembly greater powers and establishing a Public Accounts Committee (Wehner, 2007). Likewise, in Solomon Islands, UNDP's parliamentary support project has provided substantial capacity building to the Public Accounts Committee, with very positive results in terms of improved budget oversight. Beyond the Asia-Pacific, effective parliamentary strengthening initiatives have been undertaken in a number of countries including Uganda – where the focus has been on supporting key parliamentary committees – and Ghana, where a Parliamentary Financial Scrutiny Project has strengthened the Public Accounts Committee, helped to build relationships between Parliament and civil society, and introduced the practice of public hearings (Tsekpo and Hudson, 2009a and 2009c).
85. Strengthening the capacity of parliaments to engage in the policy process requires time and commitment. It also requires donors to work in such a way that parliament is – perhaps through the development of a parliamentary strategic plan – firmly in the lead. But, done well, parliamentary strengthening initiatives can play an important role in enhancing parliamentary engagement throughout the policy cycle. Parliaments should formulate plans for their own development, and then pro-actively approach donors to encourage them to provide support and meet the commitments made to parliamentary strengthening under the Accra Agenda for Action (for further information about parliamentary strengthening, see the work of the [Parliamentary Centre](#)).

### **E. Cross-cutting issues: corruption and gender**

86. There are a range of cross-cutting issues that have a major impact on the pace and quality of development in a country. Combating corruption and promoting gender equality, for example, are critical for maximising progress towards MDGs and reducing poverty in an inclusive and equitable way.

#### ***E1. Combating corruption***

87. Corruption is found in rich and poor, developing and developed countries alike, albeit in different forms and magnitude. Evidence from around the world confirms that corruption affects development effectiveness. It often hurts the poor disproportionately, hindering economic development, reducing access to and provision of social services, and diverting resources away from investments in infrastructure, institutions and social services. Besides its negative effects on the economy, it has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish. In terms of aid specifically, corruption can lead to worse development outcomes as spending decisions are distorted. Also, concerns about corruption can and do lead taxpayers in donor countries to doubt the effectiveness of aid.
88. To ensure that aid and other resources are used effectively for poverty reduction, and that donor support for aid continues, parliaments and parliamentarians can and should engage in efforts to combat corruption. Such engagement might be in terms of lobbying for the ratification of the UN Convention Against Corruption, a comprehensive framework for tackling corruption; representation, where parliamentarians can work to ensure that public dissatisfaction with corruption feeds into the



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policy process (seen recently in Tanzania, see Tsekpo and Hudson, 2009b); legislation, where parliamentary committees and parliament as a whole can scrutinise and enact laws intended to tackle corruption; or oversight, where parliamentary engagement includes effective participation in the budget process, and the exercise of oversight through support for anti-corruption commissions, collaboration with audit institutions and promoting media freedoms (Stapenhurst et al, 2006).

89. To take some specific examples, in Nepal, since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006, Parliament has increased the mandate of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuses of Authority, and has passed a Bill establishing a Special Court to speed up judicial hearings on corruption charges (GOPAC, undated). In the Philippines, a high profile parliamentary committee has been established to contribute to the fight against corruption (see Box 13). If corruption is not tackled, donors will be unwilling to make greater use of country systems and will be reluctant to channel aid through national budget processes. This will hinder the effectiveness of aid, and the scope for parliamentary engagement in policy and budget processes. As such, by working to tackle corruption and to enhance the integrity of country systems, parliaments and parliamentarians can have a positive impact both on the effectiveness of aid and on their ability to drive further progress on accountability for development.

#### Box 13: Parliament against corruption (Philippines)

Besides playing a role in lawmaking, the Senate devotes much of its time to investigating wrongdoing through its Committee on Public Accountability and Investigation. The Blue Ribbon Committee, as it is commonly called, has been perceived as the most powerful committee in the Philippine Senate in terms of investigative power. Its jurisdiction includes matters concerning corruption, crime or wrongdoing. The Committee may compel persons to attend either as witnesses or as the subjects of the investigation themselves, and to testify and produce documents before the Committee.

Source: Parliamentary Centre,

## E2. Taking gender into account

90. International human rights agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) commit governments to work towards greater equality between men and women, girls and boys. The MDGs also contain some specific commitments for achieving gender equality. Moreover, ensuring that aid and other resources are used effectively for poverty reduction entails ensuring that the needs of different social groups – including men and women – are given adequate consideration in the policy process. Yet gender issues are often not part of the mainstream of development and are often neglected by parliaments, where generally women remain under-represented (see Box X). Parliaments and parliamentarians have a role to play in ensuring that efforts to reduce gender inequalities are systematically taken into account at all stages of the policy and budgeting process, from preparation, to implementation, to monitoring and review.

