

STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTS IN AFRICA: *Improving support*



A report by the Africa All Party
Parliamentary Group. March 2008



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Acronyms and abbreviations

AAPPG	Africa All Party Parliamentary Group
AWEPA	European Parliamentarians for Africa
CCM	<i>Chama Cha Mapinduzi</i> (Party of the Revolution)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CPA-UK	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, UK
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development
DR Congo	Democratic Republic of Congo
EC	European Commission
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
GOPAC	Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption
GTF	Global Transparency Fund
GTZ	<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i> (German Agency for Technical Cooperation)
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
I-IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IFES	formerly, International Foundation for Election Systems
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IPU-BG	Inter-Parliamentary Union, British Group
MEJN	Malawi Economic Justice Network
NAO	National Audit Office
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDCO	Planning Coordination and Development Office
PNoWB	Parliamentary Network on the World Bank
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAI	Supreme Audit Institution
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SUNY	State University of New York
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WBI	World Bank Institute
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy

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Executive Summary

In recent years, African parliaments¹ have begun to exert greater influence on how their countries are governed. Many African parliaments are now more effective at shaping legislation, monitoring and challenging the executive, and representing citizens' views. However, huge challenges remain. Insufficient constitutional and other provisions continue to constrain parliaments. Even if they enjoy robust powers on paper, the political realities inside and outside parliament mean that parliaments regularly fail to exercise their duties. Problems of institutional capacity, in terms of the available resources, expertise and facilities also loom large. This report sets out the findings of an inquiry by the Africa All Party Parliamentary Group. It explores the factors that hold African parliaments back and how the UK and others can contribute to addressing them.

On behalf of citizens, a parliament is responsible for overseeing the executive and for holding it to account. Our inquiry placed particular emphasis on the function of parliaments as watchdogs over governments and, in particular, to their contribution to overseeing the use of public funds. Evidence submitted to the Group demonstrates how a host of formal and informal influences combine to hamper parliamentary scrutiny.

African citizens and their political leaders are the most important groups for strengthening their parliaments. Development partners can, however, play a role. Until relatively recently, development partners have tended to focus exclusively on the executive branch of government - working over and around parliaments rather than with them. As a result, development partners have often ignored parliaments. Evidence suggests they may even undermine the role of parliaments. This is despite the fact that parliaments can make a crucial contribution to good governance and development.

There are signs that this neglect of parliaments has been recognised and is changing. Both in the UK and internationally, there has been a recent upsurge in attention to parliaments and their significance – including their unique position for helping to make sure that aid is used effectively. In DFID's 2006 White Paper, for example, strengthening parliaments was given newfound prominence and coverage. Because of the importance of parliaments and the fact that the UK and others are reviewing how to scale-up and improve parliamentary development, the Africa APPG decided to call for evidence on this issue. Members of the Group also visited the parliaments of Uganda, Kenya and Malawi to conduct interviews first-hand.

Evidence gathered by the Group about how best to assist domestic African efforts suggests five fundamental areas:

As we were told in Kenya, 'you cannot strengthen a political institution whose politics you do not understand'.² Development partners must do more to ensure that they base interventions on a thorough understanding of the pressures, interests and actors that shape parliamentary leverage. While many of the formal institutional features of African parliaments are common to parliaments elsewhere, the political environments they operate in are context-specific. Parliamentary assistance is itself inherently political and must be based on close knowledge of individual parliaments and their position in relation to other institutions and to the broader political culture. As we were told in Uganda:

Strengthening parliaments isn't simply a capacity issue; it's an intensely political issue. We need to dispel the entrenched idea amongst many donors that what's holding parliaments back is an apolitical issue of capacity. Capacity building initiatives that approach parliament as a normal institution are doomed to failure.³

Parliamentary strengthening will only succeed if it is pulled by local actors – both inside and outside parliament - not just pushed by donors. Initiatives must build on, build with, and build up, African efforts and channels to strengthen parliaments. As appropriate, development partners must align their efforts with local systems and initiatives. Too often, steps to strengthen parliament reflect funding supply, rather than local demands and needs. Interventions should go beyond short-term, *ad hoc* measures and focus on the long-term institutional development of parliaments.

Training parliamentary clerks or improving IT equipment, for example, will not make the executive more accountable to parliament unless MPs and their parties have the political will to ask parliamentary questions, table amendments to legislation and challenge ministers to justify how they spend public money and how they run their ministries. This is why it is vital that parliamentary strengthening work is determined by political context and involves coalitions for reform across MPs, political parties, parliamentary staff and actors outside of parliament.

Development partners must work in step with one another. Approaches need not be uniform but they should be coordinated. This means sharing information and insights, reducing duplication and dividing labour according to comparative advantage. Donors should also do more to form common, streamlined arrangements. Without greater coordination at all levels, development partners will continue to create added burdens for African parliaments and will continue to miss opportunities for efforts to be mutually reinforcing.

If parliament-related support is to be accountable, transparent, and recognised as successful then far-reaching changes are necessary to the gathering, storing and sharing of information. Development partners must ensure that parliamentary strengthening work is based on evidence and results and that information is used to improve collective practice. This requires commitment to evaluating the impact of parliamentary strengthening work and to improving the means of assessing parliamentary performance.

Aid, particularly to African governments through direct budget support, strengthens recipient governments and risks making them more accountable to donors and less accountable to their people. Therefore, development assistance that does not concentrate directly *on* parliaments should nonetheless consider potential implications *for* parliaments so as to minimise harm to the position of parliaments and maximise benefit. Development partners must also proactively make available timely, transparent and full information on aid flows and negotiations in order that parliaments can play their role in ensuring that all public resources are used efficiently, effectively and accountably.

Overarching Recommendations

1. Understand parliaments in their political context

Development partners must approach parliaments in their political context and base interventions on a thorough understanding of the pressures, interests and actors that shape parliamentary leverage.

2. Engage local demand and encourage broad-based local ownership

Parliamentary strengthening will only succeed if it is pulled by MPs, political parties and other local actors, not just pushed by donors. Initiatives must build on, build with, and build up, local efforts and channels to strengthen parliaments.

3. Coordinate

Development partners must work in step with one another. Approaches need not necessarily be uniform but they should be coordinated. This means sharing information and insights, reducing duplication and dividing labour according to comparative advantage. Donors should also do more to form common, streamlined arrangements.

4. Learn lessons and apply them

Development partners must ensure that parliamentary strengthening work is based on evidence and results and that information is gathered, shared and used to improve collective practice. This necessitates moving beyond short-term and scattered efforts. It requires a commitment to evaluating the impact of parliamentary strengthening work and to improving the means of assessing parliamentary performance.

5. Take greater account of parliament in development work

Development partners must ensure that their work does not marginalise or undermine parliaments and that the parliaments of recipient countries are encouraged to play a full part in development relationships.

Further conclusions and recommendations

Understand parliaments in their political context

1. 'Parliament is an inherently political place – politics at all levels shapes what happens. Nothing can substitute for understanding the political context' (Kenyan parliamentary strengthening practitioner). We agree.
2. In Uganda, we were told: 'Strengthening parliaments isn't simply a capacity issue; it's an intensely political issue. We need to dispel the entrenched idea amongst many donors that what's holding parliaments back is an apolitical issue of capacity. Capacity building initiatives that approach parliament as a normal institution are doomed to failure'.⁴ We agree.
3. Development partners must invest more time and resources in analysing the political terrain at parliament and the interests, agendas and individuals that can make or break efforts to reinforce the role of parliament.
4. Development partners who want to assist parliaments need to invest more time in building relationships on the ground.
5. Effective parliamentary assistance must be based on close knowledge of individual parliaments and their position in relation to other institutions and to the broader political culture. Development partners must approach parliament as part of a wider political system rather than as a free-standing institution.
6. The UK should not promote Westminster-inspired reforms without assessing their relevance to African contexts. The practices and experiences of non-African parliaments and of other parliaments within Africa are sometimes useful but measures to strengthen African parliaments must be tuned to local realities and must not be imposed from outside.
7. The pool of donor expertise and experience in parliamentary strengthening is small. As parliamentary strengthening rises up the international development agenda, the quality of parliamentary strengthening work should not be compromised.
8. Development partners must ensure that they have sufficient numbers of staff in post with the right skills, professional background and inter-personal qualities to operate effectively in a parliamentary environment. Drawing more on the expertise of those (in Africa and internationally) that have experience of working in parliaments as MPs or staff is one important part of this.
9. Development partners seeking instant results will be disappointed. In Kenya, we were told that development partners are sometimes 'too quick to run away from the very problems that they are supposed to be alleviating'.

10. In Malawi we were told: ‘Parliaments and MPs are wary of outside support. Donors should not give them cause to ask “who sent him here? What is his hidden agenda?”’⁵ We agree.
11. We believe that support to parliaments as institutions (in terms of human resources and institutional capacity) can translate into support for MPs and can have an enduring impact in creating institutional strengths that are available to future generations of MPs.
12. The importance of political parties to the strength of parliament was a consistent and acutely felt concern throughout this inquiry. DFID should consider working with organisations, such as leading political party institutes/foundations as well as International IDEA, to support the development of political parties. As a first step, DFID should conduct research on the relationship between political parties, parliaments and good governance in Africa.
13. We recommend that within a long-term and predictable approach to supporting parliaments, DFID retains the ability to remain flexible so as to realise the opportunities for parliamentary strengthening presented by changing political circumstances.
14. Development partners have largely overlooked the distinct challenges and opportunities for strengthening parliaments in fragile states. Jointly with other donors, DFID should initiate studies of work in these environments to date and the potential for scaled-up programming.

Engage local demand and encourage broad-based local ownership

15. ‘Build on what the people of a country can do for themselves. [Try to] work to their plans, through their systems. Outside support to parliaments will do more good if it’s long-term, predictable. Too often parliamentary strengthening has been *ad hoc*, stop start’ (Hilary Benn, former UK Secretary of State for International Development).⁶ We agree.
16. A Kenyan MP told us: ‘We like our autonomy and we like to be supported on the programmes that we ourselves have prioritised’.⁷ Too often, steps to strengthen parliament reflect the funding that is available from donors rather than broad local agreement about the needs of parliament.
17. It is not just the fact of local ownership that is important but also its nature and the process by which it is generated. In Malawi and Uganda, we observed how the development of strategic plans to strengthen parliament has been at the centre of efforts to instil broad-based local ownership of reform efforts as well as donor alignment with these efforts. We recommend that a joint-donor comparative study be conducted of early lessons learned from the formulation process and initial results of these strategic plans and others.

18. In Malawi, we were told: ‘In order for reforms to be taken up at parliament it is important not just to push an idea but to ensure that MPs and parliamentary staff pull it’.⁸ We agree.
19. Development partners should seize opportunities to support parliament and civil society in ways that make parliament a positive example of a transparent institution: one that upholds high parliamentary standards; that reaches out to citizens; and that enables access to information.
20. Inter-continental visits by MPs and/or parliamentary staff (both to and from African countries) should occur only when there are specific issues that must be addressed first-hand. The cost-effectiveness and impact of inter-continental trips should be maximised.

Coordinate

21. DFID told the APPG: if... increased donor interest is to translate into more progress in strengthening African parliaments, assistance will have to be provided in a more effective way.⁹ We agree.
22. An informal team working from different areas in DFID has led the Department’s central work on parliamentary strengthening. To ensure that DFID’s parliament work is sustained and expanded as posts turn over, DFID should establish a clear institutional home for parliamentary strengthening work.
23. There is insufficient coordination between the work of organisations providing support to political parties and the work of development partners providing support to parliament. This must change.
24. We support initial efforts by DFID, UNDP and the World Bank Institute to improve international information-sharing, coordination and lesson-learning. We look forward to seeing the progress of the recently-established contact group on parliamentary strengthening.
25. We note the dispersed nature of parliamentary strengthening work by UK-based actors and the urgent need for improved coordination. We welcome preliminary efforts, led by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), to determine how best to mobilise collective UK experience and expertise in relation to parliaments. We note that these discussions have led to a joint bid by WFD and other UK bodies for funding from DFID’s Governance and Transparency Fund and look forward to closer collaboration whether or not this bid is successful.
26. We recommend that DFID builds on its early steps towards establishing a closer relationship (including funding where appropriate), with UK bodies that are concerned with strengthening parliaments in Africa.

Learn lessons and apply them

27. Drawing on the Paris Declaration, we recommend that donors develop joint principles of good practice to inform their parliamentary strengthening work.
28. DFID told us that there is a strong case for the Paris principles to be more rigorously applied to parliamentary strengthening work.¹⁰ We agree and urge DFID to work with other donors to ensure this occurs.
29. DFID, together with other donors, should support greater parliamentary engagement in the implementation and monitoring of the Paris Declaration.
30. We recommend that DFID improves the way in which information and data on its parliamentary strengthening work is gathered, stored and shared. This applies within country offices, between country offices and headquarters and with other donors helping to strengthen parliaments in Africa.
31. DFID must take steps to enable the evaluation of legislative strengthening work. Such evaluation should not result in discrimination against less readily quantifiable dimensions of parliamentary strengthening work (such as promoting the non-violent resolution of social conflict).
32. There is a shortage of rigorous up to date research on how African parliaments operate on the ground. We recommend that international donors support research in this area, particularly from institutions within Africa.
33. A donor official working on parliamentary strengthening in Malawi told us: ‘The kind of reporting we do is for internal administrative purposes. A lot of the lessons aren’t being reported for general discussion. Our approach has not really been to ask ourselves “do we have something to share at the end of the day?”’¹¹ This must change.
34. We encourage DFID to take forward the idea of producing guidance for country offices on how best to approach parliamentary strengthening. We look forward to hearing of DFID’s progress on this issue.
35. DFID has recently commissioned a small number of country case studies to address donor support to parliaments in relation to the Paris principles. We call on DFID to publish these studies and to build on them by working with other donors to carry out a joint review on a larger scale.
36. We recommend that development agencies share results and good practice principles with the OECD DAC Network on Governance (GOVNET) and encourage GOVNET to consider parliamentary strengthening as a focus for its future work.
37. An online gateway should be established where donors and African parliamentarians can access a database of parliament-related documents including thematic and country-specific strategies, evaluations, research and information on good practice.
38. We welcome the fact that DFID and others have taken steps to identify what makes for successful parliamentary strengthening work. However, broad insights about

generically desirable approaches need to draw on, and be supported by, the diverse experiences of programmes in particular countries. ‘What works’ should include what did, and did not work, where, and why.

39. DFID should carry out and publish a series of country-based studies in places where it has greatest experience of parliamentary strengthening work. DFID should ensure that field-based perspectives and experiences are gathered and incorporated into general policy.
40. We support efforts to date by the IPU, CPA and UNDP to address the need for standards and benchmarks on parliamentary performance. The involvement of the SADC Parliamentary Forum as a regional African body is particularly welcome.
41. We recommend the production of a bi-annual report on the ‘state of parliaments’ worldwide – including an index of parliamentary strength and a topical thematic component. We welcome initial discussions at UNDP for a report of this kind.

Take greater account of parliament in development work

42. Development assistance that does not concentrate on parliaments *per se*, should factor-in potential implications for parliaments so as to minimise potential harm to their position and to maximise potential benefit.
43. Development partners must proactively make available timely, transparent and full information on aid flows and negotiations in order that parliaments can play their role in ensuring that all public resources are used efficiently, effectively and accountably.
44. DFID should support parliamentary scrutiny of development aid through presenting to individual African countries an annual ‘report to parliament’ covering all bilateral aid, particularly Poverty Reduction Budget Support.
45. DFID should give greater attention to parliaments in its operational guidance on how to conduct Country Governance Analysis.
46. A specified percentage of direct budget support should be earmarked for parliamentary strengthening.

1: Introduction

Parliaments, good governance and better aid

African parliaments can make a crucial contribution to good governance and development in Africa. At the heart of governance lies the relationship between citizens, institutions and rulers. Parliaments are key to this relationship. Where parliament works as a strong, effective institution, it can help government work accountably, capably and responsively.

African parliaments can also help to ensure that aid is spent effectively. The trend - increasingly led by the UK - towards disbursing increasing amounts of aid in the form of direct budget support makes scrutiny of funds by the parliaments of recipient countries all the more important. African parliamentary scrutiny can also help the UK government to account to UK taxpayers for how its aid budget has been used.

The 'rediscovery' of parliaments

Aid, particularly to governments through direct budget support, strengthens recipient governments and risks making them more accountable to donors and less accountable to their people. Historically, donors have tended to work over and around parliaments rather than with them. The donors' preference has been to engage with the executive in developing countries or with civil society actors rather than with the legislature.

