

Handbook on
Constituent Relations
and Representation

Handbook on Constituent Relations and Representation

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FOREWORD

Secretary General of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia

The members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI) of the 2009-2014 period are the people's representatives elected by the third general election after the Democratic Reform, the advent of democracy in Indonesia. Compared to previous post-Reform elections, we may say that the 2009 election has gone through a more mature democratization process.

The positive development of democracy in Indonesia intensifies the people's demand on their representatives in the DPR to improve their work performance and quality compared to previous periods. In truth the demand must also take account of the fact that the majority of the people's representatives of this period is new to the DPR. They would need relatively more time to study and comprehend their tasks and authorities in performing their functions as the people's representatives.

In addition, it is necessary to immediately familiarize DPR members of this current period with their role, function, tasks, and authorities, because the recently issued Law No. 27/2009 on the People's Consultative Assembly, House of Representatives, House of Regional Representatives, and Regional House of Representatives has changed several regulations on the system and procedures of representative institutions in Indonesia.

We understand that in order to improve work performance, DPR members need to increase their knowledge and understanding of their main tasks and functions according to new developments, including new adjustments to existing laws. To help increase such knowledge and understanding, the General Secretariat of DPR is cooperating with Parliamentary Support Programme of UNDP to compose eight handbooks for DPR members.

To optimally realize the hopes and intentions of this book, we have composed this book: (1) based on regulations according to Law No. 27/2009 on the People's Consultative Assembly, House of Representatives, House of Regional Representatives, and Regional House of Representatives, which is currently the main foundation for the system and procedures of representative institutions in Indonesia; (2) with the goal to fill practical needs; (3) complete with best practices in Indonesia or in other countries.

It is our hope this book will have significant positive impact on the work performance of the DPR.

Secretary General DPR RI,

Dra. Hj. Nining Indra Shaleh, M.Si.

PREFACE

UNDP Parliamentary Support Programme

On this occasion, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would like to congratulate the new members of the House of Representatives (DPR) of the Republic of Indonesia, 2009-2014. We wish you success in your public endeavours. We would like to take this moment to express our gratitude to the Secretariat General of the DPR RI, the Australian Agency for International Development, and The Asia Foundation for their unwavering support in the development of these handbooks. Finally, we also would like to thank the authors themselves for generously sharing their expertise and experience.

Becoming a member of parliament is a great honor, but it also entails great responsibility. Certainly, the House Members are expected to not only listen to the people, but also represent them and respond to their needs in a timely and effective manner. The UNDP Parliamentary Support Programme gives its full support to the Secretariat of DPR RI and all the House Members in the representation of their constituents.

The Handbook on Constituent Relations and Representation is written to help the work of the DPD members in their activities inside the House and in their constituencies. The book illustrates the importance of building relations with constituents and provides information about how to build an effective communication strategy. The book provides ideas on how to best follow-up the input from constituents. Furthermore, the book also provides information on the advantages a constituent office, which maximises the performance of members. Further, the book describes the support from various House bodies in supporting the constituent relations of members.

The success of parliamentary democracy in Indonesia depends much on the work of its members. For that reason, the public will have a great interest in overseeing the members' work in parliament. To support the effectiveness of the members' work, this handbook describes best practices from various democratic countries. The UNDP Parliamentary Support Programme is also continuously supporting the work of members with the necessary knowledge and technical assistance.

We hope that members will find this handbook useful, and will refer to it regularly as a source of information in carrying out their duties. We have compiled complicated and complex issues into a simple and easy-to-read format. We wish all the members the best of luck in all their future work.

Yours sincerely,

UNDP Parliamentary Support Programme

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List of Acronyms

APBN	: <i>Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Negara</i> /National Budget
DPD	: <i>Dewan Perwakilan Daerah</i> /House of Regional Representatives
DPR	: <i>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat</i> /House of Representatives
DPRD	: <i>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah</i> /Regional House of Representatives
KUA	: <i>Kantor Urusan Agama</i> /Religious Affairs Office
LSM	: <i>Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat</i> /Civil Society Organization
MPR	: <i>Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat</i> /People's Consultative Assembly
RT	: <i>Rukun Tetangga</i> /neighborhood association
RUU	: <i>Rancangan Undang-Undang</i> /Draft Legislation, Bill
RW	: <i>Rukun Warga</i> /super-neighborhood association
SMS	: Short Message Service, cellular phone text messages
UU	: <i>Undang-Undang</i> /Law
UUD 1945	: <i>Undang-Undang Dasar 1945</i> /Constitution 1945

Purpose and Structure of this Handbook

Purpose of this Handbook

This book was prepared to be a source of initial information for members of the House of Representatives (DPR) in performing their duties as representatives of the people. Carl J. Friedrich has explained that representative assemblies have to function as integrative institutions that create a balance between government policies and the demands of various interest groups in society. This task requires a high level of skill from the Representatives, especially to be familiar with several aspects of the organization of governance and to balance them with the interests of their constituents.

Based on this need, in this book we have prepared information regarding approaches that Representatives can consider applying in relationships with constituents. Also included are several activities that have been used by Representatives from previous terms and activities used by Representatives in other countries that can be considered for use. It is the hope of the editors that this book might maximize the performance of DPR members in the execution of their duties as representatives of the people.

Users of this Handbook

This book is aimed primarily at DPR members.

Structure of this Handbook

This book is split into several chapters, which are organized systematically. After the introduction, it begins by explaining the function of representation. This is to give a theoretical and philosophical foundation for Representatives to act as representatives of the people. The meaning of representation must be emphasized first so that Representatives understand the urgency of the function of representation, especially in connection with the meaning of representing the people and reflecting the people's aspirations, needs, issues, and interests in the form of laws and organization of governance.

Next is a discussion regarding the mechanisms of relationships between Representatives and their constituents. In discussing the urgency of relationships between Representatives and their constituents, the book discusses the meaning of constituent and why relationships with constituents are important. Following that is a discussion of the mechanism for relationships between Representatives and their constituents, ways for DPR members to communicate with their constituents, strategies for building relationships with constituents, how to respond to certain issues from constituents, constituent services in the DPR, and where to establish constituent offices.

Finally, there is a discussion of the role of parliamentary party groups in the DPR in managing constituent aspirations.



Introduction

Amendments to the 1945 Constitution are one of the demands of elements of society. These demands were to improve the condition and structure of the state's foundations after the New Order.

Amendments to the 1945 Constitution related to institutions representing the people caused changes especially in the areas of:

- The structure of parliament
- The authority of the various chambers of parliament

The Structure of Parliament

In the structure of parliament, besides the House of Representatives (DPR) and the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), a House of Regional Representatives (DPD) was also created. The amendments also included changes in the membership of the MPR.

Authority within Parliament

The authority of the DPR and MPR also experienced changes. Of course, these were connected to the creation of the DPD as a second chamber of the parliament of the Republic of Indonesia.

The authority of the DPR after the amendments to the 1945 Constitution became greater than before.

This greater authority related to the DPR's legislative function, as well as its authority in relation to its oversight function. This increased authority naturally gave rise to greater expectations on the part of constituents. They hoped that more effort would be seen in working for and achieving their aspirations, both in the formulation of national policy and in the operations of government. This was only fitting, since the members of the DPR are representatives of the people.

DPR members are the liaison between the people and the government.

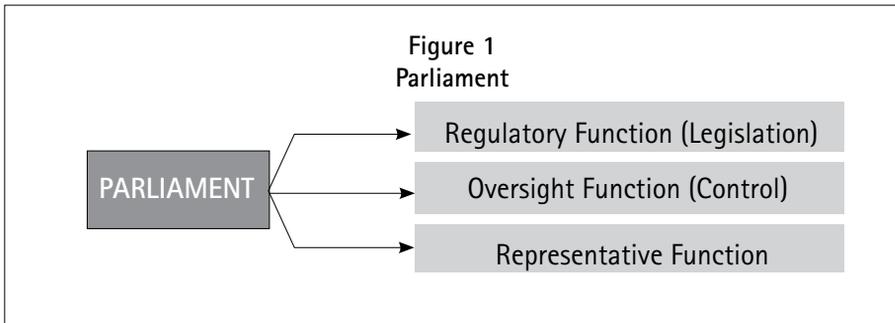
Relations between the people and their legislators help give legitimacy to the actions of the government. Indeed, in the parliamentary system of governance, parliaments often act only as a "rubber stamp" for executive decisions. This happens because it is the majority party in parliament that runs the government.

This situation indicates that in a presidential system of governance, as in Indonesia, the role of DPR members as representatives of the people is critical, especially in giving legitimacy to the actions of the government.

This legitimacy is achieved by articulating the aspirations of their constituents and integrating them into their programs. Of course, it also relates to the formulation of national policy and oversight of the conduct of government.

DPR members must function more effectively in order to further promote democratization and make public policies more effective.

The Functions of Parliament



The Functions of the DPR in the 1945 Constitution are:

- a. Legislative Function
- b. Budgetary Function
- c. Oversight Function

The budgetary function of the DPR is part of its oversight function, that is, the DPR's oversight over the state budget.

In its development, parliament does several things connected with its parliamentary function.

Table 1

Parliaments in Other Countries around the World	
Countries	Function of Parliament
Burundi and Rwanda	Parliament is the front line for resolving protracted conflicts.
Bangladesh, Gabon, Pakistan and Uganda	Parliament as an institution or members individually play the roles of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agents of development, • mobilizers of resources, and • executors of the implementation of development projects for their constituents Funds for members of parliament to undertake these activities are a part of national budget allocations.
Several countries in Asia and Africa	Members of parliament function as agents of social security guarantees who help their constituents with free schools and health services.

Currently, the legislative function in some countries is merely a formality. This is because most of the proposals for bills come from the government. In contrast, the representative and oversight functions are functions whose implementation continues to develop day by day. From various developments in various countries, one can see that parliaments are strengthening their role in terms of their representative function. This makes relationships between members of parliament and their constituents ever more important. This is happening in countries everywhere, including in Indonesia.