#### Box X: Women under-representation in politics: a factor in poor development results

One reason why development policy and corresponding budgets do not often reflect women's concerns is simply that women themselves are not among the policy-makers. Women account for fewer than 19% of seats in national parliaments worldwide, with the number varying widely from country to country (from 43% of seats in Cuba to 11% in Togo or 10% in India). There are many initiatives to support the participation of women in politics, including some undertaken by the IPU, UNDP and others. A good resource for women candidates or current office-holders is the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics ([iKNOW Politics](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm)). Current statistics of women politicians by country and region are available on the IPU website at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

91. There are strong multiplier effects for development from investing in improving gender equality and empowering women. For example, women reinvest 90% of their income in their families and communities, compared to men who reinvest only 30% to 40% of their income; in some African countries, children of mothers who have spent five years in primary education are 40% more likely to live beyond the age of five (see OECD 2008 – [Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#)). This is recognised in the Accra Agenda, which states that:



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“Gender equality, respect for human rights, and environmental sustainability are cornerstones for achieving enduring impacts on the lives and potential of poor women, men, and children”.

92. Despite this growing recognition, supporting greater gender equality is consistently underfunded in aid budgets. The OECD DAC has produced guidelines for strengthening gender equality and aid effectiveness, some of which have relevance for parliamentarians (OECD 2008). For example, these guidelines call on donors to work with partner country parliaments, as well as ministries (including planning, finance and women’s ministries), local government, NGOs and the private sector to ensure that women’s voices are heard in the development of Poverty Reduction Strategies and other medium-term plans. The guidelines also recommend that donors support efforts to ensure that parliamentary processes are informed about the costs of persistent gender inequality and discrimination, as well as the importance and utility of gender equality and women’s empowerment for achieving development results.
93. One of the main ways in which a gender perspective has been brought to bear on parliamentary engagement in the policy process is through the practice of Gender Responsive Budgeting, an approach that seeks to ensure that budgets and economic policies address the needs of males and females equitably (See IPU/UNDP/WBI/UNIFEM, 2004, [Parliament, the Budget and Gender – Handbook for Parliamentarians](#)). It is often assumed that a national budget is gender neutral; in other words, that it will impact on men and women in the same way. But, men and women often have differing needs and can be impacted in different ways by economic policies. For example, women are more likely to be in lower paying jobs and in sectors such as care, which are often informal or unpaid. Adopting Gender Responsive Budgeting allows for analysis of the likely impacts of economic policies for men and women, as it involves undertaking a gender based assessment of budgets, and incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process.
94. Parliamentarians can support a greater focus on gender issues within budgeting processes by ensuring that a parliamentary committee focused on gender issues, or the Budget Committee, take responsibility for developing an approach which includes gender perspectives on the budget. As a less formal option, a women’s caucus can provide leadership on these issues and work with relevant budget committees to include gender perspectives.
95. Putting in place effective mechanisms for Gender Responsive Budgeting remains a challenge for many countries, given that women are severely under-represented in most parliaments, and that gender equality may not be seen as core priority. But some progress has been made in countries such as Morocco, Mozambique, Tanzania and Nepal (UNIFEM, 2008). In terms of parliamentary engagement and support for Gender Responsive Budgeting, in Rwanda – a country with a particularly high proportion of women MPs – Parliament demanded in 2008 that information be provided about how the budget will affect men and women differently, and in Uganda the Forum for Women in Democracy has worked closely with the Budget Office and Parliament to push for equal opportunities (AWEPA, 2008; Wehner and Byanyima, 2004).
96. Beyond the budget process, both male and female parliamentarians can come together to examine those aspects of aid and development which particularly impact on women and to ensure that the interests of women are well represented. For example, in Timor-Leste, a Women Parliamentarians’ Caucus has done much to integrate a gender perspective into the work of the National Parliament (see Box 14), while in Nepal women MPs have participated on parliamentary committees on the peace process (Corner, 2008). In Niger, community level monitoring and engagement that has involved parliamentarians and parliamentary committees appears to have delivered some progress in terms of putting gender on the parliamentary agenda (African Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network, 2007). In South Africa, a joint Committee was established to monitor the improvement of the quality of life and status of women (see Box 14).

#### **Box 14: Putting gender on the agenda**

**The Gender Resource Centre, Timor-Leste:**

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Supported by UNDP, Australia, Norway and Sweden, the Gender Resource Centre is an initiative of the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus, or the Grupo das Mulheres Parlamentares de Timor-Leste, a women's lobby within the National Parliament. It is supported by UNDP's Parliament Project and UNIFEM through its Integrated Programme for women in Politics and in Decision Making, a five-year undertaking designed to aid and enhance women's participation in politics and decision making. The Gender Resource Centre assists in integrating a gender perspective into the work of the National Parliament through capacity development, research, training and networking activities with other organisations.

**The 'Monitoring Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women' Joint Committee, South Africa:**

The Joint Committee on Monitoring the Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women monitors and evaluates progress regarding improvements in the quality of life and status of women in South Africa. It refers to the Government's commitments to the Beijing Platform of Action and to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and other applicable international instruments. It makes recommendations to either or both Houses, or to specific Joint or House Committees.