This has begun to change. To paraphrase one observer at a donor conference on parliaments: 'it is almost as if parliament has been rediscovered'.¹² Donors are beginning to provide parliaments of recipient countries with greater support. Both in the UK and internationally, there is increasing realisation that parliaments have a significant role to play in development. In DFID's 2006 White Paper, for example, the UK committed to work more closely with parliamentarians in an effort to 'put support for good governance at the centre of what we do'.¹³

African parliaments: Forward strides and ongoing weaknesses

Much of this new attention is focussed on African parliaments. Traditionally weak, they have slowly begun to exert the new constitutional powers that have come with the transition away from dictatorships to multi-party politics. African legislatures wield more power currently than they have since independence.¹⁴ In practice, this picture varies greatly but interviews by the AAPPG in Malawi and Kenya, for example, affirmed that parliament was no longer 'a sub-branch of the executive' or a 'department of the presidency'.¹⁵ Amongst the wider public, an increasing majority of Africans believe that the legislature should be independent of the executive and that it is unacceptable for the president to seek to bypass parliament to pass legislation.¹⁶ Overall, executive dominance and authoritarianism are both waning¹⁷ and parliaments are now more assertive in overseeing financial governance.¹⁸

Nonetheless, African parliaments face acute challenges. Many lack formal powers and agreed clear procedures. They also lack institutional capacity; and incentive structures to encourage MPs and parliamentary officers to exercise their responsibilities. In its submission to the Group, the UNECA highlighted its African Governance Report which concludes that:

In terms of enacting laws, debating national issues, checking the activities of the government and in general promoting the welfare of the people, these duties and obligations are rarely performed with efficiency and effectiveness in many African parliaments.¹⁹

The approach, focus and structure of this report

To identify these problems in the African context is not to imply that they have been solved outside Africa – not least in Westminster. The reality of African parliaments reflects African politics, history and society. The practices and experiences of non-African parliaments and of other parliaments within Africa are sometimes useful but measures to strengthen African parliaments must be tuned to local realities and must not be imposed from outside.

Westminster has a long history of parliamentary democracy and the Westminster system continues to have international influence and standing. Nonetheless, Westminster's own procedures and systems grew out of historic struggles for rights and privileges between monarch and people and between classes. In the past (and indeed the present) the UK parliament has not always been an ordered debating chamber. The red lines on the floor of the House of Commons – set two sword lengths apart - are a stark reminder of its bloody origins.

This report looks at some of the difficulties encountered by African parliaments and parliamentarians.²⁰ It also looks at what the UK, through its aid and through other channels and relationships, is doing to address these difficulties. We hope that this report will contribute to current debates about the most effective ways to approach and conduct parliamentary strengthening and will inform the development of new work in this field.

We give particular attention to parliament's function as a watchdog over the government and especially on the financial dimension of parliamentary scrutiny. As an All Party Group of parliamentarians, we have a distinct concern with the scrutiny function of parliament because much of our own activity involves scrutiny of UK Africa policies as well as of wider UK policies that impact upon the continent (see, for example, our report *The Other Side of the Coin: The UK and Corruption in Africa*²¹). Our concern also emanates from the importance of African parliaments in ensuring that UK development aid has maximum positive impact.

As parliamentarians, we were especially keen to hear directly from our counterparts in African countries and from the parliamentary staff with whom they work. In order to gather first-hand insights, members of the Group visited Malawi, Uganda and Kenya. Accordingly, this report makes particular reference to these countries. The Africa APPG also received 20 submissions in response to a call for evidence. These submissions included material from African MPs and parliamentary staff as well as individuals and organisations with expertise related to parliamentary strengthening (see Annex C). Members of the APPG were also in South Africa to attend discussions on parliamentary strengthening organised by the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNOWB). Further input into the inquiry came through a series of public meetings on parliaments and development, held at Westminster in collaboration with ODI (see Annex A).

This report is structured according to the importance of parliaments and the problems they face; what existing activities exist to address these problems; and how current activities can

be improved. Chapter 2 introduces African parliaments and development partners' growing recognition of their importance. Chapter 3 examines the weaknesses of African parliaments before looking specifically at these weaknesses in terms of financial accountability (in Chapter 4). Chapter 5 provides an overview of the UK's engagement in parliamentary strengthening. Chapter 6 contains conclusions and recommendations for improved effectiveness in parliamentary strengthening.

2: Africa's parliaments and western support – the background

The distinct role of parliaments and parliamentarians

Parliaments matter because of their unique combination of roles. They deliberate policy, pass legislation and provide a link between government and people. As representatives of citizens' concerns and interests, parliaments are responsible for overseeing the executive and holding it to account - crucially by reviewing public funds and how they are used.²²

A vibrant parliament is integral to democracy. Free and fair elections are an essential democratic pillar but elections must be accompanied by a parliament with the powers, resources, capacity and will to exercise its responsibilities.

Parliaments in Africa

African parliaments are based on western parliaments and have similar formal roles.²³ The social, cultural and political contexts in which they operate, however, are contrasting and varied – both within the continent and between the continent and other parts of the world. South Africa, for example, is not Somalia. To generalise, however, the concept of parliament as a gathering of leaders is long-standing in many African societies and imperial European powers often formalised an advisory council of traditional chiefs as part of their rule. Today, African parliaments formally reflect western-style parliaments and draw little on traditional practices. Informal patronage networks, however, are very influential. Based on personal historical obligations, geographical ties or community/family links, these networks co-exist with, overlap with, and sometimes conflict with, institutions in the formal political sphere – including parliaments.

Only two of Africa's 53 states (Botswana and Mauritius) have enjoyed a post-independence record of unbroken multi party democracy. After independence, much of the continent saw the emergence of presidential regimes and one party states. In many countries, parties were abolished altogether when the army took over. In these environments, critical scrutiny of the executive and representation of the electorate was scarce. Instead, 'big man' rule through informal patronage networks often took precedence over the formal functions of the state. Separation of powers and legislative involvement was sometimes largely symbolic. As it was put to the Africa APPG in the Kenyan context, 'the president became the father of the nation and the parliament was his political household'.²⁴

In many countries, it was not until the 1990s that domestic pressures and international shifts contributed to a wave of democratisation and liberalisation. For other states, such as DR Congo and Sierra Leone, it is only recently that free and fair elections have taken place. These shifts have opened up new political space and the possibility of a revived role for African parliaments.

Parliaments as a low priority amongst development partners

Development partners have been slow to support parliaments to play this revived role. Appreciation of the significance of governance for development and poverty reduction is

only gradually extending to the contribution of parliaments. The Group was told, for example, that while governance has been a *leitmotif* for development partners in recent years:

*relatively little attention tends to be paid to the elected representatives of the people in the parliaments of developing countries and how they can be encouraged and supported in their work to take up a positive and central role in the creation of good governance.*²⁵

This neglect of parliament does not apply to all development partners in equal measure and some development partners can point to well-established initiatives with parliaments.²⁶ Nonetheless, relative to other activities, strengthening parliaments has not traditionally been a donor concern. As the UN told the Group, donor work on parliamentary strengthening remains ‘small, tentative and patchy’.²⁷

Box 1: Donor neglect of parliaments

Historically, parliamentary strengthening has been a fringe concern in development policy. This relates partly to the absence, until recently in some cases, of popularly elected parliaments with whom it was readily possible for development partners to engage.²⁸ Even with widespread democratisation and liberalisation, however, development assistance has remained overwhelmingly executive-orientated.

- In bilateral terms, the executive of the donor country has tended to discuss development assistance with its African executive counterparts who may have a vested interest in parliament remaining weak.²⁹
- International financial institutions have seen ‘country ownership’ as executive ownership and have not considered how the nature of their relationship with executives can undermine the role of parliament.
- Donors have been discouraged by institutional weaknesses and the political complexity and diversity of parliaments. As compared with the executive branch, for example, parliaments often lack a clear hierarchy and natural interlocutor for development partners to engage with.³⁰
- Parliament is an inherently political and highly sensitive arena. Donor agencies have tended not to commit the resources and personnel to enable them to understand the nuances of this environment and to build the necessary relationships of trust upon which effective parliamentary strengthening depends.
- Donors have been wary about support to parliaments inviting accusations of aid becoming unduly ‘politicised’.
- In terms of corruption, for example, parliament is often seen more as part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

Why parliaments are rising up the development agenda

The traditional neglect of parliaments is changing. Several reasons explain this. Donors are starting to give more attention to parliaments partly to support renewed efforts by African parliamentarians and civil society to strengthen their parliaments. The newfound focus on parliaments is also due to shifts amongst donors. In Kenya, a senior DFID official told us; ‘the reason for working with parliament is more to do with evolutions within DFID than within Kenya’.³¹ Various development partners, not least DFID, have begun to emphasise that African development is inextricably linked to domestic African politics.³² DFID’s stated priority of strengthening the state-citizen relationship means that it ‘can’t ignore parliament’.³³

The Group also heard from UNDP that a changed outlook had led it to operate in political areas that would in the past have been politically ‘off-limits’. Where previously its parliamentary work concentrated on more technical areas, UNDP’s remit has broadened to more political terrain such as assisting members on constituency relations, aiding reform of parliamentary procedures and offering guidance on work with political parties.³⁴ The World Bank Institute cited renewed concerns with governance and corruption in the mid-1990s as being integral to the expansion of its parliamentary strengthening work.³⁵

Box 2: The potential cost-effectiveness of parliamentary strengthening

We were told³⁶ that one reason for the growing support for democratic parliaments in Africa is that it can be cost effective due to:

- the small number of MPs and parliamentary staff relative to other target groups of development interventions;
- the high potential impact that supporting parliamentarians can have given their wider influence;
- the ability to interact with leading representatives of all political tendencies and;
- parliaments can be an entry point for the promotion of a range of important development goals, such as gender equality and anti-corruption.

The role of parliaments in more effective and accountable aid

Increased support to parliaments is also linked to moves to reform how aid is managed and delivered. Many donors have concluded that project-based support and conditional lending have brought mixed results, partly because they have not fostered national ownership of development initiatives. Consequently, donors are increasingly opting to transfer aid monies directly to governments of recipient countries. This ‘direct budget support’, makes it all the more crucial that these funds are overseen by recipient country institutions such as parliaments. A parliamentary strengthening practitioner at the Canadian Parliamentary Centre, told us: ‘Parliaments can get to the parts that donors and civil society can’t reach’ (See Box 3).³⁷ Development partners are coming to recognise parliaments as potential allies in terms of monitoring the use and impact of aid monies as part of their overall role in scrutinising the use of public resources.

Box 3: **The unique role of parliaments in overseeing aid resources**

DFID and other donors are carrying out direct budget support and the constitutionally mandated body to hold the executive to account is parliament. Parliament is a key link in the chain of accountability if aid is to work. You can make all the noise you want about civil society but parliaments have a unique role. Donors can't evaluate national budgets. Parliaments can get to the parts that donors and civil society can't reach.³⁸

[Our aim at DFID] is to see aid as part of a government's overall resources and to secure improvements in the way in which these overall resources are managed, including an appropriate role for parliament. Thus overseeing aid resources would be part of parliament's oversight of the use of all government resources. Increasing the volume of aid which is provided in the form of budget support will contribute to achieving this.³⁹

Not only can stronger African parliaments enhance government-citizen accountability in Africa; they can also enhance government-citizen accountability in donor countries. Being able to account for development budgets and their impact can contribute to public support in donor countries for rising aid expenditure.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

Donors' increased engagement around parliamentary strengthening is also linked to growing acceptance of the need to honour commitments to implement the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.⁴⁰ In March 2005, donors and partner countries agreed 'to take far-reaching and monitorable actions to reform the ways we deliver and manage aid'. The Paris Declaration articulates an emerging commitment to reconfigure aid in ways that give parliament a more central role. Partner countries agreed, for example, to 'strengthen as appropriate the parliamentary role in national development strategies and/or budgets'.⁴¹ The Declaration underlines the need to enhance donors and partner countries' respective accountability to their citizens and parliaments for their development policies, strategies and performance⁴². The Declaration also conveys the risk of development aid impairing domestic accountability and affirms that aid can be more effective where donors maximise the scope for working with and through national institutions and systems – parliament included.

Box 4: The shortage of current information on African parliaments

How much is actually known about parliaments in Africa?

The APPG noted the shortage of existing studies on how parliaments in Africa actually operate. As one interviewee commented to the Group, 'it is a legitimate question to ask how much is actually known about parliaments in Africa'.⁴³ Research on democratisation has largely overlooked African parliaments, especially relative to other more developed areas of the world.⁴⁴ The dearth of data and literature on parliaments in Africa is such that a study written in 2004 was able to lay claim to being 'the first comparative analysis of the legislative process on the continent'.⁴⁵

Limited sources to draw on

African policymakers and members of civil society have limited sources to draw on when seeking current information and analysis about the actual capacity, operation and performance of their own legislatures. African policy makers and practitioners seeking to learn from the experiences of other African countries by consulting systematic regional or continental comparative studies of legislatures encounter even greater gaps in research. Development partners endeavouring to build their approaches to parliamentary strengthening on a strong evidence base confront the same problem.

The relationship between formal and informal political spheres

These limitations concern both the formal and informal factors that influence parliaments. In terms of formal aspects, little information is available concerning, for example, the internal organisation of parliaments and the facilities, funds and human resources that they possess or lack. Also under-researched is the extent to which the day to day operation of parliament is influenced by social and cultural rules, networks and incentive structures that exist outside the official political sphere. The AAPPG was told that there is a shortage of analysis of actually-existing parliaments in specific contexts and the informal factors and demands that shape how parliamentarians work and how events in parliament unfold on the ground.⁴⁶ Approaches to understanding parliaments, we were told, often centre on the degree to which parliaments conform to or deviate from western political models and standards without contextualising local political systems.

3: Obstacles to stronger African parliaments

African parliaments playing an increased role

Many African parliaments are moving towards becoming assertive institutions that have leverage over legislation, that monitor and challenge the executive, and that represent citizens' views. Compared to the past few decades, the current period is a highpoint for African parliaments. In many countries, executive dominance is decreasing and numerous constitutional and legislative initiatives have been undertaken to bolster scrutiny and enhance accountability. In three countries (Nigeria, Zambia and Malawi) parliaments have barred presidential efforts to alter the constitution to enable third terms of office (the reverse occurred in Uganda, however).

African parliaments, partly spurred by civil society, also often demand transparency, challenge the executive on corruption and call for more rigorous management of public funds. As the following comment to the Group from an observer of the Kenyan parliament makes clear, in at least some contexts, the blatant 'rubber stamp' parliament is less pervasive than in the past:

Gone are the days when MPs would line up and receive cash from State House and be told to vote for particular bills. Cabinet Ministers can no longer take MPs for granted and assume that his or her bill will pass. MPs will not pass things blindly.⁴⁷

In terms of wider shifts in public opinion, surveys from southern Africa show widespread support for the parliament's legislative prerogative - a shrinking minority of the public believe that a president should be at liberty to override parliament in the legislative process.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, deep-seated challenges remain. Evidence gathered by the Group on the factors that shape parliaments and the barriers to parliamentary development point to the importance of:

- The social, cultural and historical context in which a parliament is situated
- The formal rules, powers and arrangements that frame parliament's leverage
- The political environment within parliament and between parliament and other political institutions
- Parliament's resources and institutional capacity
- The relationship between parliament and international actors

Based on material received by the Group, we explore these areas below.

Parliament in social and cultural context: Citizens' expectations and demands

Parliaments cannot be abstracted from the broader historical, cultural and social context in which they are embedded. What MPs deliver is partly a function of what citizens understand and expect of them. This includes the relative emphasis that constituents and the broader population place on the different roles that parliamentarians are supposed to fulfil. Demand from civil society for an active parliament can, in turn, generate demand from an active parliament for effective government.

If the public does not understand what the institution of parliament is supposed to do, or what the function of an MP is, then the scope for dysfunctional political relationships and abuse of power increases.⁴⁹

A recurring theme in material gathered by the Group was the limited popular understanding of MPs’ responsibilities and the extent and limitations of their powers. We were told that the electorate viewed MPs principally as agents that were supposed to solve collective local problems and meet individuals’ needs for assistance. Popular opinion surveys in Malawi indicate, for example, that citizens see the most important role of an MP as being to deliver development in areas such as health, education and water.⁵⁰ Malawians also emphasised ‘representing the people’ alongside expectations concerning poverty alleviation and improvements to infrastructure and agriculture. Legislative and scrutiny responsibilities, however, were hardly mentioned. At and between elections, therefore, an MP is assessed individually as a ‘development officer’ for his or her community rather than as a representative of the people. An MP’s contribution to the collective functions of parliament such as legislation and holding the executive to account was not seen as important.