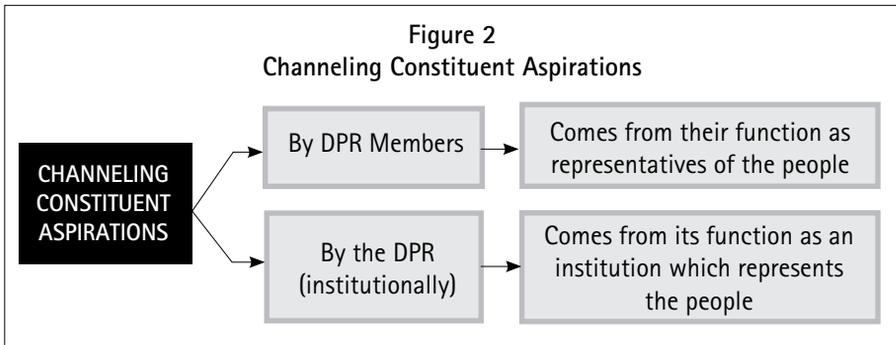
Although the representative function is not stated explicitly in the 1945 Constitution, the 1945 Constitution states that the members of the DPR will be chosen through an election. In Law No. 27 of 2009 on the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), House of Representatives (DPR), House of Regional Representatives (DPD) and Regional Houses of Representatives (DPRD), it is also stated that the execution of the legislative, budgetary and oversight functions is undertaken within the framework of representing the people. This indicates that relationships with constituents are important, especially in a country that does not have direct democracy. Today there is not a single country in the world practicing direct democracy, including Indonesia. This causes the representative function, as a key element of representative democracy, to be important in every country around the world today.

Constituent aspirations must receive attention.

This is because the mechanism for relationships between DPR members and constituents is simple:

DPR members need votes from constituents. Because of this, the interests of constituents must receive attention.

It is important for DPR members to consider the aspirations of constituents, especially before making decisions on programs and policies. This means that DPR members must familiarize themselves with the difficulties and problems that their constituents face. Therefore, managing relationships with constituents is something that must be done by the people's representatives in the DPR.

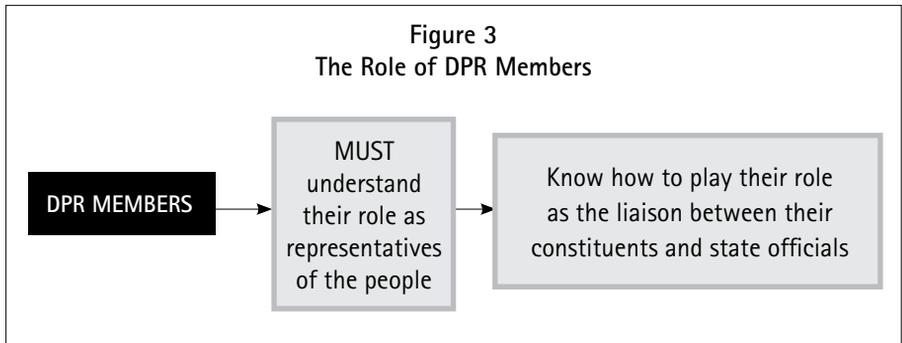


However, Representatives must be aware of the fact that with an open proportional system and a multi-party system in Indonesia, the bond between Representatives and their party is strong. Because of this, the party's position is important in a representative's decision making, because the Representative is also a representative of his party in parliament. But this cannot cause a representative of the people to be "shackled," because, just like Representatives, political parties also need the votes of the public during an election.

In this multi-party era, it is the parties that are responsive to the aspirations of the people that will get voter support in an election. Political parties very much need constituents, not only in giving them votes but also in keeping the party going; therefore, long-term relationships are something that political parties pay significant amounts of attention to.

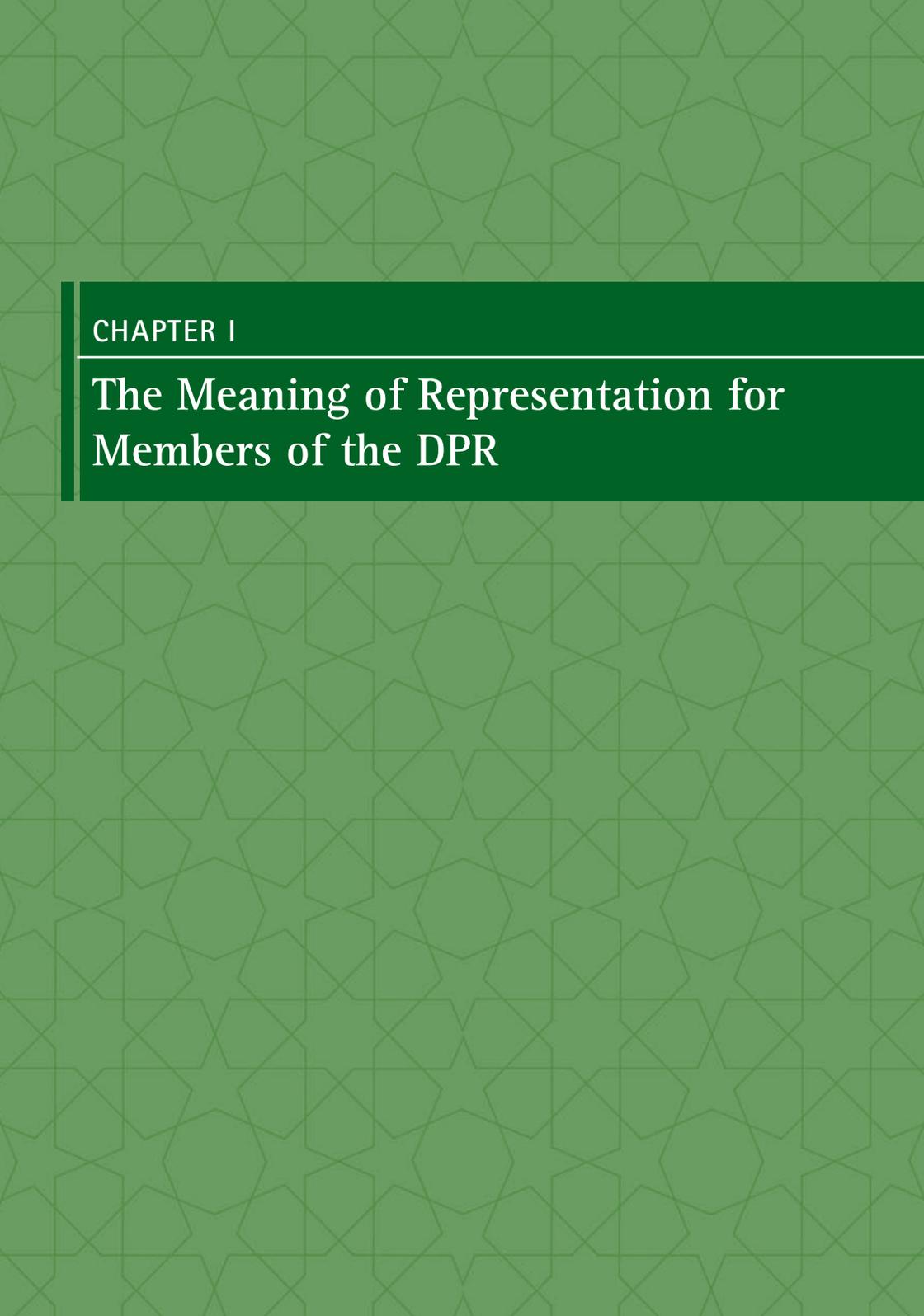
Long-term relationships can only be managed well if the party's focus is not only on the values for which they are struggling and the party's organizational solidarity. Parties must also look at the dynamics and development of society that force an increase in the activities of parties as vehicles for society's political participation. This can only come into being if the political party has the ability to manage and respond to constituent aspirations in several ways. The foremost among these is through the party representatives who sit in representative institutions.

With the strengthening of the role of the DPR after the amendments to the 1945 Constitution, DPR members and the DPR as an institution, which represent the people, are required to play a larger role. This role is primarily in pushing for the aspirations of their constituents in national policies and in the conduct of governance.



This is even more true after the results of the 2009 general election caused such changes in the political constellation, meaning that there will be many new individuals becoming DPR members.

The great expectations of constituents for their DPR members will, however, become empty dreams if DPR members do not understand their function and execute that function as representatives of the people to the best of their abilities.

The background of the entire page is a repeating geometric pattern of interlocking lines forming star-like shapes, rendered in a light green color against a darker green background. A dark green horizontal bar is positioned at the top, containing the chapter title. A thin white horizontal line is located just below the chapter title.

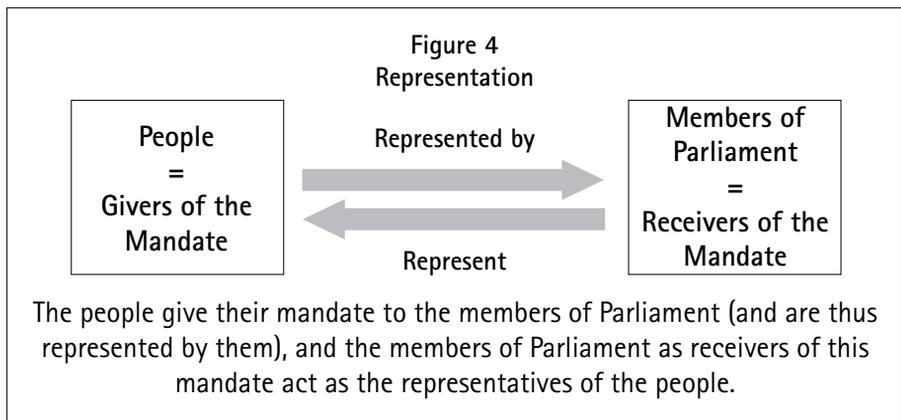
CHAPTER I

**The Meaning of Representation for
Members of the DPR**

The Meaning of Representation

According to Montesquieu, in a free country, the legislative power should be held by the whole populace. However, this ideal cannot be implemented in a country with a large territory. Indeed, many difficulties are encountered trying to implement it even in countries with relatively small territories. This means that the populace must be represented. The concept of representation does not cause the rights of the people to be alienated when they are represented, because fundamentally the authority remains with the people.

From the perspective of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the people in their totality are the holders of the highest power. According to Rousseau, the agreement that makes the people submit to their leaders is not actually a contract, because the people remain the holders of the ultimate power. It is the government that must make sacrifices for the people, and not the people who must make sacrifices for the government.