## F. Conclusions

97. Parliaments and parliamentarians have a key role to play in ensuring that aid and other resources are spent effectively in support of poverty reduction. This can be done – by parliamentarians working as individual MPs, as members of parliamentary committees and caucuses, and as part of the wider body of parliament – by engaging at various stages of the policy cycle, from preparation, through implementation, to monitoring and oversight.
98. At the preparation and planning stage, parliaments and parliamentarians should:
- **Pro-actively engage with the executive and donors in consultations:** Parliamentarians and parliamentary committees should pro-actively engage in consultations around national development strategies and plans for meeting the Millennium Development Goals, as well as around sector-specific plans.
  - **Explore partnerships with civil society organisations, where appropriate:** parliamentarians and parliamentary committees may find it useful to work with civil society organisations, to access information and resources, to encourage the representation of a greater number of views, and for assistance in analysing the budget in detail.
99. At the implementation stage, parliaments and parliamentarians should:
- **Scrutinise, debate and pass legislation:** parliamentary committees and parliament as a whole should scrutinise, debate and pass legislation for poverty reduction and progress on the MDGs that respond to citizens' interests.
  - **Exercise effective budget oversight:** parliamentary committees – including committees with a focus on budgets, finance, public accounts and poverty reduction – and parliament as a whole should conduct effective oversight of budget allocations. Parliaments should also consider establishing independent Budget Offices.
  - **Scrutinise foreign loans:** parliamentary committees and parliament as a whole should seek to involve themselves in the scrutiny and approval of foreign loans.
100. At the review stage, parliaments and parliamentarians should:
- **Access progress reports and review these in a parliamentary committee:** Parliaments should push for access to regular and timely progress reports on the implementation of plans and budgets, with such reports including information about results.
  - **Engage with citizens for community-level monitoring:** parliamentarians and parliamentary committees should engage citizens in monitoring results at a community level, through their constituency links and through engagement with activities such as 'Citizens Report Cards' or 'Community Score Cards'.
101. In addition, parliaments and parliamentarians should insist that their partners in the development process, particularly governments in developing countries and donors, fulfil their responsibilities. Parliaments should **ask to be included in the policy process** and in the relationship between the executive and donors. Parliaments should **support efforts to put more aid on budget** so that parliament can exercise effective oversight. Parliaments should **insist that donors and governments provide regular, detailed and timely information** about the use of aid and other resources.

## F. Conclusions

Parliaments should collaborate to **establish effective mechanisms for mutual accountability**. Parliaments should take the lead on identifying their own capacity development needs, and **ask donors to support their efforts to strengthen parliamentary capacity** to play a more effective role in holding governments to account for the use of aid and other resources.

102. There are also a number of ways in which parliamentarians can contribute to cross-cutting issues that have significant impacts on aid and development effectiveness. This includes **supporting attempts to combat corruption**, in terms of representation of citizens' dissatisfaction with corruption, legislation to tackle corruption, and the exercise of oversight through collaboration with institutions like anti-corruption commissions and supreme audit institutions. Parliamentarians can **contribute to strengthening gender equality and ensuring that policy and budget processes are responsive to the needs of men and women**, including through ensuring that women's voices are heard throughout the policy cycle, applying a human rights lens, and supporting efforts to ensure more gender responsive budgeting.
103. By engaging effectively around the policy cycle, with partners meeting their responsibilities too, parliaments and parliamentarians can do much to ensure that a country's resources – including the aid provided by donors – are spent effectively in pursuit of the country's developmental priorities. By sharing experience of engaging in the policy process through peer exchanges at the regional level such as through the CDDE Facility, and through other mechanisms for south-south cooperation on aid and development effectiveness, parliaments can make faster progress towards playing their rightful role in ensuring that aid and other resources are spent effectively.
104. As a "live" document this Note is meant to be updated and improved with input received from parliamentarians and other practitioners around the world as they become more involved in these issues. Parliamentarians are encouraged to contact the IPU or the CDDE for any question they may have on the Note or to provide critical comments as well as additional practical illustrations of best practices and lessons learned.

Alessandro Motter, Senior Liaison Officer  
Inter-Parliamentary Union  
[amotter@ipu.org](mailto:amotter@ipu.org)

Aidan Cox, Regional Adviser Aid Effectiveness  
UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok  
Aidan Cox c/o [cdde@aideffectiveness.org](mailto:cdde@aideffectiveness.org)

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## Annex 1: Acronyms

ABI	Alternative Budget Initiative
AWEPA	Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa
CDDE	Capacity Development for Development Effectiveness
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECOSOC	(United Nations) Economic and Social Council
GOPAC	Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption
HIV-AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus -Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HLF	High Level Forum
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MP	Member of Parliament
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission (Ghana)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODAMOZ	Official Development Assistance to Mozambique Database
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PFM	Public Financial Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WBI	World Bank Institute
WHO	World Health Organisation

## Annex 2: References and Further Reading

### Parliamentary engagement in the policy process: What you can do

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