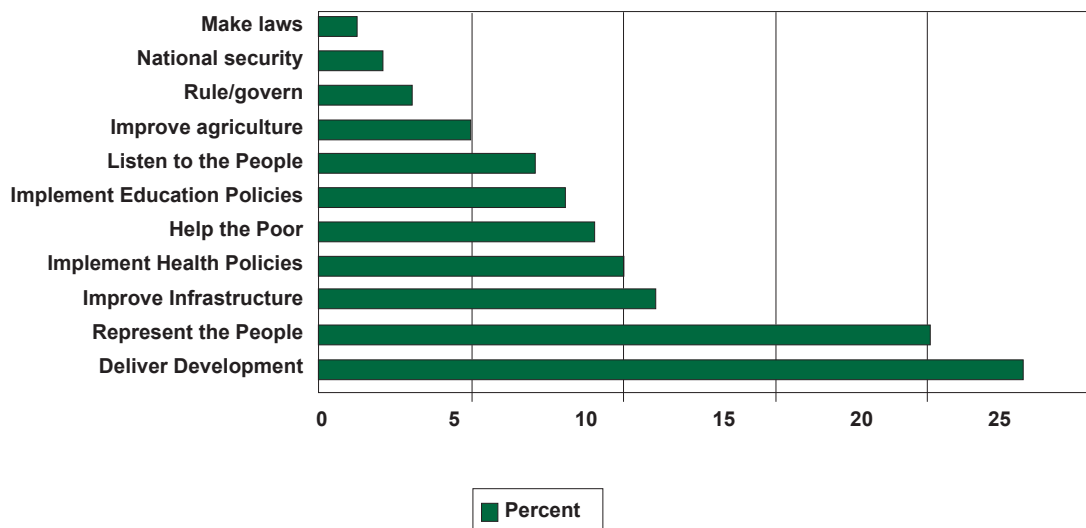


Figure 1: Malawians’ expectations of an MP. Members of the public were asked what they believed are the most important responsibilities of an MP⁵¹

Members from various countries described to the Group the heavy burden of financial expectation from constituents with regard to costs associated, for example, with road repair, school fees, funerals, weddings and medical bills. Such demands from constituents can either mean that MPs spend all their time servicing community needs or, at the other extreme, that they avoid visiting their constituencies in non-election periods because of the demands that confront them when they do.

Box 5: **MPs, oversight and constituency funds**

In Kenya, MPs have been granted a Constituency Development Fund to meet the costs of small scale development initiatives and to reduce the corruptibility of MPs by giving them a financial base. According to some Kenyan MPs consulted by the Group, the Fund has taken pressure off MPs and has freed time for the fulfilment of other duties. However, a Ghanaian Member argued that, in the case of his country, the apportioning of money to MPs for development activities had contributed to MPs being assessed by how they dispense Common Fund monies and to MPs spending time lobbying ministers for additional funds rather than fulfilling duties associated with overseeing of the executive.⁵² In its submission to the Group, IDASA similarly cautioned against constituency funds on the grounds that the implementation of service delivery is the proper role of the government and that the heading of local development initiatives by MPs complicates relations between the legislature and the executive and distracts from scrutiny responsibilities. At worst, constituency funds can amount to state support for the reinforcement of MPs' patronage networks.

Inflated promises, high turnover and 'big man' politics

The Group was told that some MPs contribute to a negative dynamic with constituents by dispensing gifts (particularly at elections) and by making inflated election pledges. They then have to find ways to recoup their election costs and generate more funds once elected to keep constituents happy. If they fail, the disillusioned electorate votes them out but this leads to a high turnover of MPs. In the countries visited by the Group, turnover rates are often well over 50%. While this can mean the arrival of new members with fresh vision and commitment, it also discourages the accumulation of experience and creates huge demands on parliaments for the training and induction of new members who often have no experience of public service.

Popular perceptions of parliaments and parliamentarians are also crucial. Where a country's political culture has historically emphasised individual personalities ('big man politics'), respect for and expectations of, parliament as an institution are likely to be low. The lack of issue-differentiation among political parties accentuates the role of individual political personalities.

Box 6: **'Big man' politics**

One submission described a 'scrupulously honest candidate' who was contesting a seat against a 'deeply corrupt' incumbent. The former campaigned on a bicycle, but 'the electorate said that someone so poor was not a "big man" and clearly could not divert funds to them as Mr X, who campaigned in a luxury sports utility vehicle'.⁵³

The Group heard from IDASA for example, that the legislature was widely seen in Africa as an ‘amorphous body with indistinct functions’.⁵⁴ Frequent refrains in interviews conducted by the Group included the need for:

- ‘the strengthening of the state-citizen relationship’;
- ‘the promotion of democratic norms’;
- ‘civic education rather than simply political campaigning to chase votes’ and;
- ‘the need to get parliamentarians out to the people’.

A Ugandan MP, for example, told us of the importance of translating the constitution into local languages and engaging the whole population in demanding accountability. ‘We need to reach a point’, she argued, ‘where the building of a school in a local community is seen by that community not as a favour to be grateful for but as the government’s job’.⁵⁵

A former UK High Commissioner to Uganda told the Group that donors ‘consider it desirable that African parliamentarians should hold their ministers and governments fully accountable... [but] in most African countries, MPs themselves are under very little pressure from their constituents to play this role’.⁵⁶ Increased popular awareness of the range and nature of MPs’ responsibilities, as well as increased demand for these to be met, would make a marked contribution towards the emergence of stronger parliaments.

Formal rules, powers and arrangements

Constitutional powers

The constitution determines the formal rules of the political system and parliament’s role and leverage within that system. In many countries, the constitutional odds are stacked heavily against parliament.⁵⁷ While African countries have taken important steps to address the constitutionally-enshrined marginalisation of parliament, there remain significant constitutional hurdles to be overcome. In Kenya, for example, the question of constitutional reform has generated protracted and intense political conflict in recent years, notably over the issue of the restructuring of executive power and the failure to honour promises made to temper the powers of the presidency.

A parliament’s control over its own affairs

The strength of parliament is also defined by the extent to which parliament’s operations are determined by parliament itself, rather than by the executive. Evidence to the Group frequently cited burdensome and outdated rules of procedure (or standing orders) as a hurdle to improved parliamentary performance. Parliaments can also be held back by inadequate powers and resources to hire and dismiss their own staff and to determine the terms of staff employment. Many countries lack a predictable calendar for when parliament sits and do not maintain a clear distinction between neutral and politically partisan staff. In Malawi, the parliament’s sitting period recently ranged between 70 and 100 days a year, often reflecting irregular sessions at the behest of the President.⁵⁸

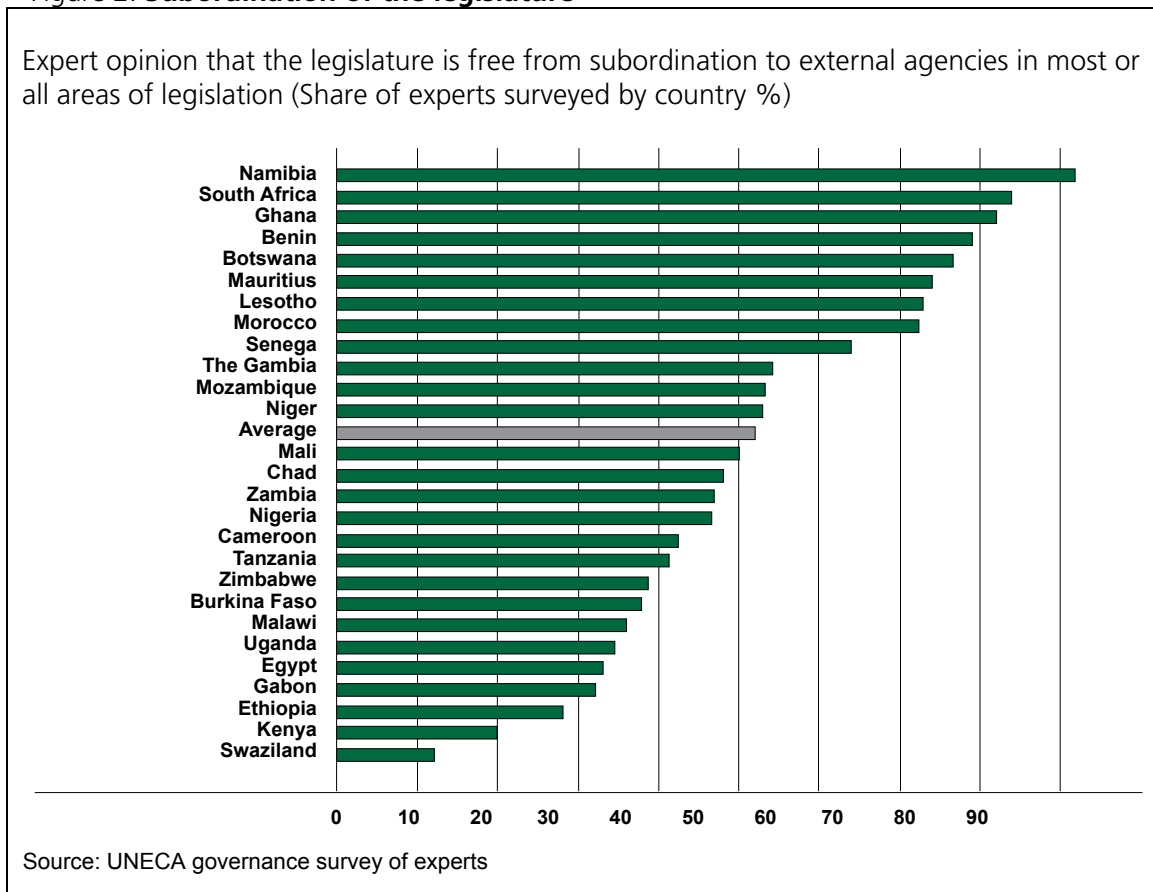
The financial independence of parliament is crucial. Submissions to the Group from Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi underlined that their parliaments were unable to determine and approve their own budgets. Reliance on the executive branch for funding and salaries, the

Group was told, severely compromises parliamentary autonomy and leaves parliament vulnerable to under-funding, to the politically-motivated interruption of funding or to co-optation. The Tanzanian Speaker told the Group: ‘Government can call the shots because it controls the purse strings. This makes a mockery of holding government to account’.⁵⁹ The Strategic Plan of the Malawian National Assembly identifies the need for a ‘protected budget’ and cites the ‘Assembly’s inability to have a final say on its annual budget as a source of weakness and unpredictability’.⁶⁰

Political environment

On paper, a parliament’s powers may be reasonably strong but this is only part of the story. Whether MPs and parliamentary staff are willing or able to exercise these powers (or are even fully aware of them) is determined partly by political realities the ground. Constitutional hurdles notwithstanding, parliaments are often unable to exploit the powers that they *already have*.⁶¹ As the Tanzanian Speaker put it: ‘formal rules, structures and institutions often look robust in print but informal practices may tell a different story’.⁶²

Figure 2: **Subordination of the legislature**



Executive power

The power of the executive over the legislature is stark in African politics. As a submission from a Liberian MP put it to the Group, '[ours is] a tradition and culture of the imperial presidency'.⁶³ United Nations surveys of expert opinion on the independence of the legislature from interference by the executive and other actors (such as special interest groups) show that over half of African legislatures are under the varying sway of external agencies in all principal areas of legislation (Figure 2 above).⁶⁴ In Kenya, for example, the Group was told that: 'there's an entrenched political culture of impunity in this country and a framework whereby the executive has the ability quietly to undermine and subvert the momentum of many regulations that parliament has been passing'.⁶⁵ Similarly, a submission to the Group from the Deputy Speaker of Uganda stated:

*The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda provides for checks and balances and provides clear roles for each of the three arms of Government. In reality, however, because the Executive is powerful and strong there is a tendency for it to at times interfere with matters handled by Parliament to suit its own interests.*⁶⁶

In addition to the official power of the president, his personal power exerts immense influence in African politics. His favour or antagonism introduces personal calculations for MPs about their career prospects.⁶⁷ The following assessment resonates with interviews conducted by the Group:

*African parliamentarians are still under immense executive pressure, at times forging parliamentary alliances to secure government favours or refraining from embarking on genuine oppositional politics in fear of de-selection at the next election.*⁶⁸

Leading party dominance and confrontational political environments

The subordination of parliament to the executive is related to the widespread dominance of the leading party in many African countries.⁶⁹ In Tanzania, for example, the CCM party (*Chama Cha Mapinduzi*) exercises strong internal party discipline and occupies over 200 of the 232 seats that are elected by the popular vote. The combined power of the Presidency, the Executive and the CCM party restricts the scope for parliament to hold the executive to account.⁷⁰

The situation of minority government in Malawi, by contrast, was cited in interviews as a key factor in the revived role that parliament has played in that country in recent years. Nonetheless, even in contexts where the leading party does not enjoy comprehensive dominance, parliament does not necessarily always play a constructive role. If it takes a confrontational or obstructive approach to the executive, for example, it can be accused of exercising 'opposition in bad faith'.

Political parties

The importance of political parties to the strength of parliament was a consistent and acutely felt concern in discussions with the Group. Whether in interviews, submissions or presentations and from sources within parliaments and outside them, a common thread during this inquiry was that parliamentary development, and indeed the overall quality of governance, is inextricably linked to the state of political parties. Themes regularly stressed

were: the abuse of public funds by governing parties; weakly institutionalised parties; flawed party candidate selection; poor internal party democracy; the problem of ethnically and geographically-based parties; and the lack of issue-differentiation between political parties and of ideological coherence within them.

A report highlighted to the Group recently concluded that:

Political parties often perceive state capture for the control of the resources and personnel of the state as a source of elite enrichment; therefore politics itself becomes a means to an end, devoid of any idea of protecting public interests vis-à-vis private gains.⁷¹

We were told that part of the reason for development partners to work with democratic parliaments is because working with parliaments enables engagement with political parties through a formal state institution.⁷²

Politics in many African countries is characterised by rigid party discipline. During visits to Kenya (prior to the December 2007 election) and Malawi, the Group observed that political parties are highly fragmented. In these countries, we observed that political party membership was often a tradable vehicle of convenience. Prior to Kenya's flawed and disputed 2007 elections, we were told that, in effect, there is a 'ruling clique' rather than a ruling party.⁷³ As one MP put it:

We don't have a Government of National Unity. Instead, we have a government of co-option. The president carries out a putsch from parties in opposition in order to get a voting machine. Parties have not been institutionalised. MPs are seen as individuals rather than as representatives of a party. We choose where we want to sit in the house, we don't sit with our parties.⁷⁴

In Malawi, disputes over defections or 'floor crossing' have been hugely disruptive to parliamentary business.

Members also expressed a need for more stringent criteria for the registration of new political parties by an independent electoral commission.⁷⁵ In Uganda, a 19-year ban on political parties only ended in 2005 and members described the difficulties of coming to terms with the implications of multiparty politics and effective opposition, especially the balance between toeing the party line and acting on a more individual basis.⁷⁶ While the weakness of political parties in Kenya and Malawi was presented to the Group in negative terms, it was also acknowledged that fragile party ties could also create strategic opportunities to strengthen parliament across party-political lines.

Box 7: **Sierra Leone and the transfer of power from one party to another**

Multi-party democracy and the transfer of power whereby one party is, at least occasionally, able to succeed another, are closely linked to the performance of parliaments. While many African countries now have multi-party systems and free and fair elections, relatively few have 'a revolving door' that sees power transferred in this way.

In practice, opposition politicians need the backing of a political party, or a coalition of parties, to mount a serious challenge to the incumbent party. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy submitted to the Group the example of its work with political parties in the run-up to the 2007 elections in Sierra Leone. WFD was contracted by DFID to work with all the registered political parties, including the ruling party, to help them develop their policy platforms and to design innovative ways of presenting their policies to the electorate. This included pledge cards on which the parties summed up key policies in a few words, and an open discussion programme involving MPs and members of the public that was broadcast on Sierra Leonean radio. Despite the country's recent history of political violence and civil war, 'the door revolved' and power was transferred peacefully. Development work with, and by, political parties as well as parliament as an institution, is an important part of reinforcing multi-party democracy.

Individual members of parliament and parliamentary officers

To strengthen a parliament, there must be commitment from the people *within* that parliament. The priorities, outlook and competence of MPs and parliamentary staff are crucial. Results can be significant if MPs are reform-minded and there are opportunities to strengthen the legislature at the same time as furthering their own concerns and careers. Alternatively, MPs are likely to resist change if they have a vested interest in the perpetuation of a status quo in which parliament is weak.