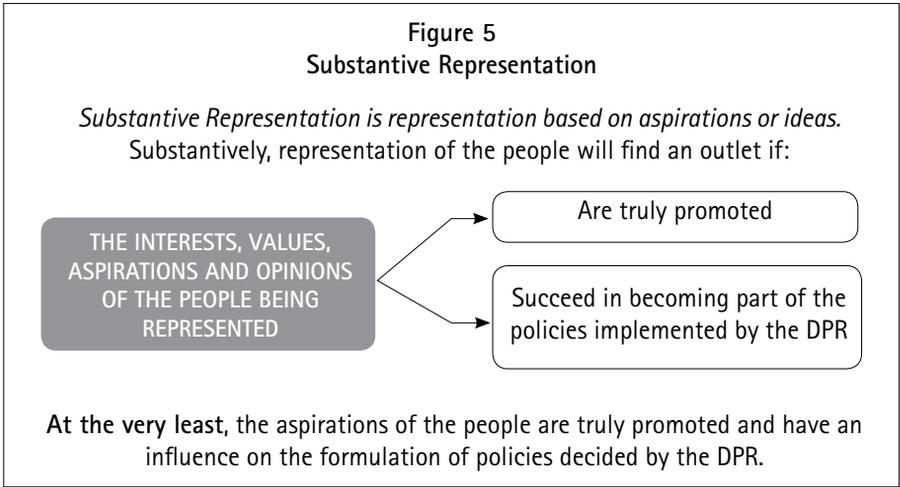
The concept of representation forms the basis for members of parliament to execute their other functions in parliament.

With a mandate from the people, the members of Parliament are able to execute their other functions, which are their legislative function and oversight function.

Jimly Asshiddiqie emphasizes that the most basic function of parliament, as an institution representing the people, is its representative function. The thing that must receive attention is the representative function that is shared in formal representation.

A representative institution without representation has no meaning!!!

Formal Representation is representation that is seen in terms of physical presence.
(Physically and officially > Seated in the people’s representative institution)



It is important to remember that one is designated as a member of the DPR because one is chosen by the people to represent the people!!!

For that reason, the representation by members of the DPR must be of the substantive type. A DPR member must promote the aspirations of the people by articulating and integrating them in programs related to the drafting of laws and oversight of the conduct of government.

Important Concepts of the Representative Function

In connection with the position of a representative of the people, there are several things that must be taken into account:

4 Important Concepts of the Representative Function:

- a. Communication
- b. Accountability
- c. Transparency
- d. Accessibility

a. Communication

Often, in discussions of the representative function, the stress is on communication between constituents and the representatives of the people. However, communication between the representatives and the constituents is an equally important feature in these discussions.

Communication is an interactive relationship that goes both ways.

Generally, the concept of participation is discussed in connection with participation by constituents. But with regard to substantive representation, communication must also come from the representative to the people whom he or she represents.

In Representatives' communication with constituents, it is important to do the following things:

1. The DPR member must ensure that the channeling of constituent aspirations can be done freely.
2. The DPR is an institution representing the people which must take on the aspirations of society and serve as a liaison or bridge for constituents' interests.
3. Accept and investigate constituents' complaints about public services.
4. Cooperation and coordination between DPR members and various elements of the community.
5. Communicate with regional governments in meeting the needs of the regions.

Guaranteeing a Free Channeling of Aspirations

Things related to the freedom of expression must be guaranteed, including guaranteeing and legally protecting the right to demonstrate and the right to strike. Constituents should be reminded that the exercise of their constitutional rights in the form of freedom to express their thoughts in spoken and written forms must still be based on the provisions of the prevailing laws. In addition, they should receive political education that as citizens, constituents have the right to access various services and information related to public services. These matters are based on the enactment of the Public Services Law and the Freedom of Public Information Law.

Taking on the Aspirations of Society and Being a Liaison for Constituents

This means that the interests of constituents must be articulated and integrated into the programs of DPR members. Included in this is that the DPR, institutionally, as well as individual DPR members, must involve constituents in the drafting of laws.

For example, say the DPR is working on a bill that prohibits businesses in residential areas. The goal is to straighten out zoning and raise the income of the state through fees from the business community in the form of shops. This bill could potentially have negative effects on those who have a livelihood as vendors in homes, in residential areas, or who run businesses in residential areas. This prohibition will certainly eliminate their livelihood, because opening a business in the designated areas requires a lot of capital for things such as transportation, the venue, employees, electricity, water, etc.

The task of the Representatives is to analyze the possible impacts that will come from the law they are drafting. Representatives must know for sure which social groups are directly affected and could suffer financial loss. This obligates the Representatives to take on the aspirations of the various social groups that have an interest, specifically those social groups that could suffer financial loss. Representatives are tasked with becoming a liaison, and bridging between various constituent interests.

Good public policies are not just oriented toward state interests, but primarily oriented toward the making the state's people prosperous.

Accepting Constituent Complaints about Public Services

As representatives of the people, DPR members must have a commitment to advocate on the people's behalf, especially for those people who need help in receiving services from public servants. A Representative's commitment can be seen from the various things he/she does in the framework of taking up, collecting, and accommodating aspirations, to the point where these aspirations have an influence in the follow-up that the Representative will take.

Public Services

An activity or a series of activities with the purpose of fulfilling the need for services in accordance with the laws and regulations for every citizen and resident for goods, services, or administrative services that are made available by public service organizations.

Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services, Article 1, section (1)

The actions of Mac Thornberry, a member of the US House of Representatives, are something you can imitate. At his "online office," constituent services are made available, including offers for help with bureaucracy and red tape in federal government institutions.

For example, the government has a program to give subsidized fertilizer specifically to small farmers. In practice, according to information from constituents, small farmers cannot get that subsidized fertilizer and must buy fertilizer at market price. As a Representative, one must advocate on behalf of people who need help. A Representative could contact the Ministry of Agriculture and the Office of Agricultural Services in his electoral region regarding the distribution of the subsidized fertilizer. He or she could also work to set up a meeting between small farmers and the appropriate government officials. Alternatively, bringing this problem to mass media outlets is another method for speeding up the government in resolving this problem through broader public pressure.

Cooperation and Coordination between DPR members and Elements of Society

In common parlance, elements of society are often identified as grassroots organizations, non-governmental organizations or interest groups that generally form a part of a Representative's constituents.

Through cooperation and coordination, it is hoped that consensus, synergy, and commitment to society's interests can be built.

The benefits of creating a cooperation and coordination network with elements of society are:

- One will get accurate information on constituent issues.
- One has data and alternative solutions that have been discussed by or even put forward by these elements of society.

Back to the example of the misuse of subsidized fertilizer: Farmer's groups would be a strategic partner in discussing and looking for alternative solutions.

Communicating with Regional Governments in Meeting Regional Needs

In common parlance, regional government means an instrument of regional governance that consists of the Head of a Region and a Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), at either the provincial or the regency/ city level.

Representatives can advance various regional government needs in the formulation of national policies. Representatives provide access for regional governments to receive various facilities and services from the central government.

For example, say that based on an independent study, the potential for economic growth of the region that is one's electoral district will expand rapidly if a bridge is built to connect one regency with another. The regional government has already been successful in securing international help to build said bridge, but the necessary funds are still lacking. The Representative will be asked to help in promoting the cause so that the region receives an allocation of funds to build the bridge in the state budget that is being prepared.

This is an example of an important role for a DPR member: as a communicator between the regional government and the central government, especially in helping the regional government access facilities and services.



b. Accountability

Another important aspect related to the representative function is accountability. The concept of representation is needed as a basis for DPR members to represent their constituents. However, constituents must continue to monitor the DPR members who represent them in the DPR. This indicates that not only communication is necessary, but also accountability from the Representative to the people whom he or she represents.

For accountability, it is important to do the following things:

1. Communicate with the public and emphasize public interests that have already been promoted and become points of debate between the House and the administration.
2. Inform those who bring forward aspirations or concerns of your next steps for addressing those aspirations or concerns.

Communicating with the Public, and Emphasizing Public Interests that Have Already Been Promoted

This activity makes constituents understand the processing of their aspirations and helps them understand what obstacles are blocking the realization of their aspirations, which are already being promoted by the DPR member as their representative in the DPR.

On their websites, several parliamentary party groups and individual DPR members have explained the thinking that they put forward in debating certain bills, and the opinions of the party group or even personal opinions on issues relating to the public. However, on many of the websites of DPR members, they only give opinions concerning national issues, despite the fact that local issues related to a DPR member's electoral district should receive serious consideration so that constituents do not feel ignored.

The content of your parliamentary party group's website and of your own website as a DPR member should be different. On a party group's website, national issues must be the main point of attention. In contrast, a Representative's website should pay more attention to local issues in accordance with the Representative's electoral district, along with things related to the execution of the Representative's duties in the DPR.

■

Besides their websites, some Representatives also actively communicate with the public regarding their mission in parliament in the form of mass media publications and seminars and public discussions.

There are even those who collect their opinions from those mass media outlets into a book. Of course, this is a worthwhile effort to show the public what has been accomplished and what is still being debated with the administration.

Informing about Follow-Up on Aspirations and Concerns that Have Been Received

This generates constituents' trust in their Representative, and it is an efficient way to manage electoral support for Representatives and their parties.

Representatives must inform constituents about the outcome of their work. With this information, constituents will be able to evaluate their Representatives' efforts based on the authority that Representatives have and their place in the government structure.

Differences between the constituents' private interests and the Representative's actions may be seen by constituents as shortcomings.

What one Representative has done as regards accountability is something that others should imitate. He produced a book containing information about the process of taking on aspirations, activities that have been undertaken, financial reports, and the outcome of his work while he has been a Representative (Ma'shum, Saifullah: 2008). In the framework of transparency and accountability of a Representative to his or her constituents, it is good to be in the habit of conducting a yearly evaluation of legislative tasks that can be put periodically into a report for his or her electoral district.

Table 2
Views of DPR and DPRD Members

(Survey question: Does this institution represent the interests of regional society?)

VIEW of DPR MEMBERS		VIEW of DPRD I MEMBERS		VIEW of DPRD II MEMBERS	
Represents well	22%	Represents well	25%	Represents well	34%
Represents poorly	35%	Represents poorly	31%	Represents poorly	28%
Does not represent	15%	Does not represent	12%	Does not represent	11%
Don't know	26%	Don't know	29%	Don't know	25%
No answer	3%	No answer	2%	No answer	2%

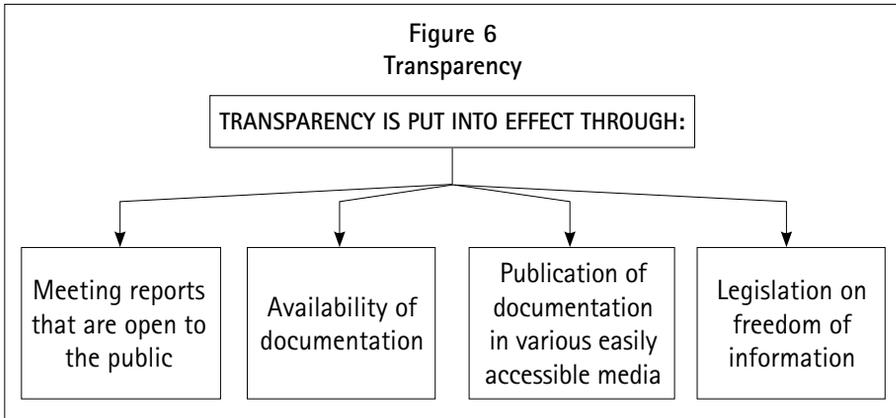
Source: *"The Voice of the People to the People's Representatives"* as quoted in the summary of the findings of the Study "Compiling Indicators of Democracy" by the Directorate of Politics, Communication and Information, BAPPENAS, p. 6.

From this survey, one can see that only a very small percentage feel represented by their DPR members. This survey was conducted in July, 2000, with 3000 respondents (aged 18 or above or already married) in 60 regencies and cities in 20 provinces.

We can see from this study conducted by the Directorate of Politics, Communication and Information of BAPPENAS (the National Planning Board), that the level of accountability of the people's representatives to their constituents is perceived as "Low," as seen from the efforts of Representatives such as meetings and reports. This indicates that constituents see a need for meetings and periodic reports as a form of accountability to them.

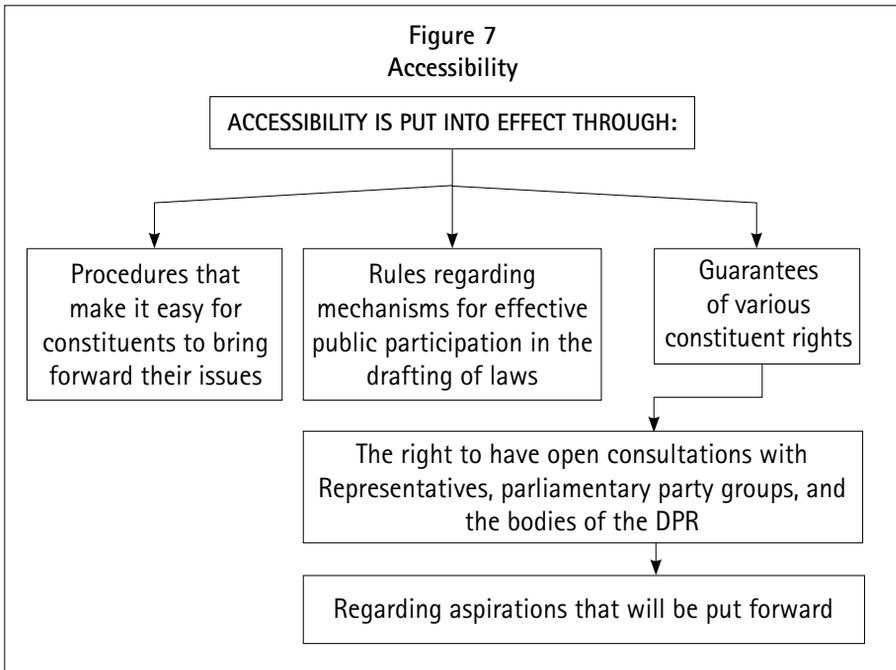
c. Transparency

The requirement of transparency is that parliament be open to the public and transparent in conducting its business



d. Accessibility

The condition of accessibility is the involvement of the public, including civil society



CHAPTER II

Constituents

Who are a Representative's Constituents?

There can be different levels of primacy between one constituent and another. Consider, for example, the differences between voters who are:

- The general public,
- Voters who are sympathizers, and
- Voters who are members of the party.

The sociological conditions of constituents in the various electoral districts in Indonesia are really quite varied, because of the high level of plurality in our society. This leads to the emergence of differences in the level of primacy of constituents.

Constituent in this context is *a voter in the Representative's electoral district*. However, there can be different levels of primacy between one constituent and another.

Even so, Representatives must still consider the various aspirations and issues that they bring forward, because it is the Representative who represents the constituents and promotes their aspirations in parliament. This also includes constituents in various organizations, namely:

1. Membership organizations;
2. Collateral organizations; and
3. Other organizations such as religious organizations and civil society organizations.

Just as with voters, there are also differences in the level of primacy between one organization and another. As an example of these differences, one can consider the different levels of primacy between organizations which are membership organizations and other organizations that are not membership organizations and collateral organizations. An example of a collateral organization that existed before the party was even founded is Nahdlatul Ulama for the National Awakening Party (PKB).

A Representative's Constituents are:

1. Voters in the Representative's electoral district
2. Organizations in the Representative's electoral district, including:
 - religious organizations, such as mosque youth groups
 - organizations of educational institutions
 - professional organizations
 - civil society organizations, in the form of NGOs or other social empowerment organizations
 - sports organizations, such as soccer clubs

In practice, it can easily happen that a constituent becomes a particular Representative's constituent because of the scope of duties of that Representative in the DPR, in line with the Committee on which he/she serves. Representatives clearly cannot reject the aspirations and concerns of these constituents.

Besides that, regional governments and Regional Houses of Representatives (DPRD) may also need the help of DPR Members. That help can take the form of access to receive facilities and services from the central government, especially on regional issues that need solving at a central level. Under the concept of regional autonomy, regional governments have autonomy to organize their governance, including providing public services. However, in funding regional governments, they need funds whose allocation is provided in the National Budget (APBN), as well as in various laws needed in connection with the conduct of governance in the regions. This necessitates cooperation and coordination between every Representative and their regional governments and Regional Houses of Representatives.

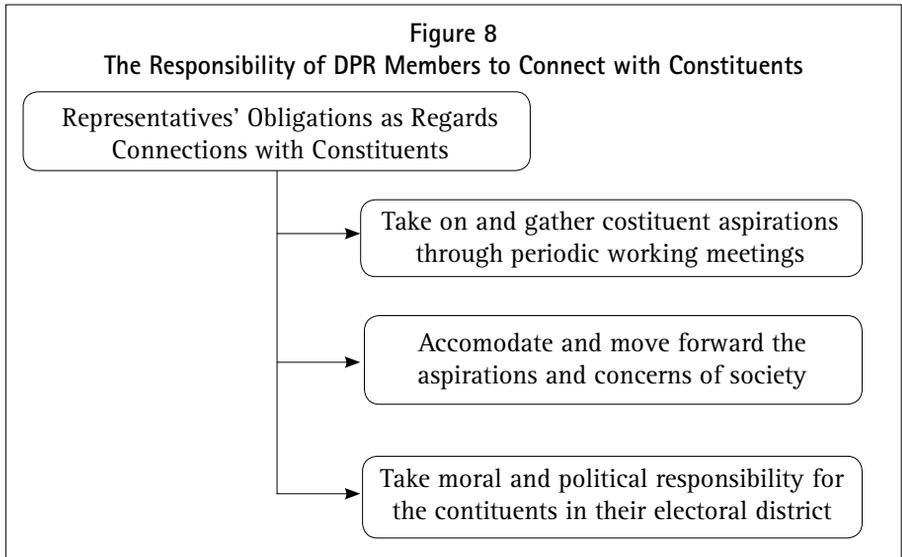
For example, a Representative must take into account various local issues, especially if they relate to broader interests. Take, for example, the silting up of rivers and the uncontrolled construction of residential areas near the rivers in the Puncak region of West Java. This situation affects the national economy, as it can cause floods that cripple nearly all activities, including economic activities, in the greater Jakarta area.

The Importance of Relations with Constituents

DPR members are chosen by the people based on specified electoral districts. The election is run on a proportional system with an open list, whereby each person who will become a DPR member must receive a certain number of votes in the election. Thus, it is clear that to become a DPR member, one must get significant support from constituents.

Communication between Representatives and constituents is a must. As receivers of a mandate, Representatives must exercise their authority based on the aspirations of the constituents that they represent. Input from their constituents is then articulated and forms the basis of Representatives' programs in drafting laws and overseeing government organization.

The importance of relationships between Representatives and constituents has caused this to be laid out in law as an obligation. This is an obligation for Representatives along with their other obligations.



At the same time, the DPR as an institution has the task and authority to take on, gather, accommodate and move forward the aspirations of society.

The elucidation of Law No. 27 of 2009 on Obligations of DPR Members states the following:

“Periodic working meetings” are:

An obligation for Representatives to meet with their constituents routinely during each recess, the outcome of which meetings with constituents will be reported in written form to the political party through their DPR party group.

Providing moral and political accountability to the constituents in their electoral district during each recess and each session by **struggling politically** and putting forward the aspirations of their voters.

To fulfill these obligations properly, several actions can be taken, namely:

1. Map out constituents
2. Map out potential and challenges of the electoral district
3. Get to know and cooperate with various parties that have influence in the electoral district

Mapping out Constituents

Representatives must have data on their constituents, for example with regard to:

- population,
- male/female ratio within the population,
- number who are of working age,
- number of adherents of various religions,
- number of workers in various industries,
- number who are unemployed,
- levels of education,
- number of educational institutions,
- number of religious institutions,
- number and focus of social organizations, etc.

Data regarding constituents is essential in connection with constituent aspirations, especially on issues where Representatives must make their decisions based on differing constituent opinions. With the information they have, the Representative's decision will

be based on rational arguments so that it can be accepted by all his or her constituents and he or she can take responsibility for it in terms of public policy.

For example, say Representative A's electoral district is an agricultural region. There are supporters and opponents among his constituents for the state budget bill that allocates funds to the district for building a bridge. This is because some feel it would be more useful if the funds were given for procurement of technology for processing food crops. The data that Representative A has indicates that the area's potential will grow more if technology for agricultural processing is developed. Thus, Representative A pushes to have an allocation for said technology in the state budget bill.

Mapping out the Potential and Challenges of an Electoral District

It is the responsibility of Representatives to map out the potential and challenges facing their electoral district. Analysis of these points is essential in order to know constituent aspirations, which are based on their long-term interests. In practice, this mapping of potential and challenges for an electoral district often becomes part of the analysis in compiling an Inventory List of Issues (DIM), as material for putting forward bills, or becomes part of the position of a political party group as they work out budget allocations.

For example, say a Representative's electoral district produces sugar cane, but there are not enough sugar cane mills. This condition means that farmers do not enjoy fair profits because of the low price offered for sugar cane. Given these conditions, the Representative could sponsor a program to fund Farmers' Groups for the form of procurement of basic sugar mills. This would increase the farmers' prosperity, and is based on their actual needs.