A member of Uganda's parliamentary staff stated that parliament would be stronger if MPs changed how they view their role.⁷⁷ Some MPs, we were told, saw their position as 'an opportunity and a possibility of joining the executive, rather than as a golden opportunity to hold the executive to account in the interest of the people'.⁷⁸ Collective legislative functions can also become secondary to efforts to secure re-election. 'Most government MPs', said one submission, 'want to hold onto their seats – not hold the government to account'.⁷⁹ Inadequate familiarity with parliamentary practice and procedure was also cited as a brake on parliamentary development.⁸⁰

The leadership of key offices in parliament (Clerk's Office, Speaker's Office) can advance or retard parliamentary development. In Malawi, for example, leadership from the Clerk and her office was a significant factor in renewing commitment to produce the parliament's strategic plan, generating buy-in and steering it to completion. In other contexts, however, the *de facto* role of Speakers or Clerks may include protecting the government rather than strengthening the institution of parliament.

Resources and institutional capacity

While MPs are the lifeblood of parliament and its pivotal human resource, the work of individual MPs is channelled and enabled by the institutional structures and support that parliament provides. Successive interviews emphasised that efforts to reinforce African parliaments will not succeed unless they build the institutional capacity of parliament and its staff. The effectiveness of parliaments depends on funding for running costs and salaries, the quality and numbers of administrative and expert parliamentary personnel, and the parliaments' physical infrastructure and facilities. Although African parliaments throughout the continent are very varied, they are generally weak in most of these areas. Speakers' offices in Tanzania and Uganda, for example, highlighted the size of parliament's budget as both a symptom and a cause of the institution's weakness.⁸¹

Interviewees also underlined, however, that while resources are a problem, the provision by donors of greater resources is not necessarily the answer. Sometimes additional resources are not well used and can supplant money that should have been coming from the national budget. A further risk is that heavy financial support can lead to perceptions of parliament as being 'in the pocket' of the donors.⁸²

High levels of MP turnover mean that a new parliament in many African countries typically contains a majority of MPs with no prior parliamentary experience and with varying educational backgrounds, thus creating significant demands for comprehensive and time-consuming induction and training. In this context, the contribution of the Offices of the Speaker, the Clerk, research services and committee clerks is all the more crucial, not least because they can be better placed than MPs to take a longer-term perspective of the institutional interests of parliament. These offices, however, are frequently over-stretched, understaffed and underpaid. Many committees lack specialist staff and it is common to find clerks serving multiple committees. In Malawi, for example, until recently, just two clerks were supporting thirteen committees.⁸³ Parliaments also contend with inadequate physical infrastructure and facilities.

Members of Parliament are sometimes poorly paid. The level of remuneration for MPs can influence their political independence and how much of their time is spent raising funds to finance their political responsibilities. Poorly paid MPs may be more likely to accept or seek financial and other incentives from the executive or other actors in order to supplement their salaries. Some countries have taken steps to address the under-payment of MPs. The appropriate level of MP remuneration has been particularly controversial in Kenya where MPs gave themselves c. £70, 000 a year, making them amongst the best-paid MPs in the world.⁸⁴

Parliaments and development partners

The influence of international financial institutions and other development partners on African parliaments has often hindered rather than helped the emergence of stronger legislatures. According to ODI, development partners, including the World Bank and DFID, are partly responsible for weak parliamentary performance.⁸⁵ This is because their engagement with the executive has substituted for rather than complemented efforts to involve and support parliaments.⁸⁶

Donors have sometimes conflated government ownership of development initiatives with country ownership. They also see ‘participation’ as being primarily about civil society.⁸⁷ The recent history of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers bears this out. The Group heard from a number of African parliamentarians that they had had minimal involvement in designing, implementing and monitoring early PRSPs. The PRSP process was instead the preserve of the presidency, the ministry of finance, development partners and certain voices within civil society.⁸⁸ Where parliament was involved, it was through individual MPs rather than parliament as an institution. While subsequent generations of PRSPs have seen legislatures play a much greater role, parliamentary involvement remains an add-on rather than a core component. One major study recently concluded that ‘both government and donors appear in practice ambivalent to any in-depth involvement of parliament [in PRSPs]’.⁸⁹

4: Parliaments and financial accountability

*The idea that the parliament polices the government – that’s still a relatively new idea in Africa.*⁹⁰

*The noise that the frog makes in the river doesn’t stop the cow from drinking water.*⁹¹

Parliament is a primary institution for political and financial accountability. As DFID states in its 2006 White Paper, ‘accountability is at the heart of how change happens’.⁹² Throughout the inquiry, submissions and interviewees drew particular attention to parliament’s accountability role in financial governance. Joachim Wehner at LSE, for example, underlined how parliaments can ensure that revenues are appropriately raised, allocated, managed and accounted for.⁹³ Parliament’s ‘power of the purse’, he stressed, means that public spending and taxation must receive parliamentary authorisation. Most crucially, government depends on the passage of the budget through parliament in order to be able to function.⁹⁴ The UNECA highlighted to the Group that:

*Parliament’s role in monitoring and controlling budgetary spending is part of the overall raison d’être for legislatures around the world, that is, to oversee government policy and operations directly.*⁹⁵

The Group heard that active legislative participation in the budget process can contribute to openness, transparency, budget credibility, country ownership and consensus-building regarding difficult budgeting decisions.⁹⁶

Determinants and challenges of effective financial scrutiny

On the issue of scrutiny of the executive, the UNECA states that:

*On the whole, the performance of African countries [in the area of parliamentary scrutiny] is negative, mostly due to the lack of resources and procedures in the auditor general’s office, deficiencies in the powers and exercise of oversight functions by parliament and a lack of cooperation by the executive branch of government.*⁹⁷

Evidence gathered by the Group suggests that areas of weakness in parliamentary scrutiny relate to formal powers, political will, practical ability and relations with civil society and development partners (Box 8).

Box 8: Determinants of parliamentary scrutiny

1. Formal rules, arrangements and constitutional powers.
2. The political environment in which scrutiny is supposed to occur.
3. The capacity of parliament, the executive and key bodies to conduct or enable scrutiny.
4. Popular expectations, input and pressure concerning parliament’s scrutiny responsibilities.
5. The relationship between parliament and development partners.

Constitutional powers

The nature of parliament’s constitutionally-enshrined budget powers shapes the potential for parliament to oversee finances. In Africa these powers are often weak, notably with respect to powers of amendment. Sometimes parliaments can only approve or reject a budget or can make cuts but cannot authorise increases or re-allocations. Other formal mandates and powers may also be a brake on scrutiny. In Tanzania, for example, the appointment of the auditor general does not require parliamentary approval.

Political environment

Even with adequate formal powers, the political environment can hobble effective scrutiny. This is especially true where a powerful executive perceives scrutiny to be a brake on effective government action. As in many non-African countries, the executive often treats parliamentary oversight as an inherent distraction or threat. Equally, opposition groups may approach oversight as an opportunity simply to criticise the executive. Partisan calculations and government evasiveness can also compromise transparency as vital information for scrutiny is withheld or not released in good time. In some cases, expenditure is simply labelled ‘classified’ and passes under the radar of the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI).⁹⁸ Governments often submit key proposals or bills (such as Money Bills) deliberately late so as to thwart parliamentary scrutiny.⁹⁹ A widespread complaint was that parliaments are not given a reasonable period of time for the review of the proposed budget. We were also told that the gulf between approved and actual budgets may, in fact, be so great that the official budget becomes meaningless.¹⁰⁰ In Malawi, we learned that parliament’s brief sitting schedule has been a significant constraint on parliamentary scrutiny.

IDASA told the Group that the principle of overseeing the executive is often weakly embedded. In parliamentary systems, the perception of oversight as an opportunity for confrontation obscures its *collaborative* significance whereby parliament works with the executive as a governance partner and constructive critic.¹⁰¹

Box 9: Scrutiny on party-political lines

In Uganda, the Group heard from a member of a parliamentary committee how, in one session, the entry of a government minister into the committee room prompted the committee members in his party to rise and receive him as ‘a guest of honour whose attendance was a privilege’, rather than as a witness to give testimony whose presence was duty-bound.

Many political environments are particularly weak on following up recommendations and findings. As a Kenyan MP put it to the Group, ‘oversight bodies without sanction are toothless; the implementation of recommendations can’t simply be left to the goodwill of the government’.¹⁰² Debates on the floor of the House and reports to the executive are necessary but not sufficient to spur action.¹⁰³ A common denominator in evidence to the Group was the lack of incentives to ensure that negligence, malpractice and non-compliance are greeted with the appropriate disciplinary and legal penalties. Audits and committee inquiries risk becoming hollow exercises if their findings and directives are not accompanied by targeted sanctions and enforcement mechanisms. Often such mechanisms are absent, under-utilised or selectively applied.¹⁰⁴

Box 10: **The lack of a 'culture of accountability' in Kenyan politics**

In Kenya, discussions hosted by the Group touched on the merits of creating a Public Assurances Committee to concentrate on the implementation of recommendations. The proposal provoked debate as to whether such a committee would compel action or would simply constitute a further bureaucratic tier. Various members underlined that in addition to legal and organisational changes, there was also a broader need for a culture of accountability whereby officials were made to realise that simply 'going through the motions without follow-up' would not be tolerated.¹⁰⁵

Capacity

Parliaments need adequate means and mechanisms to fulfil financial monitoring responsibilities not least because such monitoring involves large amounts of complex data. In order to have input into the budget process, Members require timely, accurate and comprehensive budget information supplied by the executive. In this respect, rigorous budget scrutiny is contingent upon a strong finance ministry.¹⁰⁶ Members also require independent research capacity in terms of facilities and support staff with relevant technical expertise. The Group was told that there had been significant improvements and reforms in all these areas but that deficiencies remain. In Malawi, for example, the number of committee clerks recently increased but technical proficiency is an on-going constraint.¹⁰⁷

Parliamentary audit, particularly in the Westminster system, hinges on public accounts committees but also on a close working relationship with SAIs. Inadequate finances and human resources, combined with restricted autonomy, increasing workloads and the late release of accounts from ministries and departments all delay the completion of audit reports. Such challenges also compromise the quality of the audits and blunt the overall effectiveness of SAIs.

Civil society

Civil society groups can and do make valuable contributions to financial scrutiny. In terms of groups working directly on budget issues¹⁰⁸, this contribution can:

- highlight best practice;
- provide MPs with independent analysis, training and digested information;
- help track expenditures and measure impact and;
- disseminate information and bring the voices of neglected groups into budget debates.

Opportunities for positive collaboration, however, sometimes go unrealised. The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) told the Group that relations between parliament and civil society are widely characterised by conflict, antagonism and mistrust.¹⁰⁹ Civil society organisations may themselves be weak and/or be seen as oppositional and unrepresentative outsiders that are beholden to donor agendas. Equally, the weakness of parliaments may lead civil society groups to work largely with the executive in ways that perpetuate this very weakness. In its submission to the Group, ActionAid International and CARE stated that:

*The weakness of [national parliaments] may in part explain why NGOs (and other CSOs) have stepped in to breach this gap and adopted a watchdog function, supported by DFID and other donors. The question is then whether CSOs in filling this gap, might have inadvertently detracted attention from the roles and functions of national parliaments.*¹¹⁰

Similar constraints affect the media and limit the potential for three-way constructive interaction between the media, civil society and parliament. This is especially true where the media has limited freedom and independence and/or provides little coverage of developments related to financial scrutiny. In Malawi, the Group was struck by the degree of negative or dismissive media coverage of parliamentary proceedings.

Box 11: Malawian MPs' concerns over donor support to civil society groups

Members of parliament and parliamentary strengthening practitioners voiced concerns to us about donor efforts to foster accountability through support to civil society. We were told that some donor initiatives that encouraged civil society groups to press MPs to exercise their scrutiny role, were 'setting civil society and parliament against one another' rather than promoting 'ways in which we can work together'.¹¹¹

Development partners

The behaviour of development partners has not always supported parliament to exercise its oversight role. Donors have yet to address the unintended but detrimental consequences of their support on the accountability systems of recipient countries. Donor reporting requirements and timelines, for example, may occupy domestic capacity that might be better used to strengthen in-country accountability. Equally, donors may sideline recipient countries' own systems and procedures for budget scrutiny and accounting.¹¹² A recent survey of Supreme Audit Institutions in Tanzania, Malawi and Uganda drew the following conclusion:

*Limited donor coordination adds to the workload of the supreme audit institutions, and places excessive demands on an already weak institutional capacity... The problem of off-budget donor funds going straight to ministries remains, making it hard for the audit institutions to keep track of and audit these expenditures. This contributes to undermining the authority of supreme audit institutions.*¹¹³

In evidence to the Group, the UNECA re-iterated that in some contexts donor input can be a double-edged sword '[when it] overrides local initiative and control, it undermines capacity on the ground and impairs domestic support and ownership'.¹¹⁴

5: Donors and parliamentary strengthening

Limited attention to date

In the UK, DFID is aware that it has given limited attention to parliaments to date. It concedes that its focus on the executive to the exclusion of parliament has contributed to an incomplete approach to governance.¹¹⁵ Parliamentary strengthening is still fairly new and largely unfamiliar territory for DFID. As one senior official put it to the Group: ‘we were nervous about parliament before and we’ve still got a lot to learn’.¹¹⁶ Another official said: ‘when I joined DFID we dealt with the executive and the ministries. We neglected the related committees. Our investment in the executive needs to have corresponding investment in parliament so that our work with the executive doesn’t harm parliament’.¹¹⁷

These perspectives accorded with practitioner impressions of the parliamentary strengthening field: ‘until now, there hasn’t been a great deal of donor interest in parliamentary strengthening. In terms of DFID, I see bits and pieces here and there but I don’t know if it adds up to a coordinated approach’.¹¹⁸ Similarly, with specific respect to legislative financial scrutiny, a DFID-funded review concluded that the Department’s work in this area was far from comprehensive.¹¹⁹

The newfound focus on parliaments

Nonetheless, there has been a recent upsurge in attention to parliaments and significant indications of fresh commitment on the part of DFID and other players. In DFID’s 2006 White Paper, for example, legislative bodies received particular mention. The UK committed ‘to work in our partner countries to help make public institutions more accountable... by strengthening parliamentary and regulatory oversight’.¹²⁰ Addressing the Africa APPG, the former Secretary of State for Development recently reaffirmed this commitment and DFID has since elaborated and built on its pledge to afford greater priority to parliaments in its development work.¹²¹ An increasing number of DFID country offices are engaged in strengthening parliaments and the UK’s spending in this area is set to rise.¹²² In financial terms, the most significant expression of commitment to working with parliaments was the launch in 2007 of a £100m Governance and Transparency Fund. The GTF has been created to support efforts from within developing countries to demand accountability from those in positions of power. In its invitation for applications to the GTF, DFID explicitly invites approaches from groups working on strengthening parliament and parliamentary processes. DFID aside, the Foreign Office has signalled its ongoing concern with strengthening parliaments.¹²³

Internationally, parliamentary strengthening has drawn renewed interest from bilateral and multilateral development partners as well as a host of other networks and organisations. While for many donors, working with parliaments and parliamentarians is not new, a number of actors, including the European Commission and the European Union, have been reviewing their existing activities with parliaments and looking at how best to scale up, coordinate and improve their support.¹²⁴

Overall, parliamentary strengthening work has increased in degree, deepened in nature, diversified in kind and broadened to involve new actors and partnerships (see Box 12).

Box 12: **Select international organisations involved in parliamentary strengthening**

Bilateral donors

USAID; Sida; CIDA; GTZ; Austrian development cooperation; Belgian development cooperation; DANIDA

Multilateral development agencies

World Bank (Institute); UNDP; Inter-American Development Bank; European Commission – Aid Co-operation Office; International-IDEA

Parliamentary networks and institutes

General: AWEPA; Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA); Inter-Parliamentary Union; Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)

Thematic: Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC); Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB)

Political party foundations

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI); Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES); Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS); Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (NIMD); International Republican Institute (IRI).

Research institutes, think tanks, not-for-profits and private sector organisations

Canadian Parliamentary Centre; Center for International Development, State University of New York (SUNY); Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI); Democracy International; Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS); Global Partners; Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA); IFES; South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)
(Source: ODI)

China

One major development partner of increasing significance for Africa is China. The Group notes the growing political and economic ties between China and Africa and the uncertain implications of Chinese aid for the prospects of stronger African parliaments. China's traditional policy of non-interference in the politics of other sovereign states, its exclusive relationships with African executives and low prioritisation of governance concerns, suggests that China is unlikely to become a major actor in parliamentary strengthening. It is more likely that China will offer support to parliaments in terms of infrastructure and physical facilities. In Uganda, for example, support of this kind is already underway with a grant of approximately £1.5m for the construction of a new Parliamentary Chamber.