Getting to Know and Cooperating with Various Parties that Have Influence in an Electoral District

Representatives must get to know and cooperate with several parties. They must familiarize themselves with the leadership of the regional government, whether governor, regent, mayor, sub-district head, or chairperson and vice-chairperson of the Provincial DPRD (Regional House of Representatives) and Regency or City DPRDs. The same is true for the leadership of political parties and religious organizations, as well as other organizations in their electoral districts, including educational institutions. With good relationships, Representatives can better execute their representative function. This

will make their objectives in fulfilling their function and authority as Representatives more structured and fitting. In these relationships, Representatives should also take into account the issue of division of authority, or which areas fall into the domain of the central government and which fall into the domain of the regional government, so that the channeling of aspirations can have clear objectives.

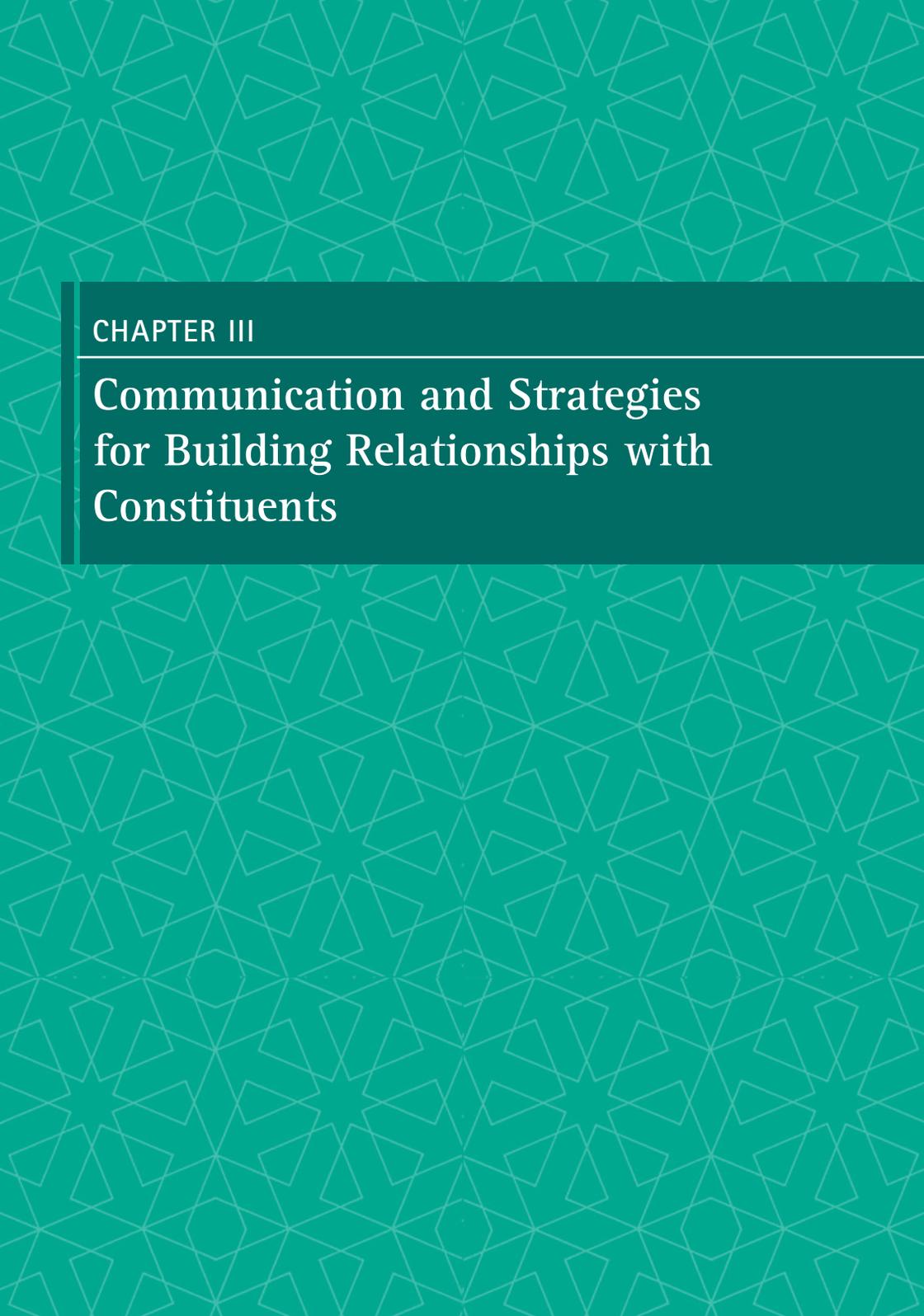
Cooperation between Representatives and societal organizations can be seen in Liberia. In this country, serious transportation problems make it very difficult to have large meetings in remote areas. However, with help from local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who helped to organize the meetings, the meetings were successful and attended by one hundred participants.

For example, there is a group of constituents that is a community living in an area alongside a river. From the observation of the Representative and his or her staff, they come to the conclusion that their needs are for sanitation and housing construction. This construction is done after the rainy season ends, because generally their houses will be damaged by floods in the rainy season. As it turns out, those issues were not problems for this community. This is discovered through participatory research undertaken by an educational institution that does research in this community. They find that the needs of the constituents are for organizing local administration and help in forming Neighborhood Associations (RT) and Super-Neighborhood Associations (RW). These are needed in connection with problems for performing legally valid marriages. Without letters of introduction from the RT and RW, they cannot obtain identity cards (KTP), and they cannot get married because they need to submit these documents to the Religious Affairs Office (KUA). Meanwhile, sanitation and housing improvements are not issues to them, because, as to sanitation, they have felt perfectly healthy all this time, and, as to housing, they already understand the risks at play.

This case shows that Representatives must make use of various organizations in order to understand what their constituents really need. Based on that, Representatives can sponsor improvements and improve the quality of life for their constituents.



Good representatives of the people must work hard to improve the quality of life for their constituents. This can be done by creating laws that take the side of the public welfare, promote democratization, and help constituents who have suffered the negative side effects of policies and actions of government administration officials.

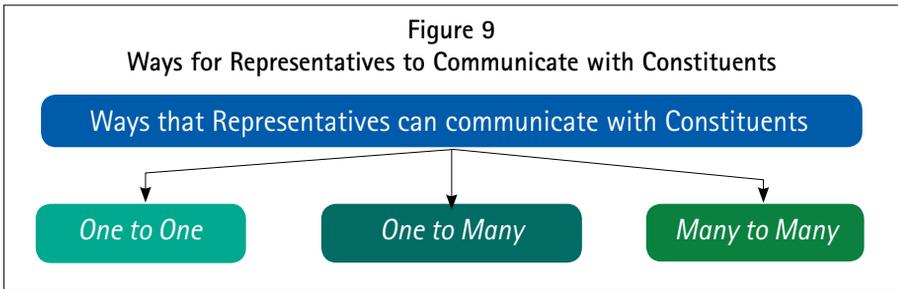


CHAPTER III

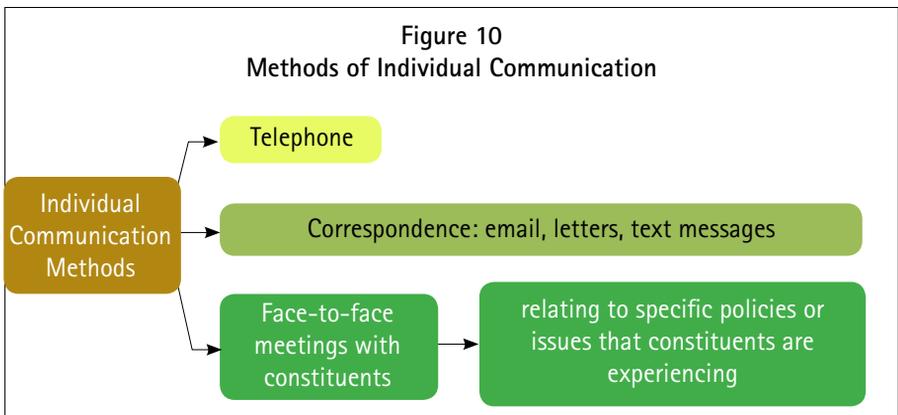
**Communication and Strategies
for Building Relationships with
Constituents**

Communication with Constituents

As noted above, it is very important to build relationships between Representatives and constituents. Constituents will not always support programs that are put forward, or the decisions made by the Representative. However, appreciation will be shown if constituents are encouraged to communicate during the formulation of programs and the decision-making process. This makes constituents familiar with what their elected member of the DPR is working on.



Individual Communication of a Representative and Constituents (One to One)





In the United States, some Representatives periodically send volunteers posting flyers from house to house. These flyers describe the activities of the Representative in connection with issues that are unfolding in the government.

Individual relationships can be a more effective way to build strong relationships than sending a press release. A press release usually only treats general problems. Representatives can also send out questions to certain constituents, especially those seen as individually representative of a sector of society. Ask them for their opinions on issues related to the drafting of bills that are being debated in parliament. For example, put forward individual questions to religious and cultural experts on the drafting of a law on morality.

In one-to-one relationships, Representatives must take into account issues of ethics and the substance of their constituents' problems.

Avoid individual issues from constituents that concern money. Assistance provided should be channeled through institutions and not done individually. The converse is also true: Representatives must not receive gratification in any form whatsoever.

Mass Communication between Representatives and Constituents (One to Many)

There are several methods for mass communication with constituents:

- Produce periodic reports on the results of the Representative's work
- Request to be assigned to disseminate information on certain bills in the Representative's electoral district
- Put bills that are under deliberation on your personal website
- Issue press releases on developments in the deliberation of bills that are under consideration (at the end of each meeting session)
- Hold public meetings with constituents during working visits to discuss the public's problems
- Accept invitations to appear in mass media and at public discussions to give explanations on one's performance of duties as a Representative
- Advocate for society in relation to bureaucratic red tape

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- Create mechanisms so that Representatives can always attend Budget Committee meetings. The goal is to allow the Representative to put forward the budgetary needs of his or her district, and allow him or her to provide information regarding allocations and projects for social development in the district to his or her constituents.

Mass Communication between Several Representatives and Constituents (Many to Many)

Representatives must build cooperative relationships with all other Representatives, especially those from the same parliamentary party group, those who serve with them on the same DPR body, and those from the same electoral district, even if they are from different parties.

Cooperation between Representatives from the same district is, of course, difficult because of different activity schedules. But Representatives must strive for such cooperation to accommodate the aspirations and concerns of society in their electoral district.