UK government and UK-based organisations supporting parliament

The UK government's parliamentary strengthening work is led by DFID. Centrally, this work cuts across different divisions but is coordinated by DFID's Effective States Team. The design and management of parliament-related support is decentralised to country offices. The former Development Secretary told the Group that approximately 23 offices worldwide were involved in parliamentary initiatives and that this number was rising.¹²⁵ Within Africa, DFID has recently provided parliament-related support in countries such as Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia and the Gambia.¹²⁶ Overall, since 1998, DFID counts 11 completed, ongoing and recently launched parliament projects in 10 African countries.¹²⁷ Figures for DFID's spending on parliamentary

strengthening work were not readily obtainable but DFID officials estimate that the Department currently spends approximately £11m per year on its world-wide parliamentary work.¹²⁸

DFID supports initiatives of varied scope, focus, timeframe and budget. Its work involves multi-donor initiatives and diverse implementing partners. An ODI review for DFID¹²⁹ groups the Department’s parliament work according to whether it is principally directed at:

- **MPs as individuals** - their skills and subject knowledge;
- **Parliament as an institution** - general capacity as well as particular areas such as public financial management;
- **Parliament and wider political systems** – for example, encouraging cooperation between parliament and civil society (see Box 13).

Figure 3: Typology of DFID parliamentary strengthening activities in Africa

	MPs		Parliaments		Political systems
	Professional skills/ procedural issues	Subject knowledge	Institutional reform	Subject specific	
Burundi					X
DRC					X
Ethiopia	X		X		
Ghana				X	
Kenya			X		
Malawi			X		X
Mozambique					X
Nigeria				X	
Sierra Leone			X		
Somalia	X		X		
South Africa	X			X	
Tanzania			X		
Uganda			X		
Zambia				X	

(Source: ODI)

Box 13: DFID's parliamentary strengthening work in Uganda, Malawi and Kenya

Uganda

- In 2003, on behalf of parliament, DFID funded an organisational review of the Parliamentary Service.
- In 2004, DFID funded a consultancy to help develop the Parliament of Uganda Strategic Investment and Development Plan.
- 2005, DFID channelled £50,000 towards the training on the Parliamentary Service in Preparation for the transition to a multi-party system.
- In 2006/7, DFID funded a local and an international consultant to adapt the PSIDP to the new multi-party environment and to develop an action plan and liaise with donor groups.
- DFID has also funded committee members in relation to their mandate and functions.
- DFID has contributed £100,000 towards priority areas identified by parliament in the PSIDP and £1.5m of institutional support to parliament from 2007/8 to 2011/12 through a multi-donor 'Deepening Democracy Programme'.

Malawi

- From 2001-2004, DFID provided £4,400,000, channelled through NDI and CIDA, to promote closer working between parliament and civil society and to strengthen parliamentary committees. This support included the provision of researchers, training, funding for field visits, committee/civil society interface meetings, public hearings with Government Officials and preparation of committee reports.
- From 2003-2008, through the Tikambirane project, DFID has committed £10,000,000 to governance work with parliament, the electoral commission, media and civil society. DFID also has supported the reform process of the Malawi parliament through measures such as funding the design of its strategic plan and providing expert advice and advocacy for coordinated support with other donors.

Kenya

- From 2005-6, DFID provided £9,537 towards the provision of information, research and legal services for the Kenyan Parliament.
- From 2007-2009, DFID is providing £830,000 through the State University of New York to strengthen and professionalize the Kenyan parliament, in relation to its leadership, committee system and service provision.

Source: DFID documentation provided to the Group

Taking stock

DFID has been taking stock of its parliamentary strengthening work. The Department is in the process of re-assessing its contribution to meeting the needs of parliaments and is examining how it might improve its work in this area.¹³⁰ An informal team in DFID's Policy and Research Division is looking at the coordination of the Department's work and is focussing in particular on:

- commissioning new work on case studies;
- updating and renewing guidance given to country offices and;
- examining coordination – both between DFID and other international donors and between DFID and UK-based organisations.

DFID is also grappling with a number of parliament-relevant tensions surrounding its renewed emphasis on governance (Box 14).

Box 14: Challenges for DFID's parliamentary strengthening work

In 'a donor perspective' on aid politics and development¹³¹, DFID shows that it is still coming to terms with the implications of an increased focus on governance:

- *Is it tactically, or strategically, wise for donors to relinquish their prominent role in overseeing aid budgets to parliamentarians where incentives are driven by patronage and clientelism?*
- *How far should our work be – implicitly, explicitly - about addressing political capacities and incentives?*
- *Bringing politics squarely into the aid equation takes many development professionals outside their zones of comfort. It also takes us to the outer edges of what some development agencies are equipped, even mandated, to do.*

FCO

The UK's parliamentary strengthening work involves FCO. The FCO does not work directly on parliamentary strengthening initiatives but does provide approximately £1.4m per year to WFD in addition to support to WFD through the Global Opportunities Fund. FCO also facilitates exchange visits for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff through its Parliamentary Relations Team. In practice, much of FCO's country-level work relates to parliaments as part of wider engagement with political systems. In addition to HMG, the Westminster Parliament and a number of UK actors are engaged in work to strengthen parliaments in Africa (see Box 15 below).

Box 15: The contribution of the Westminster Parliament and related UK actors

Select examples of UK-based organisations carrying out parliamentary work.¹³²

Parliamentarians

MPs and Peers engage directly with African parliamentarians and parliamentary staff during visits to and from Westminster – often on issues related to strengthening parliaments.

The Clerk's Department

The Clerk's Department conducts work to strengthen parliaments through the Overseas Offices of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. This work includes events in collaboration with the UK branches of the CPA and the IPU; arranging visits and professional development attachments for individuals from overseas legislatures; and arranging for members of the Clerk's Department to undertake overseas trips.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch (CPA-UK)

The CPA-UK runs a programme of visits by delegations from Westminster to parliaments across the Commonwealth as well as receiving visits from Commonwealth parliaments. The CPA-UK Branch is funded by grant-in-aid from the UK Treasury which in 2006-07 was £1,545,000.¹³³

Inter-Parliamentary Union British Group (IPU-BG)

The IPU-BG hosts visits by delegations from overseas parliaments. The IPU-BG also sends delegations from Westminster to visit other parliaments. The IPU-BG receives £1.1million grant-in-aid. Both the IPU-BG and the CPA-UK are branches of their respective international organisations.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy

The international offices of the Westminster political parties, of which WFD is the principal funder, run a number of cross-party initiatives to strengthen political parties overseas. WFD has decided to focus on parliamentary strengthening as one of the mainstays of its future work. WFD receives grant-in-aid of £4.1 million from the FCO.

National Audit Office

International work is a growing area of activity for the NAO. NAO staff work on international technical assistance projects and also engage directly with parliaments on a limited scale. The NAO's principal overseas contribution is in working with Supreme Audit Institutions.

British Council

The British Council runs a variety of governance programmes, some of which involve parliaments directly. Projects in recent years have focussed particularly on promoting the participation and representation of women in political forums. The British Council also works with the Scottish Parliament, arranging international delegations to visit the Scottish Parliament.

6: How to improve parliamentary strengthening work

If... increased donor interest is to translate into more progress in strengthening African parliaments, assistance will have to be provided in a more effective way.¹³⁴

Strengthening parliaments isn't simply a capacity issue; it's an intensely political issue. We need to dispel the entrenched idea amongst many donors that what's holding parliaments back is an apolitical issue of capacity. Capacity building initiatives that approach parliament as a normal institution are doomed to failure.¹³⁵

The most important groups for strengthening parliaments in African countries are African citizens and their political leaders. The international community, however, can assist domestic efforts. Evidence to the Group about how best to do this suggests five priority areas:

1. Understand parliaments in their political context
2. Engage local demand and encourage broad-based local ownership
3. Coordinate
4. Learn lessons and apply them
5. Take greater account of parliament in development work

These conclusions concur with comments made to the Group by Hilary Benn:

Take local context and politics seriously. Build on what the people of a country can do for themselves. [Try to] work to their plans, through their systems... outside support to parliaments will do more good if it's long-term, predictable.¹³⁶

Box 16: The Paris Principles on Aid Effectiveness

The five areas outlined above also correspond closely with the Paris principles on aid effectiveness. The signatories to the Paris Declaration agreed five principles of effective aid: ownership; alignment; harmonisation; managing for results; and mutual accountability.

DFID told us that there is a strong case for the Paris principles to be more rigorously applied to parliamentary strengthening work.¹³⁷ We agree and urge DFID to work with other donors to ensure that this occurs.

We welcome the fact that DFID has commissioned a small number of country case studies to examine donor support to parliaments in terms of the Paris principles. We recommend that DFID builds on these studies by working with other donors to carry out a joint review on a larger scale.

DFID, together with other donors, should support greater engagement in the implementation and monitoring of the Paris Declaration.

The following sections address how development partners - and the UK in particular - can improve parliament-related assistance.

Understand parliaments in their political context

Development partners must approach parliaments in their political context and base interventions on a thorough understanding of the pressures, interests and actors that shape parliamentary leverage.

Effective parliamentary assistance must be based on close knowledge of individual parliaments and their position in relation to other institutions and to the broader political culture. While this may seem self-evident, we were told that approaches to parliamentary strengthening often centre on the degree to which parliaments conform to, or deviate from, western political models and standards without contextualising parliaments within local political systems.¹³⁸ The resemblance between institutional features of parliaments in Africa and those of parliaments in major donor countries creates opportunities to draw on western technical expertise, for example, on the operation of committees. A danger of this resemblance, however, is that donors assume that African parliaments are simply weak versions of the legislatures found in western capitals and from this assumption proceed to try to recreate African parliaments in their own image.

While many of the formal institutional features of African parliaments are common to parliaments elsewhere, the political systems in which they operate may be vastly different and these differences must be reflected in strategies to strengthen parliaments in Africa. Those seeking to support parliament must map the formal and informal pressures, interests and actors that favour or discourage a stronger parliament. This assessment must cover the incentives and players within parliament, within the executive and in the wider political system.

In the UK, it is common to hear the people and politics that centre on the UK parliament characterised as the ‘Westminster village’. MPs, journalists and lobbyists devote considerable time to anticipating and analysing new political dynamics and to building relationships with individuals. Parliaments in Africa have equivalent localised political dynamics that inevitably impinge upon efforts to strengthen parliaments. Understanding local politics is crucial because effective parliamentary strengthening is partly about identifying the greatest political opportunities for reform rather than necessarily the greatest needs.

We recommend that within a long-term and predictable approach to supporting parliaments, DFID retains the ability to remain flexible so as to realise the opportunities for parliamentary strengthening presented by changing political circumstances.

We were told that development partners sometimes fail to appreciate that parliaments are political organisations and as such cannot be approached as if they were simply institutions of management and administration. The bureaucratic functions of parliament are heavily influenced by the fact that parliaments are political environments where people manoeuvre to maximise power and resources.

Parliament is an inherently political place – politics at all levels shapes what happens. Nothing can substitute for understanding the political context.¹³⁹

Nonetheless, ‘some approaches to strengthening parliament have treated parliament much like a ministry or other organisation’.¹⁴⁰ As a result, initiatives often focus on technical support or training MPs on oversight techniques. While such support can be valuable, it must be based on a prior examination of the incentive structures that shape parliamentary behaviour. As made clear in the following statement from a parliamentary strengthening practitioner in Uganda, capacity building alone is often inadequate:

Donors want to see parliament assert itself. They say ‘we wish parliament was stronger’ and they support capacity building. But when, for example, the budget committee doesn’t put its foot down, it is not necessarily because Members don’t know how to or don’t have the expertise to do so. It is likely to be because to create waves would not be in the political interests of the individuals concerned.¹⁴¹

Similarly:

Too often donors and implementers ‘teach’ MPs about their ‘role’. [The problem] is usually not MPs’ lack of understanding, however, but the incentive structure that governs their behaviour. Programming needs to focus on changing these incentive structures, rather than simply ‘teaching’ or ‘training’ MPs. Often simply throwing money at parliament doesn’t address these issues.¹⁴²

Capacity building cannot necessarily overcome entrenched political interests that favour a weak parliament. This is problematic for the nature and extent of development partner involvement in sovereign parliaments. The UNECA told us that an ‘apolitical approach’ that focuses assistance on parliamentary bureaucracy and support services is a ‘safer option’.¹⁴³ DFID has posed itself the following question: ‘how far should our work be – implicitly, explicitly - about addressing political capacities and incentives?’¹⁴⁴ As the Department notes, ‘bringing politics squarely into the aid equation takes many development professionals outside their zones of comfort. It also takes us to the outer edges of what some development agencies are equipped, even mandated, to do’.¹⁴⁵ Some interviewees suggested that it was inappropriate and impractical for development partners proactively to seek to remould political incentives. Others, however, argued that development assistance has an unavoidable political impact and that it was a question of being aware of that impact and ensuring that it strengthened, rather than undermined, accountable politics.

To be effective, development partners require a highly developed analysis of the political terrain at parliament and the interests, agendas and individuals that can make or break efforts to reinforce the role of parliament. We were told in Kenya, for example, that it was necessary to carry out regular and thorough political analysis of the opportunities and risks that accompany every intervention.¹⁴⁶ In relation to training MPs, we were told that donors must weigh the political dangers of being seen to favour one set of MPs over another. Progress hinges on being able to base programmes on a familiarity with parliamentary life:

*You need to understand the nuances of parliament and its rhythms. What time of day will you catch an MP if you want to speak to him? You need to know individual personalities, histories and reputations. And, despite official titles, who has real leverage.*¹⁴⁷

We are concerned that development partners who want to assist parliaments need to invest more time in building relationships on the ground. This means following and analysing parliamentary developments more closely and interacting more with MPs, parliamentary staff and key players outside parliament.¹⁴⁸ We were struck by the relatively small proportion of time that development partners are able spend on the parliamentary dimensions of their governance work.

As well as basing programmes on analysis of conditions within parliament, **development partners must approach parliament as part of a wider political system rather than as a free-standing institution.** As suggested above, an effective parliament depends partly on the work of the media, the judiciary, political parties, the private sector, civil society and on wider cultural demands and expectations. As outlined in Chapter 2, the weakness of parliamentary scrutiny is partly attributable to the low stock placed on this role by many citizens. A weak parliament can be symptomatic of broader features of a political system that a single-minded focus on parliament will not be able to address.

Get the right staff in sufficient numbers

Development partners' human resource policies and processes are essential in this respect. **The pool of donor expertise and experience in parliamentary strengthening is relatively small. As parliamentary strengthening rises up the international development agenda, the quality of parliamentary strengthening work should not be compromised. Development partners must ensure that they have sufficient numbers of staff in post with the right skills, professional background and inter-personal qualities to operate effectively in a parliamentary environment.** On various occasions we were told that the rapid turn-over of international staff had compromised emerging relationships of trust and had led to project set-backs. At the time of the Group's visits to Uganda and Malawi, DFID governance advisors who would otherwise have been leading on parliamentary strengthening issues were not in post. In terms of skills sets, UNDP told us that a key to success in parliamentary programming is the interpersonal skills and political experience of the staff that are implementing parliamentary strengthening programmes on the ground.¹⁴⁹ The importance of international development partners recruiting national staff and working with national consultants was also underlined to the Group.

Tread carefully and patiently

Staff working on parliamentary strengthening need to appreciate the political sensitivities that surround parliamentary strengthening work. Because parliament is an inherently political arena, efforts to support parliament are therefore also inherently political. Parliamentary strengthening runs the risk of being identified with short-term partisan political agendas. Furthermore, donor support to parliaments can invite accusations that foreign pressures are compromising parliament's independence. Development partners must continuously assess these risks and work to off-set them. As it was put the Group in Malawi, 'parliaments and MPs are wary of outside support. You should not give them cause to ask "who sent him here? What is his hidden agenda?"'¹⁵⁰ In Kenya we were told by SUNY that their approach

was successful because it was carefully choreographed and had prioritised the building of mutual trust and confidence over time.

Relations between development partners and parliament can easily become strained. Strain is sometimes necessary and unavoidable if, for example, funds are misused. The danger of a ‘softly-softly’ approach is that it edges into support for reinforcing the *status quo*, or even becomes complicit in corrupt practices. But strengthening parliaments is a slow and delicate process and development partners seeking instant results are liable to be disappointed. As it was put to the Group in Kenya, development partners can be ‘too quick to run away from the very problems that they are supposed to be alleviating’.¹⁵¹

It can be self-defeating for development partners to position themselves at the forefront of parliamentary strengthening efforts. In all three countries we visited, we were told that donor efforts that lead from the front are likely to encounter strong resistance. As we were told in Malawi, ‘parliaments are very sensitive institutions. If you go too directly, you will hit a wall. You have to step back a little’.¹⁵² Where politically delicate issues are concerned, it is easier for those who are resistant to change to dismiss reform proposals when they are seen to be driven by donors.

Engage local demand and encourage broad-based local ownership

Parliamentary strengthening will only succeed if it is pulled by MPs, political parties and other local actors, not just pushed by donors. Initiatives must build on, build with, and build up, local efforts and channels to strengthen parliaments.