Cooperation is undertaken in order to unify positions on various issues that concern social interests or national interests. The goal is to have influence in the compilation of laws or in the organization of government.

Mass communication by multiple representatives can be done by:

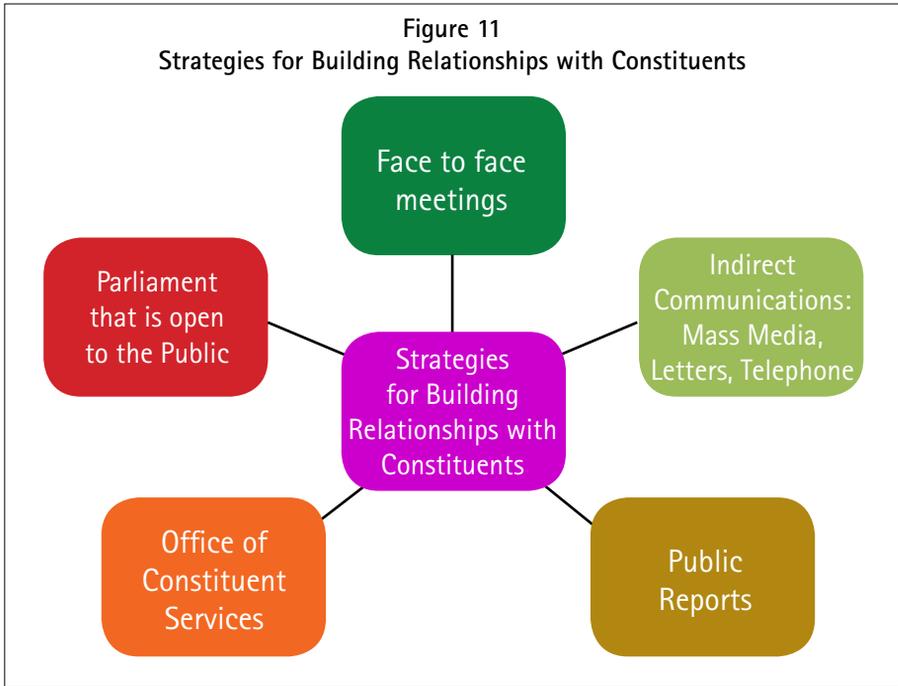
- Giving explanation regarding putting forward rights that require a certain number of votes from Representatives, namely the right to inquiry, the right to interpellation and the right to state opinions.
- Oversight of government policies in opinions presented in the mass media (this can be done by sending letters to the editor to mass media, press releases, or writing in the form of an article).

For example, say Pertamina (the state oil company) has a policy to gradually increase the price of certain sizes of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) containers (used for cooking). Some people take the view that discussions between the government and the DPR are not needed regarding these increases, because these particular LPG containers are not subsidized. Furthermore, the increase is being done in stages, so it will not burden

society. Representatives must push for the government to discuss this issue with the DPR before it happens, because an increase in price will burden the people.

Strategies for Building Relationships with Constituents

In building relationships with constituents, one needs certain strategies. It is certainly not easy to consider all of your constituents, as they are so numerous.



Face-to-Face Meetings

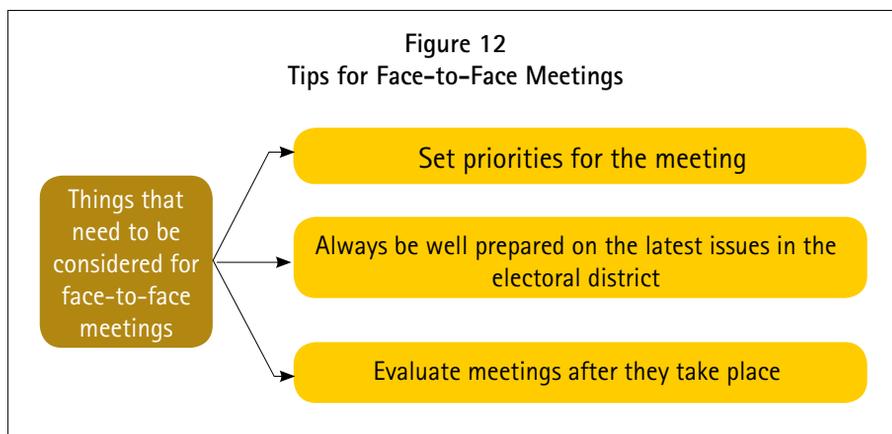
Direct meetings with representatives of constituents at the DPR are something that constituents generally expect, such that meetings with constituents must be arranged, with the primary agenda of publicizing the results of Representatives' work. Additionally, these meetings should capture aspirations from constituents as input for the Representative in fulfilling his subsequent duties.

Table 3
Meetings with Constituents

Have you ever been contacted by the DPR or DPRD?	2001	2002	2003
Have been contacted	7%	4%	2%
Have not been contacted	85%	87%	95%
Don't know	8%	8%	2%
No answer	1%	1%	1%

Source: *Media Indonesia*, 6 February 2004; *IFES 2001, 2002, 2003* as quoted in the summary of the findings of the Study "Compiling Indicators of Democracy" by the Directorate of Politics, Communication and Information, BAPPENAS, p. 5.

Meetings do not become more effective because there are fewer meetings. Rather, Representatives should strive to increase the number of face-to-face meetings with constituents.



Face-to-face meetings do not have to mean involving a lot of people. Direct visits to constituents are an alternative that should be considered, such as visits to constituents' homes or public places such as hospitals or traditional markets.

Table 4

Face-to-Face Strategies of Representatives in Several Countries	
Mexico	A dense schedule of working visits is fit in by a Representative by using a car which has been fixed up to become a mobile office. This car is used for as long as he is making working visits in the district. It is complete with the name and photo of the Representative plastered on the side of the car.
Cambodian	For Representatives who do not have a Constituent Office, volunteers are an alternative to build relationships between Representatives and their constituents.
Chile, since 1990 and Slovakia	Constituent visits are done one week per month in electoral districts
Yemen	A Representative uses the radio to announce his visits. These announcements are put out several weeks before the meetings are held, complete with date, place and the activity that will happen.

Representatives should calculate so that the working visits that they make will have a routine schedule of meetings and well-coordinated issues, so that the discussions will be more focused. Announcements must be made for meetings that are to be held, either through the media or in cooperation with local social organizations.

Tips for Face-to-Face Meetings

- a. Publicize the meeting plans (through the media or mass organizations)
- b. Invite mass media
- c. Make, keep and manage recordings of the meetings
- d. Take note of every aspiration and concern that is put forward
- e. Provide photos of the meeting to the media
- f. Study important issues for the electoral district (for example health issues; issues of employment by holding a jobs fair, etc.)

Study important issues for the electoral district. One Representative in Nigeria used the issue of health, specifically HIV/ AIDS, which is a national issue in that country, to provide education for his constituents. More than 400 people came to the Health Fairs that he conducted. These were also opportunities for him to familiarize himself with other constituent aspirations related to health, namely better handling of malaria and diabetes.

After the meeting, the Representative must also send answers relating to the various aspirations and concerns that were put forward during the meeting. He or she can also send letters of thanks to those who attended. This is to show appreciation for the constituents' participation.

*Representatives have to package face-to-face meetings
as interesting events*

This is important to make constituents interested in attending, for example by having a demonstration and competition in the arts, presenting awards for certain achievements, or even athletic competitions. Besides using the event for communication and political discussion with constituents, it can also show appreciation for the talents and abilities of constituents.

Mass Media

DPR members must use other media that can connect with DPR members, without meeting directly face-to-face, such as through mass media. It is important to establish cooperation with reporters, TV stations, radio, and other media, especially those that broadcast news programs and information about parliament. Relationships with mass media are not established in context of the mass media's capacity as a watchdog, but rather as a channel of information that connects with constituents.

Relationships with journalists must be professional and value ethics. Good relationships will make many things easier. They will make it easier to have accountability to constituents on the one hand, and to take on constituent aspirations on the other hand.

For example, many radio stations have programs specifically aimed at channeling society's complaints to the relevant parties. A Representative can offer himself to a radio station as a resource person.

Several countries, including India, Peru and Mexico, have cooperation between parliament and television stations. Indeed, in Brazil, there is a talk show that runs every week where Members of Parliament are the participants and answer questions from constituents. Sierra Leone has a similar program.

Establishing a Constituent Office in an Electoral District

Through this office, constituents generally feel that their aspirations and issues can be addressed immediately. Several DPR members from the 2004-2009 period opened self-funded service offices in their electoral districts. Because they differ from the DPD, DPR members are not given specific fund allocations for running Constituent Offices in their electoral districts.

In the experience of one Representative who has a Constituent Office, funding requests comprised the largest percentage (60%) of the societal aspirations that were received by the Constituent Office. The remainder were constituent aspirations and inputs.

If funding requests are received from constituents, Representatives can channel them institutionally. Representatives, through their staff that are specifically assigned to this, can advocate for constituents to put forward proposals. Of course, these should be in line with the programs in the relevant government Ministry or the regional government in the electoral district.

Important to Remember!!

When a Constituent Office cannot yet be opened in every electoral district, the constituent services that are managed by a bureau of the DPR Secretariat General with the task of Receiving Public Aspirations must be used as much as possible.

Cooperation with the Secretariat General is essential, because in 2006 alone, 1,273 letters containing societal concerns were received through the DPR Secretariat General. All of these letters that came in, of course, constituted a means for Representatives to get to know constituents' aspirations, with a clear source.

Making a Guidebook or Joint Website along with a Hot Line for Constituents to Call

The website states the names of the Representatives. Some Representatives have also provided their telephone and fax numbers. However, the website does not have a special section for constituents to send emails to their representatives. This clearly poses a technical constraint, because the Representatives provide information on their websites but their constituents cannot convey their aspirations directly; they still have to employ other media, such as telephone or fax.

As an example, the United States House of Representatives manages a Constituent Electronic Mail System, and seven members of the House of Representatives have joined this system.

Telephone text messages can also be used as a medium to receive aspirations and concerns from constituents. Text messages can be very effective and safe way to connect with constituents, even more so if a message is left on the phone of the Representative that those who phone should communicate by text. This is so that without taking too much time, the Representative receives diverse information from the text messages that come in.

Making Reports to the Public Regarding the Results of their Work, Either Individually by Representatives or Institutionally by the DPR

These reports include:

- Annual reports on the execution of duties and functions as well as the financial accountability of the DPR or from each Representative, which are publicized to the public. These should contain information about the allowances the Representative receives and on the scope of duties relating to the budget and the creation of laws, so that Representatives will not be seen as a "money pit." The public perception of the DPR as a "money pit" can be eliminated by issuing transparent financial statements.