Throughout the inquiry, we were told emphatically that development partners' parliamentary strengthening efforts will only get results if they carry the support of local actors – particularly actors within parliament. As we were told in Malawi: 'In order for reforms to be taken up at parliament it is important not just to push an idea but to ensure that MPs and parliamentary staff pull it. We say "the wind should first blow"'.¹⁵³ Where there is entrenched resistance to parliamentary strengthening from within parliament it is all the more important to support civil society efforts in this area.

An MP in Kenya told us: 'we like our autonomy and we like to be supported on the programmes that we ourselves have prioritised'.¹⁵⁴ The Group was concerned to hear that development partners often provide support according to their individual and immediate spending priorities instead of the long-term institutional interests of parliament. Too often, steps to strengthen parliament reflect funding opportunities rather than the needs of parliament.

In Uganda, for example, staff within parliament told us that the support that it had received was often targeted, short-termist, and provided in a way that bypassed the structures of the Parliamentary Development Coordination Office.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, multiple development partners using multiple fund management mechanisms overloaded an already stretched office. One interviewee stated that it was possible to identify individual donors 'with his eyes closed' simply according to the predictability with which they sought to earmark their funding to their favoured areas to support.¹⁵⁶ In Malawi we were told that development partners' management styles and financial arrangements at times discouraged opportunities for parliament to lead decision-making on which parts of parliament needed strengthening and how.¹⁵⁷

Exactly what 'local needs' are, who defines them, and the processes by which they are defined are themselves fraught questions. As one interviewee put it:

*How do development partners handle a situation when the Speaker wants to hand out foreign study tours only to people that he favours or to men only? What does 'local ownership' mean when key parliamentary offices do not prioritise the institutional interests of parliament? Local ownership is no panacea and certainly must mean more than parliamentary leadership per se. The nature of parliamentary leadership can be part of the problem and giving greater control to this leadership will not necessarily benefit parliament. As ever, context is everything.*¹⁵⁸

In this light, strategic plans for parliamentary development hold special significance. Such plans can go far to ensure broad-based ownership. This is especially true when they are developed through a consultative process that forges a consensus on priorities for parliamentary development across the parliamentary administration and government and opposition parties. Strategic plans can then help to match the support on offer with the support that is deemed necessary. Such plans have been crucial to reform efforts in Malawi and Uganda for example. The way these plans are drawn up and the structures they create determine whether or not the MPs and parliamentary staff see them as ‘our plans’. As we were told in Uganda, ‘we knew we wouldn’t get ownership from every single MP and individual in parliament, but we realised that we needed a core coalition of committee chairpersons and representatives of other key constituencies that were capable of spearheading a sustainable parliamentary strengthening process’.¹⁵⁹ The formula applied in one country may not be directly transferable to another – one size doesn’t fit all. However, comparative learning is necessary. **To inform future efforts, we recommend that a joint-donor comparative study be conducted of early lessons learned from the formulation process and initial results of strategic plans to strengthen parliaments.**

We were encouraged by DFID’s efforts to maximise the potential for working through recipient countries’ channels. Progress, for example, has come in Malawi where what used to be the Donor Task Force on Parliament, chaired by donor representatives, is now the ‘Parliamentary Task Force’ in which the Clerk’s office takes the lead and sets meeting dates and agendas.

Engaging local demand and ownership also raises the fact that a parliament’s own openness to scrutiny may be far from perfect. For many citizens, parliament is a ‘black box’ that yields little information about its ‘internal affairs’. **Development partners should seize opportunities to support parliament and civil society in ways that make parliament a positive example of a transparent institution: one that upholds high parliamentary standards; that reaches out to citizens; and that enables access to information.**

Move beyond short-term capacity building for MPs

Tailoring capacity building to local demand can help to engage the interest and support of members and their staff. We were told that capacity building would be more effective if it were and focussed on issues on the agenda of busy MPs and staff. Where capacity-building occurs through measures such as training seminars, these seminars should avoid focussing on generic issues of parliamentary development. Instead, they should build general themes into specific topical issues that parliamentarians may be grappling with in their day to day work.¹⁶⁰

The parliamentary strengthening field has been criticised for over-emphasis on short-term interventions such as parliamentary exchanges, conferences and seminars.¹⁶¹ The lasting value and cost-effectiveness of some of these interventions was raised in our interviews. The merits of MPs and/or parliamentary staff undertaking international visits varies greatly according to how focussed their programme is, who gets to travel and the extent of preparation and follow-up. Responsibility for the effectiveness of visits lies with hosts as well as visitors. Whether African parliamentarians should visit western parliaments or other African parliaments facing similar challenges was also a topic of debate. **Inter-continental visits by MPs and/or parliamentary staff (both to and from African countries) should**

occur only when there are specific issues that must be addressed first-hand. The cost-effectiveness and impact of inter-continental trips should be maximised.

The Group heard varying perspectives on whether resources were best channelled towards training and supporting individual MPs or to parliament as an institution. The choice is not one of either/or and we believe that development partners' parliamentary support should not sideline MPs. Nonetheless, high rates of turnover at elections mean that investment in MPs can be lost to parliament when MPs lose their seats. This is not necessarily the case, for example if MPs use their time in office to effect long-term institutional changes to parliament. It is also true that MPs can use skills and experience gained in parliament in other socially beneficial roles upon leaving office. **We believe, however, that support to parliaments as institutions (in terms of human resources and institutional capacity) can effectively translate into support for MPs and can also have an enduring impact in terms of creating institutional strengths that are available to future generations of MPs.** In Malawi, for example, the Group was told that support to clerks had reinvigorated the committee system whilst support to the Clerk's office had helped bring renewed purpose and commitment to strengthening parliament. In Uganda, the creation of the Parliamentary Development and Coordination Office was cited as pivotal to progress in recent years.

Coordinate

Development partners must work in step with one another. Approaches need not necessarily be uniform but they should be coordinated. This means sharing information and insights, reducing duplication and dividing labour according to comparative advantage. Donors should also do more to form common, streamlined arrangements.

Development partners must demonstrate their commitment to greater harmonisation and transparency. It is often necessary for donors to approach parliamentary strengthening from different angles – for example with certain donors focussing on working with civil society and others working with parliament more directly. A single project or common management approach, therefore, may not necessarily be appropriate. Much more needs to be done, however, to improve coordination. Where appropriate, this includes forming common arrangements at country level for planning, funding, disbursement, monitoring, evaluating and reporting. Development partners must reduce duplication and learn the lessons from their own work and that of others. They must also create an appropriate division of labour between donor actors according to comparative advantage. As donor support to parliaments increases, diversifies and deepens it is important that these efforts reinforce one another. This means coordination on a number of levels.

Coordination at policy level

At headquarters level, there remain noticeable gaps in donor coordination but there is now greater commitment to see these gaps addressed. As an official from the CPA put it, 'for too long we have been in our own little boxes, we are now only beginning to tackle this'.¹⁶² A 2007 donor consultation conference to share lessons and experiences was the first event of its kind and confirmed that donor coordination is still in its infancy.¹⁶³ The consultation meetings highlighted areas for improved coordination and yielded proposals to meet some of these needs. Echoing these proposals, the Group recommends the following:

Development partners working on parliamentary strengthening currently lack a central system that enables them to share information and benefit from respective experiences. **We recommend the creation of an online gateway where donors can access a database of parliament-related documents including thematic and country-specific strategies, evaluations, research and information on good practice.**

Coordination, accountability and quality would be enhanced by the joint development of good practice principles and minimum standards for donors' parliamentary strengthening work. These principles should be framed around the Paris principles and the DAC's guidelines on good practice in 'capacity development'.¹⁶⁴ **Particular attention should be given to common approaches and guidelines for evaluating donors' parliamentary strengthening work.**

Coordination on the ground

In discussions in Malawi, Uganda and Kenya, the Group learnt that donor harmonisation at country-level was improving significantly but from a low base and with scope to improve further. The Group welcomes the leading role taken by DFID Uganda in efforts to improve coordination and harmonisation. We note the importance of such activities, given that the Ugandan parliament, for example, has identified at least 17 different actors that provide it with support.¹⁶⁵ We were also told that prior to recent coordination efforts, each donor negotiated bilaterally with parliament. Donors were unaware of one others' activities and parliamentary time and resources were wasted. Any potential for synergies between the activities of different development partners was lost. DFID and others have sought to address donor coordination through support to the Ugandan parliament's strategic plan (the PSIDP) and by working to form a parliamentary donor group as a forum for exchanging information.

In Malawi, a similar donor group has also been formed – partly because donors became aware that they were sometimes funding practically identical activities. As it was put to the Group, 'duplication occurred because donors weren't communicating and parliament was fishing with several hooks in the same donor water. If there were bites on both hooks, parliament reeled in both fishes'.¹⁶⁶ According to DFID, in the past, effectiveness was compromised by the lack of a joined-up approach amongst development partners and by shortcomings on the part of the Malawian parliament:

Donors provided fragmented support partly because parliament didn't coordinate donors and partly because donors didn't coordinate amongst themselves. We didn't get to the real systemic issues.¹⁶⁷

In Kenya, we were concerned to learn that, having previously been active, the donor group had fallen into abeyance and not met for up to 8 months. In Malawi, we were told that there was scope for donors to go beyond basic information-sharing and to be fully transparent with one another in terms of disclosing budget details. Interviewees also suggested that the quality of the donor group made a significant difference. It was underlined that development partners needed to appreciate that coordination was time-consuming and complicated by the diversity of individual donors' preferred funding mechanisms.

We note the dispersed nature of parliamentary strengthening work by UK-based actors and the urgent need for improved coordination. We welcome preliminary

efforts, led by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), to determine how best to mobilise collective UK experience and expertise in relation to parliaments. We note that these discussions have led to a joint bid by WFD and other UK bodies for funding from DFID's Governance and Transparency Fund and look forward to closer collaboration whether or not this bid is successful.

Parliamentary strengthening and support for political parties

A recurrent concern during our visits was the importance of engaging with political parties in Africa as part of the work of strengthening parliaments. We were told that problems associated with political parties pose significant overall difficulties for parliamentary strengthening. The UNECA has argued that 'being considered *too political* and therefore *too sensitive*, political party development (an entry point to assisting parliaments) has for a long time ranked lowest in the list of international policy priorities for development cooperation'.¹⁶⁸ The ability to engage with political parties, however, is necessary for the support of multi-party democracy. Whatever the political sensitivities involved, it is essential that donors develop the expertise and financial instruments in order to better address this fundamental area.

At country-level, international level and amongst UK organisations, there was agreement on the need to **address the current disconnection between support to African parliaments and support to African political parties**. Overall, development partners have kept support for parliamentary development and support for political parties completely separate. **We recommend greater communication and closer links between those organisations providing support to political parties and development partners providing support to parliament.**

Learn lessons and apply them

Development partners must ensure that parliamentary strengthening work is based on evidence and results and that information is gathered, shared and used to improve collective practice. This necessitates moving beyond short-term and scattered efforts. It requires a commitment to evaluating the impact of parliamentary strengthening work and to improving the means of assessing parliamentary performance.

In order to know (and be able to show) what works, what doesn't and why, development partners' parliamentary strengthening initiatives must be built on a strong evidence base. Under the heading 'managing for results', donors made a commitment in the Paris Declaration to ensure that programming and resource commitments are results-based and that information is gathered and used to improve decision-making. The Group is concerned, however, that this commitment is a long way from being realised. As DFID acknowledges, there has been minimal overall donor investment in evaluating the impact of parliamentary strengthening work, or in designing frameworks for assessing parliamentary effectiveness.¹⁶⁹

If parliament-related support is to be accountable, transparent, and recognised as successful then far-reaching changes are necessary in the gathering, management and sharing of information.

Box 17: Accounting for the lack of evaluation

The Group was told that practical, methodological and political factors have discouraged a rigorous approach to lesson-learning:

- For some donors, parliamentary strengthening is a largely new field that has enjoyed limited funding relative to other areas of development expenditure. There has therefore been less impetus to gather data and assess impact, especially since many programmes have been launched fairly recently.
- It is intrinsically difficult to disaggregate the impact of donor interventions and to be able to be confident about how far changes can be attributed to specific donor activities rather than other factors. The Canadian Parliamentary Centre, for example, told the Group that conspicuous 'quick-wins' are unusual and that the dividends of supporting parliaments are often subtle, incremental, subject to reversal and apparent only after a number of years.¹⁷⁰
- Evaluations can have a political impact. It may not be possible to talk objectively about the role that the Speaker or a particular MP has played in helping or hurting programmatic success, without the evaluation itself having a political effect and impacting relationships between parliament and the donor or implementer. The fact that evaluations of parliamentary strengthening efforts can have political consequences needs to be recognised.¹⁷¹

Assessing donor performance

Evaluations such as those by Sida and UNDP show that comprehensive assessments are readily feasible.¹⁷² Such documents remain, however, largely the exception rather than the rule. In 2001, the UNDP argued that 'at the end of the first decade of a concerted effort on the part of donors to assist legislatures, it is time to measure the impact of this assistance'.¹⁷³

This urgency has increased. Individual donors sometimes use results-based frameworks and gather performance data from programmes but this is not done systematically to review the overall impact of legislative strengthening efforts.¹⁷⁴ Some modes of assessment, moreover, can privilege readily quantifiable dimensions of parliamentary strengthening at the expense of subtle but important qualitative shifts.

At present, the occurrence of an evaluation of a donor's parliamentary strengthening work in a given country is contingent upon the will of an individual country office. There is not yet a generalised commitment to evaluate as a matter of course.¹⁷⁵ Agreed guidelines are necessary on how development partners should carry out evaluations - either collectively or individually - of their parliamentary strengthening work. Joint evaluations would be less taxing on parliamentary staff in terms of answering surveys and making time available for interviews.

Assessing parliamentary performance

A fundamental limitation on development partners' ability to evaluate the impact of their efforts is the lack of agreed standards by which to assess parliamentary performance. The absence of consensus on what a 'strong' and democratic parliament actually is makes it difficult to be clear about whether or not a parliament has been 'strengthened'. While there is broad international agreement about the components of a democratic election, for example, there exists no equivalent in terms of democratic parliaments, although efforts, led by the CPA, the IPU and others, have begun to articulate clearer benchmarks, norms and standards. Agreement on the basic characteristics of a democratic parliament could help to provide a normative 'anchor' to parliamentary strengthening programmes. This would help to overcome suspicion surrounding the pursuit by individual donors of their particular view of what constitutes a democratic parliament.

We were also told that there is a dearth of comprehensive and well-established measures and data regarding the capacity and performance of African parliaments. These gaps make it difficult to assess the impact of domestic and donor activities, to discern national and regional trends or to discuss strengths and weaknesses in anything more than relative terms.¹⁷⁶

Box 18: Potential advantages of assessing parliamentary performance

Internationally agreed criteria for assessing parliamentary performance would offer several potential advantages:

- they would assist development partners and African actors to identify and document the impact of their interventions;
- they would be available as a tool and reference point for reformist politicians to advocate for change and;
- the process of endeavouring to reach consensus on standards could be of intrinsic value in catalysing debate and buy-in on parliamentary effectiveness.

The Group notes, however, that standards must emerge from a true international consensus rather than being donor-driven.¹⁷⁷

The Group supports efforts to date by the IPU, CPA and UNDP to address the need for standards and benchmarks. The potential involvement of SADC Parliamentary Forum as a regional African body is particularly welcome.

We recommend the production of a bi-annual report on the ‘state of parliaments’ worldwide – including an index of parliamentary strength and a topical thematic component. We welcome initial discussions at UNDP for a report of this kind.

DFID must take steps to enable the evaluation of legislative strengthening work. Such evaluation should not result in discrimination against less readily quantifiable dimensions of parliamentary strengthening work (such as promoting the non-violent resolution of social conflict).

DFID and lesson-learning

With respect to DFID, it was apparent to the Group that there are acute problems concerning the existence and availability of basic information and data about parliamentary strengthening programmes. Two recent DFID-commissioned studies to reflect on DFID’s own work both underlined that their research had been hampered by the Department’s inability to provide basic information about its country programmes. The lack of centrally-held or easily obtainable country information, the authors stressed, made it difficult to reach solid conclusions about the Department’s parliament-related initiatives.¹⁷⁸

DFID notes that its parliamentary strengthening work is decentralised to country offices, where the country-specific information is stored. Nonetheless, during the Group’s trips to Malawi and Uganda, written information was not readily available.¹⁷⁹

Documentation and insights must endure beyond the comings and goings of individual officials. **DFID’s institutional memory and capacity for lesson-learning will remain compromised unless the Department improves and the way in which information and data on its parliamentary strengthening work is gathered, stored and shared.** This applies within country offices, between country offices and headquarters, and with other donors.

Much of DFID’s recent work on parliamentary strengthening at headquarters level has been led by an informal team working from different areas in the Department. To ensure that DFID’s parliament work is sustained and expanded as posts turn over, DFID should establish a clear institutional home for parliamentary strengthening work.

In Malawi, the Group was told by one of DFID’s implementing partners that even where individual donors have consolidated their insights, these insights are not feeding into mutual donor learning:

The kind of reporting we do is for our own administrative purposes. A lot of the lessons aren’t being reported for general discussion but rather for internal reporting requirements. Our approach has not really been to ask ourselves ‘do we have something to share at the end of the day? This must change.’¹⁸⁰ We agree.

Amongst many development partners there exists a dislocation between in-country parliamentary strengthening developments and discussions at HQ level.¹⁸¹ In Malawi, for example, one practitioner suggested to the Group that ‘a lot of the talking going on about parliamentary strengthening skips the actors on the ground’.¹⁸² The Group welcomes the fact that DFID is addressing the need for guidance on good practice for country offices. We also welcome the fact that DFID and others have taken steps to identify lessons about ‘what works’. These lessons, however, are very general and suggest little about how they are to be heeded. Broad insights about generically desirable approaches need to be supported by, and refined according to, country-level insights. ‘What works’ should include ‘what did, and did not work, where, and why’. This requires case studies of individual country experiences. Such case studies are necessary not only to support informed, context-sensitive policy development. Without case studies that communicate the practical impact that parliamentary strengthening can make on governance and poverty reduction, initiatives in this area are less likely to be able to justify funding and support.

DFID should carry out and publish a series of country studies in places where it has greatest experience of parliamentary strengthening work. DFID should ensure that field-based perspectives and experiences are gathered and incorporated into general policy.

Box 19: Parliaments, political parties and fragile states

In the course of our inquiry, two particular policy and research gaps emerged:

- **Parliaments and political parties:** There are few empirically grounded studies of the significance of political parties for the strength of African parliaments. Few studies have examined the precise relationships between political parties, parliament and government in African countries. Just as international attention to elections has not been matched by commensurate concern with the significance of parliaments, so the significance of political parties in non-election periods is frequently overlooked.¹⁸³
- **Parliaments in fragile states:** Existing studies of parliaments in Africa are highly uneven in their geographical coverage. Working with the parliament of the DRC or southern Sudan, for example, may be very different to working with the parliament of Ghana or Botswana. The role of parliaments in fragile states and the distinct challenges and opportunities¹⁸⁴ for strengthening parliaments in these environments was brought to the attention of the Group as an area where data and country case studies are lacking.

Take greater account of parliament in development work

Development partners must ensure that their work does not marginalise or undermine parliaments and that the parliaments of recipient countries are encouraged to play a full part in development relationships.

In our call for evidence, we asked whether parliaments and parliamentarians were sufficiently involved in reviewing the terms of direct budget support. The following response from Zambia was consistent with many comments to the Group:

*The Zambian Parliament and its parliamentarians are not involved in scrutinizing agreements between donors and the Government because all agreements are signed by the executive wing of government, whilst parliament is merely informed occasionally of the existence of such agreements.*¹⁸⁵

The Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) told us of problems concerning donor transparency. The Network has argued that:

*[The] lack of adequate access to information has... made it difficult for Malawian parliamentarians to fully understand and appreciate the conditionality and other donor-government dynamics which have largely remained the preserve of the executive arm of government.*¹⁸⁶

A consultant with the UN said, ‘there’s almost a pact between donors and the executive – a deal is done and presented to parliament as a *fait accompli*. Parliament is then told by the executive “don’t make things difficult with the donors”’.¹⁸⁷ In a reflection of broader limits on the role of parliaments in financial legislation, up to half of the parliaments in countries surveyed by the UN were not involved in scrutinising agreements with donors.¹⁸⁸

At a minimum, donors should be more transparent in their relationships with executives and should encourage parliaments to scrutinise provisions for aid – not least because it is in donors’ interests to have additional monitoring input to ensure aid is spent effectively. The need for transparency is clear from the following passage in an internal donor project evaluation:

*The Parliament never had a clear understanding of the budget of [the project] and... did not receive adequate information concerning how much funding was available through [the project] nor how that funding was spent. Representatives of Parliament indicated that it needed better financial transparency and accountability from donor programs.*¹⁸⁹

Greater transparency would minimise the potential for misconceptions about the nature and extent of donor support. In Tanzania, for example, MPs’ concerns about undue donor influence and perceptions of donor-executive collusion arose partly because they were not privy to basic information about development assistance and its conditions.¹⁹⁰

Annex A: Africa APPG/ODI Meeting Series

Parliaments and development:

How can parliaments in developing countries contribute to poverty reduction?

This joint Africa APPG and ODI series explored the role played by parliaments in developing countries and examined what donors and others might do to help such parliaments perform more effectively. The meetings were held at Westminster.

Parliaments, governance and accountability: What role for parliaments in poverty reduction?

Wednesday 18 April, 1.00-2.30PM

Speakers:

Alan Hudson, Research Fellow, Poverty and Public Policy Group, ODI

Niall Johnston, Senior Parliamentary Consultant to the World Bank Institute

Lisa von Trapp, Consultant, Parliamentary Strengthening Program, World Bank Institute

Chair: Baroness Janet Whitaker, Africa APPG Executive Committee

Parliamentary strengthening: Strategies and successes

Tuesday 1 May, 1.00-2.30PM

Speakers:

Rt. Hon Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for International Development

Scott Hubli, Parliamentary Development Policy Adviser, Bureau for Development Policy,

UNDP

Parliaments, budgets and aid: Accountability and effectiveness

Wednesday 16 May, 1.00-2.30PM

Speakers:

Martin Powell, World Development Movement and International Parliamentarians' Petition

Joachim Wehner, Lecturer in public choice and public policy, Government Department,

London School of Economics

Discussant: Edward Leigh MP, Chair, Public Accounts Committee

Chair: Sally Keeble MP, Secretary, Africa APPG

Politics, parliamentarians and the public: The politics of parliaments and constituency relations

Wednesday 23 May, 1.00-2.30PM

Speakers:

Dr Rasheed Draman, Director of African Programmes, Canadian Parliamentary Centre (Ghana)

Hon Dr Benjamin Kunbuor, Member of Parliament, Ghana

Discussant: Dr William Shija, Secretary General, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Chair: Hugh Bayley MP, Chair, Africa APPG

Annex B: Call for Written Evidence issued by the Africa APPG

You are invited to submit written evidence to the Africa APPG's 4th inquiry on parliamentary strengthening activities in Africa. The invitation to submit written evidence is open to all but we would particularly welcome evidence from:

- African parliamentarians
 - African parliaments and parliamentary officials, Clerks and Speakers
 - African Governments
 - Donors working on parliamentary strengthening activities
 - Organisations working with parliaments and parliamentarians
 - African civil society organisations
-

Outline:

An inquiry resulting in a published report looking at parliamentary strengthening and capacity building programmes in Africa.

As the AAPPG is a UK parliamentary group the inquiry will look at how UK aid is contributing to parliamentary strengthening efforts and how well it is coordinating with other donors. It will seek to identify good initiatives and areas where more funding/focus/coordination may be required.

By parliamentary strengthening the AAPPG means all programmes aimed at strengthening parliaments and parliamentarians as representatives of the people and scrutinisers of the executive.

Key questions the inquiry will examine:

What are the key problems faced by African parliaments and parliamentarians as they seek to represent the electorate and hold the executive to account?

- What parliamentary strengthening activities already exist? Which have been most useful to African parliamentarians and parliaments?
- What gaps remain in parliamentary strengthening activities?
- Is parliamentary strengthening given sufficient attention by the UK and other donors, in terms of prioritisation and funding?
- Is the UK fully coordinated with other donors in parliamentary strengthening activities?
- What is the role of parliamentary strengthening organisations?
- Are parliaments and parliamentarians sufficiently involved in scrutinising agreements between donors and recipient governments?
- What problems restrict the development of parliamentary strengthening activities?

Annex C: List of written evidence

The Group received written submissions of evidence from:

ActionAid UK/CARE

AWEPA

The British Council

Mike Cook

DFID

Fanta Diarra MP, Mali

Marie Rose Nguini Effa MP, Cameroon

Hon. Vinnie Hodges MP, Liberia

IDASA

Rebecca Kadaga MP, Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Uganda

LM Mayaka, Clerk of the National Assembly, Zambia

Gareth Morgan MP, South Africa

ODI

Immaculee Nahayo, President of the National Assembly, Burundi

Jean Sendeza MP, Malawi

Ibrahim Sorie MP, Sierra Leone

Robert Tumukwasibwe, Principal Clerk Assistant, Parliament of Uganda

UNECA

World Development Movement

Tony Worthington

Annex D: Further evidence-gathering activities by the AAPPG

Visit to Malawi and South Africa 10th-18th March 2007

AAPPG delegates: Lyn Brown MP, Ian Liddell-Grainger MP, Nicholas Waddell (AAPPG Coordinator).

Visit to Kenya and Uganda 21st-25th April 2007

AAPPG delegates: Roberta Blackman-Woods MP, Lord Steel of Aikwood, and Nicholas Waddell.

During visits to Malawi, Kenya and Uganda, delegates from the Group held discussions with parliamentary speakers, clerks, chairs of financial oversight committees, party whips, representatives of political parties, donor officials and civil society representatives.

In South Africa, delegates from the Group attended the annual conference of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank. The conference brought together 200 parliamentarians from 90 different countries with representatives from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, other multilateral and bilateral agencies, civil society, trade unions, academia, and the private sector.

Both trips were funded through the CPA-UK's Fellowship Scheme. Costs for the Group Coordinator were met by the Group.

At Westminster, the Group held discussions with delegations of MPs from Cameroon and Tanzania as well as with the Speaker of the Tanzanian parliament, Hon. Samuel Sitta.

The Group also participated in the DFID-UNDP-WBI 'consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, 21st-22nd May, 2007.

Annex E: About the Africa All Party Parliamentary Group

The Africa APPG was established in January 2003. Its purpose is to raise the profile of African and pan-African issues at Westminster.

The current officers of the Group:

President:	Lord Hughes of Woodside
Vice Presidents:	Lord Avebury Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
Chair	Hugh Bayley MP
Vice-Chairs	Lord Chidgey Lord Lea of Crondall James Duddridge MP Baroness D'Souza
Treasurer	Lord Freeman
Secretary	Sally Keeble MP

The Group also has an executive committee comprised of officers of the Group and a further 25 members. Total membership of the Group is 170, including members from both Houses of Parliament. The administration costs of the Group are covered by the Royal African Society (www.royalafricansociety.org).

Previous inquiries by the Group:

Averting Catastrophe: AIDS in 21st Century Africa (2004)
The UK Government and Africa in 2005: How joined up is Whitehall? (2005)
The Other Side of the Coin: The UK and corruption in Africa (2006)

The Africa APPG can be contacted via:

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References

¹ For the purposes of this report, 'Africa' refers to sub-Saharan Africa. This report generally uses the term 'parliament' although it is recognised that there exist various names for national, elected representative bodies.

² AAPPG interview, Kenyan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Nairobi, 23 April 2007

³ AAPPG interview, Ugandan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Kampala, 27 April 2007

⁴ AAPPG interview, Ugandan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Kampala, 26 April 2007

⁵ AAPPG interview, Malawian parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Lilongwe, 14 March 2007

⁶ H. Benn MP, presentation given to the AAPPG, London, 1 May 2007

⁷ Comments made at AAPPG roundtable discussion with Kenyan MPs, Nairobi, 24 April 2007

⁸ AAPPG interview, parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Lilongwe, 14 March 2007

⁹ DFID written evidence to the AAPPG

¹⁰ DFID written evidence to the AAPPG

¹¹ AAPPG interview, Malawian parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Lilongwe, 14 March 2007

¹² Dick Toornstra MEP, comments at 'Donor consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, May 21, 2007

¹³ Department for International Development, *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Governance work for the Poor*, 2006, p.10

¹⁴ J. Barkan, *et al*, 'Emerging legislatures: Institutions of horizontal accountability', in B. Levy and S. Kpundeh (eds.) *Governance and Public Sector Management in Africa*. Washington: The World Bank, 2004, p.211

¹⁵ AAPPG interview, Lecturer at the University of Nairobi, Nairobi, 22 April 2007

¹⁶ The Afrobarometer Network, 'Where is Africa going? Views from below', Working Paper No. 60, The Afrobarometer Network, 2006, pp.20-21

¹⁷ UNECA, *African Governance Report*, 2005

¹⁸ M. Salih, 'Conclusions', in M. Salih (ed.) *African Parliaments: Between governance and government*, Palgrave, 2005, p.256

¹⁹ UNECA, *African Governance Report*, 2005

²⁰ Africa's regional parliaments, forums and assemblies are beyond the scope of this study.

²¹ Africa All Party Parliamentary Group, 'The other side of the coin: The UK and corruption in Africa', Africa All Party Parliamentary Group, 2006

²² Parliaments have distinct significance because they operate at the meeting point of accountability relationships between the government and the people on the one hand, and between the government and the legislature on the other.

²³ Parliaments differ in their size, their powers and rules of procedure, their terms of office, and their institutional structures. Parliaments may be uni-cameral or bi-cameral and can exist in presidential, parliamentary or hybrid political systems.

²⁴ AAPPG interview, Kenyan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Nairobi, 24 April 2007

²⁵ Tony Worthington, written evidence to the AAPPG

²⁶ Amongst bilateral donors, for example, The US's USAID, Sweden's SIDA and Canada's CIDA, have long-standing programmes. Multilaterals such as UNDP and the World Bank Institute, as well as various institutes, networks and foundations have also worked on and with parliaments over a number of years.

²⁷ UNECA, *African Governance Report*, 2005, p.4

²⁸ From the donor side, cold war strategic calculations were a historical break on many developed powers looking beyond shoring up their relations with favoured regimes.