One Representative has set a good example. He has presented to the public, in the form of a book, all of his revenue and expenditures as a Representative. This has also been done by a member of the British House of Commons, Norman Lamb. On his website he has spelled out the use of funds that he receives as a Member of Parliament to pay for various things including the cost of running an office of constituent services.

- Dissemination of transcripts of discussions in DPR meetings.

If the meetings of the DPR are open meetings, then it would be a positive thing if the transcripts of meeting discussions were accessible by the public as soon as possible. This is even more true now that the Law on the Freedom of Public Information has been enacted, guaranteeing that the public can get information.

Parliament that is Open to the Public

As a place where the people's representatives gather, the parliament building should also be a place that the people can easily access.

Several steps can be taken to make parliament more open to the public, among others:

Tours of the Parliament Building

This is done to bring citizens closer to the institution that represents them. Seeing their representatives performing their duties is an excellent part of this learning process. It also verifies what mass media report in the news regarding the attendance and behavior of DPR members.

These tours must be well-managed. Because their goal is to bring constituents closer to Representatives, they must include an explanation on the authority of Representatives and a chance to observe Representatives' activities in open meetings.

In Macedonia, on Education Day, several schools are permitted to visit parliament. The students receive an explanation on the function of parliament and what the parliament can do for them.

Publishing a Daily Media Outlet for Parliament

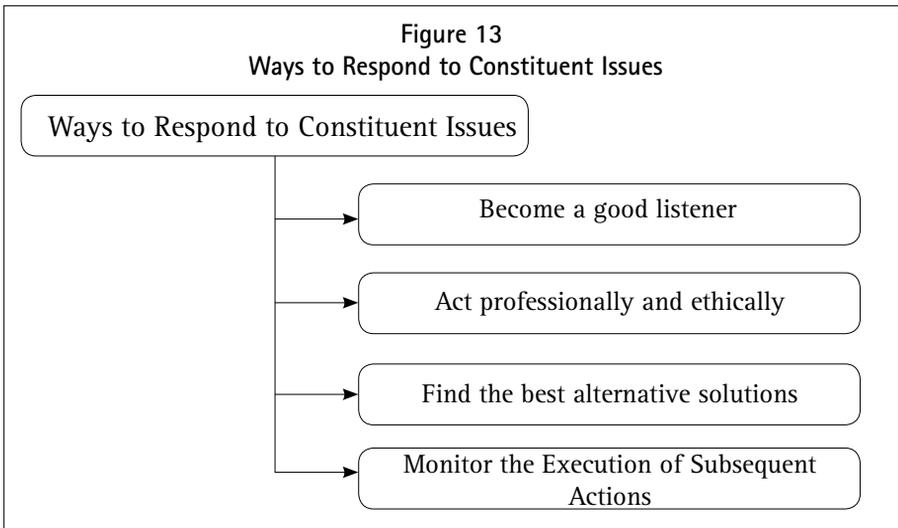
This medium is in the form of a newsletter or website for Parliament describing the various activities of Representatives. It can also be complemented with summaries of Representatives' activities and meeting transcripts.

Mozambique produces a periodical publication on the activities of its Representatives, which also contains interviews on various issues in Parliament. In Peru, their daily publication is put on a website that is managed by Parliament. On the site, they lay out Parliament's agenda and the contents of bills that are being debated. The publication of bill drafts is important so that the public knows the substance of the bills and provides input related to the bills under discussion.

CHAPTER IV

Responding to Constituent Issues

Constituent issues are matters that must receive a response from DPR members. Representatives need to do several things in response to constituent issues.



Be a Good Listener

All constituent issues are important issues, regardless of the constituents' background (social-economic, gender, educational, etc.). The concept of "one man one vote" indicates that constituents have a high status to receive attention from Representatives as their voice in the DPR.

Act Professionally and Ethically

As a DPR member, your daily behavior will receive a lot of attention from the entire population of this country, and especially from the constituents who elected you. By always firmly upholding principles and professionalism, various matters will be taken



into consideration before making decisions. You must make the best possible use of your capacity as a DPR member and maximize the use of expert staff. The goal is that the Members of the DPR will make a strong contribution to the nation.

One good example is a book written by a Representative containing a compilation of his thoughts that had been published in various mass media. This demonstrates this Representative's accountability for the performance of his duties, based on ethics and professionalism.

Finding the Best Alternative Solutions

Not all problems can be solved by Representatives. When it comes to things that the Representative cannot do, he or she must be able to say "No." If you are asked for help that is outside your authority, such requests must be forwarded to those who do have that authority. However, as a DPR member, you can advocate for constituents by suggesting other ways to solve their issues. Representatives can channel complaints they receive from their constituents to the appropriate parties.

Most constituent issues should be able to be solved by government institutions at the regional level. Representatives and their staff should know about the various public services and social services in their electoral district by building good relationships with local government officials in the region. Such relationships are needed so that they can contact these people when necessary.

Representatives need to prepare a list of government administrative institutions in the district, especially in connection with public services that constituents can receive. This is valuable information for constituents, and also provides useful political education.

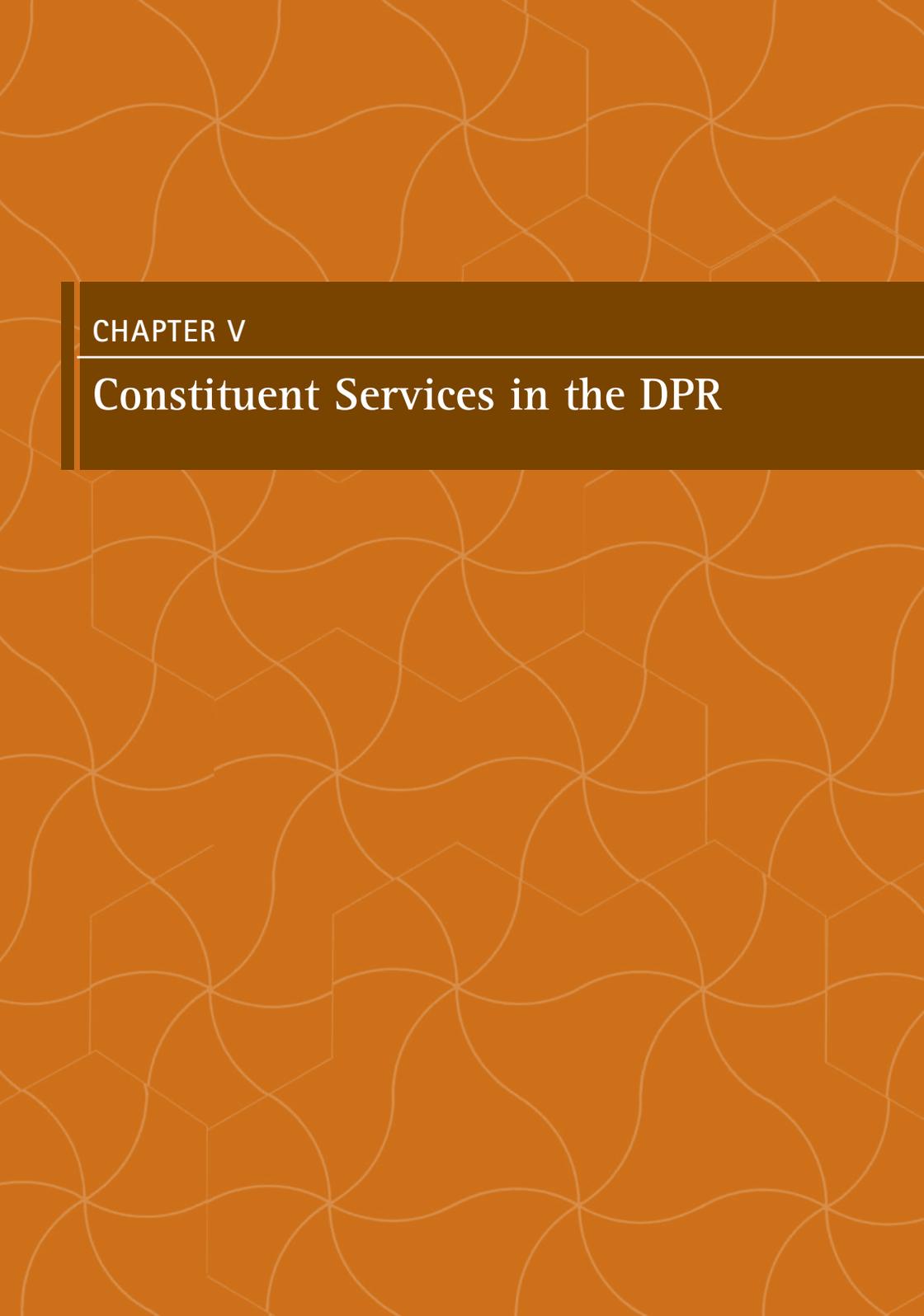
Monitor the Follow-Up

Continually monitor developments from the alternative solutions that have been given, so that the maximum result can be achieved.

The main problem in channeling constituent aspirations and concerns is monitoring to follow up on what has been done



In relation to the execution of legislative and oversight functions, generally constituents do not understand the final results as reported through mass media. On this point, Representatives can communicate with their constituents about the process of making those various policies. This is where we see the importance of establishing multiple channels for communication with constituents. This can take the form of communication on your website and that of your political party group, posting flyers, articles in the mass media, attending seminars and public discussions, and publishing books on the activities you have undertaken as a Representative.



CHAPTER V

Constituent Services in the DPR



Constituent Services in the DPR

Members of society can come directly to the DPR to put forward their aspirations and/or complaints. These aspirations and concerns are received and channeled by the DPR Secretariat General to the relevant DPR body that deals with that issue, and/or to parliamentary party groups.

Unlike the House of Regional Representatives (DPD), DPR members are not given an allocation of funds specifically to manage a Constituent Office in their electoral districts. This means that Representatives have to pay attention to the aspirations and concerns received from the DPR Secretariat General. Because so much constituent input comes in, this is an inexpensive way to familiarize yourself with the aspirations and issues of constituents, and their clear source makes it easy to follow up.

Letters that come in to the Secretariat General are grouped into 11 categories, namely:

- Land, Housing, and Buildings
- State Apparatus and Civil Service
- Labor and Employment
- Politics and Law
- Economy and Finance
- Social and Cultural Issues
- Education
- Health
- Religious Affairs
- Forestry, and
- Environment

The aspirations that are received are then processed further in the DPR.