²⁹ S. Hubli presentation to the AAPPG, London, 1 May 2007

³⁰ S. Hubli presentation to the AAPPG, London, 1 May 2007

³¹ AAPPG interview, senior DFID official, Nairobi, 23 April 2007

³² AAPPG interview, DFID official, Nairobi, 24 April 2007

³³ AAPPG interview, senior DFID official, Nairobi, 23 April 2007

³⁴ S. Hubli, presentation to the AAPPG, London, 1 May 2007

³⁵ L. von Trapp, presentation to the AAPPG, London, 18 April 2007

³⁶ S. Hubli, presentation to the AAPPG, London, 1 May 2007

³⁷ AAPPG interview, London, 14 November 2006

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- ³⁸ AAPPG interview, Canadian Parliamentary Centre official, London, 14 November 2006
- ³⁹ DFID written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁴⁰ Comments made at the 'Donor consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, 21 May 2007
<http://sdnhq.undp.org/governance/parls/docs/Final%20Report%20-%20DFID-UNDP-WBI%20Donor%20Consultation.pdf>; AAPPG interview, DFID official, Lilongwe, 12 March 2007
- ⁴¹ The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, para. 48,
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>
- ⁴² The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, para. 3 (iii),
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>
- ⁴³ AAPPG interview, Researcher at the University of Cape Town, 22 June 2007
- ⁴⁴ While there has been a recent increase in material on Africa, the overwhelming majority of studies on legislatures concentrate on US and Western European experiences. See, L. Nijzink *et al.* 'Can parliaments enhance the quality of democracy on the African Continent? An analysis of institutional capacity and public perceptions', Working Paper no. 60, Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town, 2006. Having surveyed the major citation indexes, Stephen Fish of the University of California at Berkeley, observed that there were more references to the Scottish parliament than to all African parliaments combined (comment at 'Donor consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, 21 May 2007). Initiatives such as the African Legislatures Project at the University of Cape Town are beginning to redress the lack of research on African parliaments.
- ⁴⁵ J. Barkan, *et al.*, 'Emerging legislatures: Institutions of horizontal accountability', in B. Levy and S. Kpundeh (eds.) *Governance and Public Sector Management in Africa*. Washington: The World Bank, 2004, p.212
- ⁴⁶ ODI written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁴⁷ AAPPG interview, SUNY-Kenya official, Nairobi, 24 April 2007
- ⁴⁸ The Afrobarometer Network, 'Where is Africa going? Views from below', Working Paper No. 60, The Afrobarometer Network, 2006, pp.20-21
- ⁴⁹ IDASA written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁵⁰ The Afrobarometer Network, 'Responsiveness and accountability in Malawi', Briefing Paper No. 31, The Afrobarometer Network, 2006, p.3
- ⁵¹ The Afrobarometer Network, 'Responsiveness and accountability in Malawi', Briefing Paper No. 31, The Afrobarometer Network, 2006, p.3
- ⁵² Hon. Dr Benjamin Kunbuor MP, presentation to the AAPPG, Westminster, 23 May 2007
- ⁵³ Mike Cook written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁵⁴ IDASA written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁵⁵ AAPPG interview, Ugandan MP, Kampala, 26 April 2007
- ⁵⁶ Mike Cook written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁵⁷ UNECA written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁵⁸ Stuart Wier *et al.*, 'Baseline study of the parliament of Malawi, Report of the Parliamentary Reforms Review Team, 23
- ⁵⁹ AAPPG interview, Samuel Sitta MP, London, 24 December 2006
- ⁶⁰ Malawi National Assembly, Strategic Plan 2006-2009, pp.9-10
- ⁶¹ UNECA written evidence to the AAPPG, Gareth Morgan MP written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁶² AAPPG interview, Samuel Sitta MP, London, 24 December 2006
- ⁶³ Vinnie Hodges MP written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁶⁴ UNECA, African Governance Report, 2005, p126.
- ⁶⁵ AAPPG interview, Kenyan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Nairobi, 24 April 2007
- ⁶⁶ Rebecca Kadaga written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁶⁷ IDASA written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁶⁸ M. Salih, 'Conclusions', in M. Salih (ed.) *African Parliaments: Between governance and government*, Palgrave, 2005, p.260
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- ⁷⁰ A. Lawson and L. Rakner, 'Understanding Patterns of Accountability in Tanzania', Final Synthesis Report, Chr. Michelsen Institute/Oxford Policy Management/ REPOA - Research on Poverty Alleviation, 2005
- ⁷¹ International IDEA, Political Parties in Africa: Challenges for Sustained Multiparty Democracy, 2007, p.21
- ⁷² S. Hubli communication to AAPPG
- ⁷³ AAPPG interview, Lecturer at the University of Nairobi, Nairobi, 22 April 2007
- ⁷⁴ Comments made at AAPPG roundtable discussion with Kenyan MPs, Nairobi, 24 April 2007
- ⁷⁵ In many countries, the distinction between state resources and party resources is regularly violated, prompting one study to conclude that 'this fusion of party and state boundaries constitutes a real challenge to the sustainability of multiparty politics in Africa', International IDEA, Political Parties in Africa: Challenges for Sustained Multiparty Democracy, 2007, p.128
- ⁷⁶ The Group was told that there were only two MPs in the House who had served long enough to have had any direct previous experience of multiparty politics (AAPPG interview, Ugandan MPs, Kampala, 26 April 2007)
- ⁷⁷ Robert Tumukwasibwe MP written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁷⁸ Robert Tumukwasibwe MP written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁷⁹ Tony Worthington written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁸⁰ Tony Worthington written evidence to the AAPPG, Rebecca Kadaga written evidence to the AAPPG, AAPPG interview with the Malawian Clerk of Parliament, Lilongwe, 12 March 2007
- ⁸¹ AAPPG interviews, London, 24 December 2006; Kampala 27 April 2007
- ⁸² S. Hubli communication to the AAPPG
- ⁸³ AAPPG interview, Malawian Clerk of Parliament, Lilongwe, 12 March 2007
- ⁸⁴ Mike Cook, written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁸⁵ A. Hudson, presentation to the AAPPG, 20 March 2007; WDM written evidence to the AAPPG; M. Mfunwa, Strengthening internal accountability in the context of programme-based approaches in sub-Saharan Africa, discussion paper 4/2006, German Development Institute, 2006
- ⁸⁶ Tony Worthington written evidence to the AAPPG
- ⁸⁷ Various written evidence to the AAPPG, including from UNECA, Tony Worthington, ODI.
- ⁸⁸ Comments by Anna Makinda MP (Tanzania), at PNoWB seminar 'How to strengthen the role of parliamentarians in the PRSP process and in development programmes', Cape Town, 15 March 2007
- ⁸⁹ H. Selbervik and V. Wang, 'In pursuit of poverty reduction: what have parliaments got to do with it?', Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2006, p.v
- ⁹⁰ AAPPG interview, Kenyan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Nairobi, 24 April 2007
- ⁹¹ AAPPG interview, Lecturer at the University of Nairobi, Nairobi, 23 April 2007
- ⁹² Department for International Development, Eliminating World Poverty: Making Governance work for the Poor, 2006, p.23
- ⁹³ J. Wehner, presentation to the AAPPG, London, 16 May 2007
- ⁹⁴ The budget process is especially important because it is one of the most regular predictable and systematic ways of scrutinising government conduct (J. Wehner presentation to the AAPPG, London, 16 May 2007). In practice, the level and nature of a parliament's impact on the budget varies greatly and different models of financial scrutiny exist in different parliaments. Broadly, leverage can range from actively initiating parts of the budget, to influencing it through amendments or rejections, to the more passive practice of simply passing the budget without alteration.
- ⁹⁵ UNECA, The role of African parliaments in the budgetary process, 2007, p.18 (document highlighted in UNECA written evidence to the AAPPG.
- ⁹⁶ J. Wehner presentation to the AAPPG, London, 16 May 2007. Wehner also underlined that steps are necessary to minimise the risk that such participation leads to fiscal indiscipline.
- ⁹⁷ UNECA, African Governance Report, 2005, p.4
- ⁹⁸ V. Wang and L. Rakner, The accountability function of supreme audit institutions in Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania, Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2005, p.v
- ⁹⁹ UNECA submission to the AAPPG; comments made at the AAPPG roundtable meeting with Kenyan MPs, Nairobi, 24 April 2007
- ¹⁰⁰ J. Wehner presentation to the AAPPG, London, 16 May 2007

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- ¹⁰¹ IDASA written evidence to the AAPP. Interviewees in Uganda, Malawi and Kenya emphasised that the effectiveness of a given committee was heavily influenced by individual personalities – notably the commitment and leadership on the part of the Chair.
- ¹⁰² Comments made at AAPP roundtable discussion with Kenyan MPs, Nairobi, 24 April 2006
- ¹⁰³ AAPP interview, Lecturer at the University of Nairobi, Nairobi, 22 April 2007
- ¹⁰⁴ V. Wang and L. Rakner, *The accountability function of supreme audit institutions in Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania*, Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2005
- ¹⁰⁵ Comments at AAPP roundtable discussion with Kenyan MPs, Nairobi, 24 April 2006
- ¹⁰⁶ The notion of a power struggle between the legislature and the executive can obscure the symbiotic dimensions of this relationship.
- ¹⁰⁷ AAPP interview, Malawian parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Lilongwe, 12 March 2007. As emphasised by Wehner: 'legislators in DFID partner countries are likely to lack the high quality fiscal information that their counterparts in most of the industrial democracies can take for granted', in J. Wehner *et al.* *Strengthening legislative financial scrutiny in developing countries: Report prepared for the UK Department for Development*, 2007, p.25
- ¹⁰⁸ Presentation by The International Budget Project ('The role of civil society organisations in legislative strengthening'), presentation given at 'Donor consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, 22 May 2007
- ¹⁰⁹ IDASA written evidence to the AAPP
- ¹¹⁰ ActionAid/CARE written evidence to the AAPP
- ¹¹¹ Comments made at AAPP discussion with Malawian MPs, Lilongwe, 12 March 2007
- ¹¹² UNECA written evidence to the AAPP
- ¹¹³ V. Wang and L. Rakner, *The accountability function of supreme audit institutions in Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania*, Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2005, p.vi
- ¹¹⁴ UNECA written evidence to the AAPP. Of course, as argued throughout elsewhere in this report, the nature of the 'local ownership' and 'control' can themselves be problematic.
- ¹¹⁵ H. Benn MP, 'Making politics work for the poor: Democracy and development', speech at Demos, London, 23 October 2006
- ¹¹⁶ AAPP interview, DFID official, 23 April 2007
- ¹¹⁷ AAPP interview, DFID official, 23 April 2007
- ¹¹⁸ AAPP interview, Canadian Parliamentary Centre official, London, 14 November 2006. In his evidence to the AAPP, Mike Cook wrote: 'in my experience there has never been a coherent [UK] policy to strengthen African parliaments. Assistance was generally on an ad hoc and occasional basis'.
- ¹¹⁹ J. Wehner *et al.* *Strengthening legislative financial scrutiny in developing countries: Report prepared for the UK Department for Development*, 2007, p.53
- ¹²⁰ Department for International Development, *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Governance work for the Poor*, 2006, p.27
- ¹²¹ Department for International Development, *Governance, Development and Democratic Politics*, 2007
- ¹²² DFID official, comments made during 'Donor DFID consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, 22 May 2007
- ¹²³ FCO official, comments at meeting convened by WFD and CPA-UK, London, 17 June 2007
- ¹²⁴ Comments made during 'Donor consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, 22 May 2007
- ¹²⁵ H. Benn MP, 'Making politics work for the poor: Democracy and development', speech at Demos, London, 23 October 2006
- ¹²⁶ DFID written evidence to the AAPP
- ¹²⁷ DFID written evidence to the AAPP
- ¹²⁸ DFID official, comments at meeting convened by WFD and CPA-UK, London, 17 June 2007
- ¹²⁹ A. Hudson and C. Wren, *Parliamentary strengthening in developing countries*, ODI, 2007
- ¹³⁰ DFID written evidence to the AAPP
- ¹³¹ J. Armon, 'Aid, politics and development: A donor perspective', in *Development Policy Review*, 25 (5), September 2007, pp.655-656

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- ¹³² Adapted from submissions of written evidence and from WFD, 'Parliamentary strengthening: Who in the UK is involved?', background paper in advance of meeting convened by WFD and CPA-UK, London, 17 June 2007
- ¹³³ From April 2008, CPA-UK is to be funded by the UK Parliament.
- ¹³⁴ DFID written evidence to the AAPP
- ¹³⁵ AAPP interview, Ugandan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Kampala, 27 April 2007
- ¹³⁶ H. Benn MP, presentation given to the AAPP, London, 1 May 2007
- ¹³⁷ DFID written evidence to the AAPP
- ¹³⁸ A. Hudson, presentation to the AAPP, 20 March 2007
- ¹³⁹ AAPP interview, Kenyan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Nairobi, 23 April 2007
- ¹⁴⁰ S. Hubli presentation to the AAPP, London, 1 May 2007
- ¹⁴¹ AAPP interview, Ugandan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Kampala
- ¹⁴² S. Hubli communication to AAPP
- ¹⁴³ UNECA written evidence to the AAPP
- ¹⁴⁴ J. Armon, 'Aid, politics and development: A donor perspective', in *Development Policy Review*, 25 (5), September 2007, p.655
- ¹⁴⁵ J. Armon, 'Aid, politics and development: A donor perspective', in *Development Policy Review*, 25 (5), September 2007, p.656
- ¹⁴⁶ AAPP interview, Kenyan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Nairobi, 23 April 2007
- ¹⁴⁷ AAPP interview, Kenyan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Cape Town, 15 March 2007
- ¹⁴⁸ Speaking local languages is often particularly important.
- ¹⁴⁹ S. Hubli presentation to the AAPP, London, 1 May 2007
- ¹⁵⁰ AAPP interview, Malawian parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Lilongwe, 14 March 2007
- ¹⁵¹ AAPP interview, Kenyan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Nairobi, 24 April 2007
- ¹⁵² AAPP interview, Malawian parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Lilongwe, 14 March 2007
- ¹⁵³ AAPP interview, Malawian parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Lilongwe, 13 March 2007
- ¹⁵⁴ Comments made at AAPP roundtable discussion with Kenyan MPs, Nairobi, 24 April 2007
- ¹⁵⁵ AAPP interview, Ugandan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Kampala, 27 April 2007
- ¹⁵⁶ AAPP interview, Ugandan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Kampala, 27 April 2007
- ¹⁵⁷ AAPP interview, Malawian parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Lilongwe, 12 March 2007
- ¹⁵⁸ S. Hubli communication to the AAPP
- ¹⁵⁹ AAPP interview, Ugandan parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Kampala, 27 April 2007
- ¹⁶⁰ S. Hubli presentation to the AAPP, London, 1 May 2007
- ¹⁶¹ S. Hubli and M. Schmidt, *Approaches to parliamentary strengthening: A review of Sida's support to parliaments*, Evaluation 05/27, Department for Democracy and Social Development, 2005
- ¹⁶² Comments by CPA official, 'Donor consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, May 21, 2007
- ¹⁶³ The Group recognises the role played by DFID, UNDP and WBI in organising the conference and promoting better coordination.
- ¹⁶⁴ See, http://www.oecd.org/document/10/0,3343,en_2649_33721_1916746_1_1_1_1,00.html
- ¹⁶⁵ PDCO, Report on capacity building support to the parliament of Uganda, September 2006
- ¹⁶⁶ AAPP interview, Malawian parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Lilongwe 14 March 2007
- ¹⁶⁷ Briefing to the AAPP, DFID official, Lilongwe, 12 March 2007.
- ¹⁶⁸ M. Mfunwa, *Strengthening internal accountability in the context of programme-based approaches in sub-Saharan Africa*, discussion paper 4/2006, German Development Institute, 2006, p.11
- ¹⁶⁹ DFID written evidence to the AAPP
- ¹⁷⁰ An official from the Canadian Parliamentary Centre stated: 'It is difficult to capture shifts in institutional culture and individual mindsets. Successes are largely small and buried' (AAPP interview, London 14 November 2006)
- ¹⁷¹ S. Hubli, communication to the AAPP
- ¹⁷² See, for example, S. Hubli and M. Schmidt, *Approaches to parliamentary strengthening: A review of Sida's support to parliaments*, Evaluation 05/27, Department for Democracy and Social Development, 2005; J. Murphy and A. Alhada, *Global programme for parliamentary strengthening II: Mid-term evaluation report*, UNDP, 2007

¹⁷³ Cited in Brösamle *et al*, Improving fiscal scrutiny through legislative strengthening, report to the UK Department for International Development, London School of Economic, 2007, p.69

¹⁷⁴ Comments by USAID official, 'Donor consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, May 21, 2007

¹⁷⁵ Comments by USAID official, 'Donor consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, May 21, 2007

¹⁷⁶ AAPPG interview, Researcher at the University of Cape Town, 22 June 2007

¹⁷⁷ Equally, ensuring that indicators are technically sound should not result in protracted and exclusive technical and methodological debates amongst experts. The Group also notes the need to avoid results-based management resulting in a short-termist, 'freeze-frame' approach.

¹⁷⁸ A. Hudson and C. Wren, Parliamentary strengthening in developing countries, ODI, 2007; J.

Wehner *et al*. Strengthening legislative financial scrutiny in developing countries: Report prepared for the UK Department for Development, 2007.

¹⁷⁹ These experiences are not unique. A DFID-commissioned consultant similarly observed that only tentative findings about the department's parliament work were possible because the department did not ensure that project documentation was transferred and preserved as posts turned over. See, J. Wehner *et al*. Strengthening legislative financial scrutiny in developing countries: Report prepared for the UK Department for Development, 2007, p.50

¹⁸⁰ AAPPG interview, Malawian parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Lilongwe, 14 March, 2007

¹⁸¹ Comments made at 'Donor consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, May 21, 2007

¹⁸² AAPPG interview, Malawian parliamentary strengthening practitioner, Lilongwe, 14 March 2007

¹⁸³ International IDEA, Political Parties in Africa: Challenges for Sustained Multiparty Democracy, 2007, p.130

¹⁸⁴ Not least the potential of parliament to help manage conflict and grievances non-violently.

¹⁸⁵ L. M. Mayaka, written evidence to the AAPPG

¹⁸⁶ Malawi Economic Justice Network, Establishing linkages with civil society: The case of Malawi parliament and the Malawi Economic Justice Network, Presented to the SADC parliamentarians' roundtable discussion on PRSPs and macroeconomic approaches, 24 November 2006, Johannesburg, 2006, p.13

¹⁸⁷ Comments by UN consultant, made at 'Donor consultation on parliamentary development and financial accountability', Brussels, May 21, 2007

¹⁸⁸ UNECA written evidence to the AAPPG. The UNECA cited Cameroon, Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia as examples of countries where parliaments do not enjoy powers to ratify government borrowing, including agreements with international financial institutions. Moreover, capacity constraints hamper the scrutiny of lengthy and dense loan documents.

¹⁸⁹ Evaluation Team, Review of USAID support to the Ugandan Parliament, political processes and elections from 2002-2006 and recommendations for future assistance, USAID/Uganda, 2007, p.25

¹⁹⁰ A. Lawson and L. Rakner, 'Understanding Patterns of Accountability in Tanzania', Final Synthesis Report, Chr. Michelsen Institute/Oxford Policy Management/ REPOA - Research on Poverty Alleviation, 2005

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