Figure 14
Cycle of Constituent Services in the DPR



In a 2007 study on the Mechanism for Follow-Up on Letters to the DPR on Society's Aspirations and Concerns, the main constraint found was related to human resources, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In other words, the DPR-RI Secretariat General does not have enough employees to handle letters of concern, and these personnel also need to be of better quality.

Categorizing letters that come in is professional work. Because of this, the ability of the staff to categorize the letters that come in must be improved, so that the next stage, namely forwarding the letters to the DPR body that deals with that topic and/or to parliamentary party groups, will proceed properly because the letters are forwarded to the appropriate body.

The problem that occurs, and that must be noted, is that after the letters are forwarded they only undergo procedural handling; that is, the letters are recorded, but they do not receive adequate follow-up handling from the Representatives.

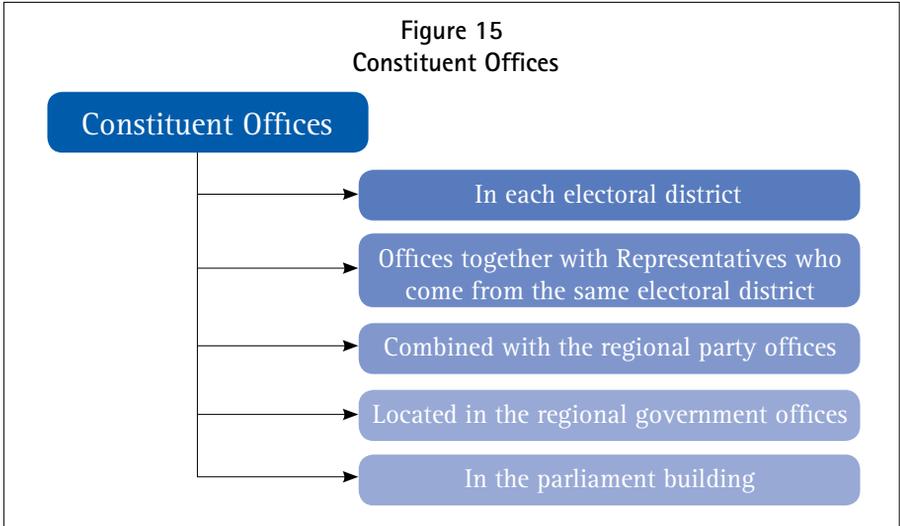
It is not enough when the only follow-up done on letters of societal concern is discussion in working meetings and public hearings. It is also not enough to send a letter to the relevant agency to request their response and attention to this concern. Instead, Representatives should respond to these letters.

It is the responsibility of the people's representatives to follow up on letters that are related to their authority in the DPR

Services of Constituent Offices

The 2006 Study Team for Improving the Performance of DPR-RI (whose membership comprised 21 DPR members from various parliamentary party groups) noted several things that were identified as obstacles to the performance of the DPR, both those internal and external to DPR members in performing their duties and functions. One main point was that communication between DPR members and their constituents was lacking. Their recommendation on this point was the establishment of an "Aspiration House" that would bridge between DPR members and constituents in their electoral districts. Another issue was the information gap.

Figure 15
Constituent Offices



Ideally there would be a constituent office in each Representative’s electoral district.

Implementation of the DPR’s function in the context of representing the people (based on laws) can be done by:

- Opening up space for public participation,
- Transparency in performance of functions, and
- Accountability to the people for the work of the DPR.

Currently, aspirations and concerns from society, both in the form of letters and in the form of visits, are received by the DPR Secretariat General, to later be distributed to the respective DPR body that deal with the particular issue and/ or to political party groups. However, in practice several DPR members have, at their own expense, established Constituent Offices in their electoral districts.

Figure 16
Funding of the Constituent Office

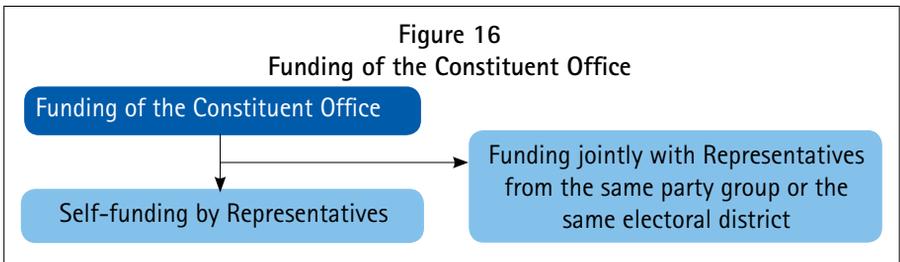


Table 5
Constituent Offices in Other Countries

Examples of Constituent Offices in Other Countries		
Country	Representative	Constituent Offices
United Kingdom	Norman Lamb , Member of the House of Commons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts the address of his constituent office • Describes the staff of his constituent office on his website • Posts the uses of funds that he receives as a Member of Parliament in paying for various things • Posts the costs of operating his constituent office
Canada	Justin Trudeau Member of the House of Commons (His Constituent Office is based in his home district in Quebec)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts the address, telephone number, and fax number of his constituent office • Posts the address, telephone number and fax number of his office in the House of Commons
Poland		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament provides offices for Representatives in the regional party offices
Palestine		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constituent Offices are established in regions and the office is used by all political parties
Lithuania		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a special allocation for the management of Constituent Offices • The Constituent Office is located at the Regional Government office • Parties report to parliament on the management of funds for these offices
Chile (since 1990)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each member of parliament has a meeting room of their own in the parliament building to meet with constituents • The meeting room can be used by all Representatives to meet with their constituents (as a less costly alternative)

The location of a Constituent Office is ideally in a place that is easily accessible.



Conditions of a Constituent Office are, at a minimum:

- a. Located in a place that is easily accessible;
- b. Has special staff, administrative staff and financial staff. For the Special Staff:
 - Staff who have analytical abilities;
 - Staff who can build good relationships with various groups and the mass media; and
 - Staff who can advocate for constituents.
- c. Office is equipped with communication equipment

Important Roles that Should be Performed by Special Staff:

- Managing relations with the media
- Preparing press releases
- Organizing schedule of meetings with constituents
- Organizing schedule of meetings with certain groups and organizations (as related to the Representative's scope of duties)
- Help to prepare reports to the parliamentary party group on working meetings that have been conducted

Representatives must establish a cycle of constituent services at their Constituent Offices. The goal is to have a mechanism for managing relationships with constituents that runs smoothly. They can imitate the system of services at the DPR Secretariat General or make a simpler system. Of course, there will be differences. In the Constituent Office, there must be a stage of reporting by the staff to the Representative. This is done before the staff follows up on sensitive issues for the Representative and the party, and also for things that have a wide impact.

Figure 17
Cycle of Constituent Services



CHAPTER VI

**The Role of Parliamentary Party Groups
in the DPR in the Management of
Constituent Aspirations**

Just as with all parliaments in the world, the membership of the first chamber is filled with political parties. This means that Members of Parliament have to consider their political party's interests as well as the interests of their constituents.

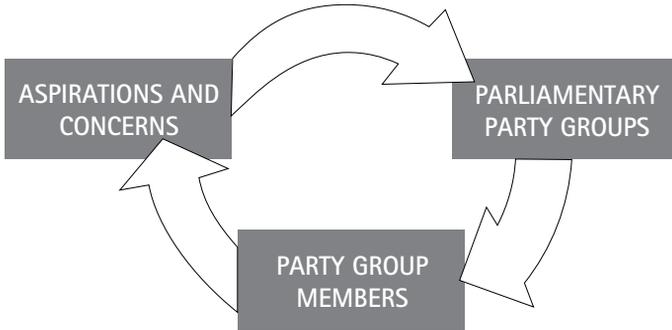
The involvement of members of parliament with their parties varies. In New Zealand and India, the attachment is very strong. In New Zealand, MPs from the Labor Party must sign a promise that obligates them to be faithful to the decisions of the party. In India, Members of Parliament will lose their seats if they express opinions that differ from those of their party.

The attachment of DPR members to their political parties is also quite close, such that it is stipulated that every DPR member must be a member of a parliamentary party group. These parliamentary party groups (*fraksi*) are formed by political parties that meet the electoral threshold to win seats in the DPR.

The importance of the party groups can be seen in the rules on party groups, which are stipulated in a separate section of the Law. Parliamentary party groups are also accommodated in matters such as facilities, budget, and expert personnel to facilitate the work of the party groups.

A special day is set aside for Representatives to meet with the other members of their parliamentary party group (Party Group Day). At this event, the parliamentary party groups gather together and discuss various things relating to the Representatives, including matters related to the aspirations and concerns of constituents. The parliamentary party groups are also the ones that manage various issues and problems related to constituents.

Figure 18
The Role of Parliamentary Party Groups in the Management of
Constituent Aspirations



It is the parliamentary party groups that determine which issues generally must be discussed with the Representatives' constituents. In addition, parliamentary party groups will ask for reports on working meetings that are held, in order to know the aspirations of constituents as a reference for determining the party group's policies.

The Law stipulates that it is the party groups that undertake evaluations of the performance of Representatives and other party group members. The party groups then report to the public. If a party group has expert staff, a good system, and adequate funding, then the role of the party group in providing constituent services will be a great help to the Representative. This is because the party group will have all kinds of documentation and data that can be used as templates, especially in drafting party group policies and bills to be proposed. In this way, Representatives can perform their duties more easily because they are in accord with the needs of constituents and the interests of the party.

One complaint that arises from Representatives is that they are assigned to a particular Body of the DPR, but in their meetings with constituents in their electoral district, the aspirations and concerns of the constituents are not limited to their specific scope of duties in the DPR; rather, the constituents voice issues related to all the problems they experience in the home district. The parliamentary party groups need to play an active role in addressing this problem.



A parliamentary party group must manage its members well. Party group meetings can be used as a means for members to share with their party group colleagues, both with colleagues from different Committees regarding the various issues in their districts, and with colleagues from different districts for the issues of each specific Committee.

In practice, some party groups only hold party group meetings at the leadership level, but there are other party groups that have made their party group meetings effective in classifying and discussing several issues related to constituent interests that are currently under debate. This is important to provide briefings for Representatives in a way that accommodates their respective electoral districts.

Conclusion

Representatives are the liaison between their constituents and government organizations. Because of this, aspirations and concerns from their constituents have to be managed well. The goal is to articulate and apply them in the formulation of national policies and in the oversight of the conduct of the government.

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