The Centrality of Financial Oversight in Parliamentary Strengthening

Dr. Rasheed Draman, Director, Africa Programs

The Parliamentary Centre (PC) continues to be guided by the fact that Financial Oversight is central in making Parliaments effective, particularly in Africa where the focus of governments remains poverty reduction and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Effective control, oversight and monitoring of public expenditures and budget implementation are essential to ensuring not only value for money but effective poverty reduction efforts and the attainment of the MDGs.

For the past few years, the PC has invested resources in ensuring that the Parliaments we work with are effective in their financial oversight. The concrete manifestation of this was the establishment of our Learning Centre (LC) in our Africa regional office in Accra, Ghana with support from the Austrian Development Agency. The LC’s primary purpose is to serve as a training facility for African Members of Parliament and their staff in the Budget Process. It is also supposed to serve as a resource facility for research on Parliamentary issues. After a year in existence, the LC has already served as a training facility for MPs and Parliamentary staff from Benin, Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Tanzania and Uganda.

In the coming years, we will continue to focus on how best to strengthen the capacity of MPs to effectively perform their financial oversight role. While training in the budget process remains the thrust of our work across Africa, we are constantly examining novel ways that can complement this effort. Two new areas worth mentioning are the setting up of Budget Offices within Parliaments; and the role of Executive-Legislative relations in financial oversight, particularly the importance of a good working relationship between the Auditor General’s department and the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament. This latter initiative is currently being tested in Ghana with good results.

As is evident, the year 2007 has witnessed yet another milestone in our effort to strengthen the capacity of African MPs in Financial Oversight. So, let me end this piece by thanking all members of the Poverty Network for their support and collaboration during the course of 2007. I would also like to sincerely thank our donors – CIDA and ADA – for their generous support during the year. Their contributions are helping us make a difference in the lives of many millions of Africans.

On behalf of the PC, Season’s Greetings and Best Wishes for 2008 to all African MPs, particularly those that are part of our big family!

Financed by Austrian Development Cooperation

The African Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network brings together parliamentary committees involved in the design, implementation and oversight of poverty reduction policies. The Network promotes greater cross-Africa dialogue among committees and creates opportunities for improving effective implementation of Poverty Reduction Programs, particularly through local monitoring with community-based civil society groups.
Training on Budgetary Oversight
By Petra Andersson, Program Officer Africa

Parliaments are an essential component of national governance systems. The extent to which parliaments and parliamentarians are able to carry out their legislative, oversight and representative functions will influence the ability of the state to formulate and implement policies that are effective in reducing poverty. The budget process – preparation, approval, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – is key component of parliaments and parliamentarians’ functions as an arm of the state. This is because government budgets are about the allocation of scarce resources that affect the lives of the citizenry who parliamentarians in a democratic dispensation represent. It is therefore imperative that parliamentarians are equipped with the necessary tools with which to perform its role in the budget process.

To meet the need for parliamentarians to increase their capacity in the budget process, the Parliamentary Centre has developed a five-day training program called “Financial Oversight Function of Parliamentarians: Tools and Mechanisms for Optimum Government Budget Analysis”. For each training opportunity, three identified countries are invited to select three Members of Parliament and one committee clerk who will benefit from furthering their knowledge in the area of budgetary oversight. This training is part of a five year program funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), and is estimated to continue until 2011. These type of training programs has become even more necessary given the fact that each election brings new representatives to parliaments. In Africa particularly, there is a high turnover of parliamentarians. The training on budgetary oversight therefore seeks to equip parliamentarians, especially new entrants to parliaments with the appropriate tools and mechanisms that will enhance their performance.

Second Anglophone training
September 17-21 2007, participants from Botswana, Ghana and Zambia came together to learn and share experiences on budgetary oversight. Of the eleven participants, 45% were female. This was the second Anglophone training organized by the Parliamentary Centre, the first training taking place in December 2006 (see article in previous newsletter). Since the last training, a complete learning package with important background information completing the training modules had been prepared and this information was distributed to the participants upon their arrival. The participants also received a compilation of background documentation relating to the budget process, poverty reduction and good governance to enable them to further their knowledge.

The program reflected the first training on budgetary oversight and specifically contained:

- **Understanding National Budgets**
  - What is a budget?
  - Budget Functions: Political, Economic, Legal
  - Actors and activities- The Budget Cycle
  - Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability
  - Principles of good budgeting
  - Budget Overview: a typical budget

- **Role of Parliamentarians in the Budget Process**
  - Functions of Parliament
  - Executive-Legislative Relations in the Budget Process
  - Ensuring Budget Compliance
  - Factors Shaping Legislative Roles in the Budget Process: Rules; Constitutional Framework; Civil Society Outreach
  - Role of Parliamentary Committees

- **National Budgets and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**
  - What are the MDGs?
  - Progress made so far
  - Why MDGs and national budgets
  - Policy direction for optimum budget impact
  - Assessment of MDG considerations in national budgets

- **Analyzing Government Budget Statements: How Pro-Poor Should a Budget Be?**
  - What is pro-poor growth?
  - Elements of pro-poor economic policy initiatives
  - Measurement of pro-poor growth
  - What makes growth pro-poor
  - Indicators of pro-poor budgets
  - Pro-poor initiatives: National Budgets versus Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs)
  - Are pro-poor policies sufficient?
• Analyzing Gender Equity in Budget Statements: Key Issues
  - Definition/historical perspective
  - Gender Analysis
  - MDGs and Gender Issues
  - Gender considerations in National Budgets
  - Why Gender Responsive Budgets
  - Gender Budgeting and Budget Reform
  - Role of Parliaments in Gender Budgeting
  - Gender issues in National Budgets
  - Review of National Gender Policies
  - Implementation Challenges

The various training modules were presented by Dr. Rasheed Draman, Director Africa Programs, and Issifu Lampo, Budget and Governance Advisor. Practical group work followed each presentation, which had been carefully tailored to address the presentations made. The participants were divided into two groups where all countries were represented. The budgets from Ghana and South Africa were used to allow for a practical use and analysis during the group works. The specific themes were:

• Principles of Good Budgeting;
• The Budget as an Economic, Political and Legal Tool;
• The Functions of and the Role Parliament in the Different Stages of the Budget Process;
• Gender Consideration in the Budget;
• How the Budget is linked to the MDGs and if the Budget is used as a tool to achieve the MDGs; and
• Pro-Poor Policy Initiatives in National Budgets.

The participants appreciated these exercises very much and showed true dedication during discussions and presentations. Many of them were newly elected MPs and had not yet been part of the budget process in their respective countries. They expressed their gratitude to be given the necessary tools to analyze the budget while keeping the poor in their constituencies in mind.

In order to give a practical meaning to the theoretical issues of tracking expenditure in national budgets, as well as to gain a better appreciation and understanding of how accountability and oversight issues in the budget process could be addressed, a field visit was arranged. It focused on the Capitation Grants to Basic Schools provided by the Ghana Education Service. The grants were introduced by the Government in 2005-2006 to enable increased enrolment in schools as part of their program to provide Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) and its purpose is to replace school levies, in particular in deprived areas. The field study started with a visit to the Ministry of Education, where the delegation received an interesting and very frank presentation on the education system and the grants. The presentation showed that much progress had been made and the grants had had the intended effect of increasing enrolment rates, where deprived areas were in focus. The program had also benefited girls in particular, as their education had not been prioritized to the same extent by some families when funding was an issue. The challenges this program faced were also presented, such as increased enrolment leading to there not being enough qualified teachers, class rooms, textbooks and various school materials etc., which the Ministry also tries to address. There is still a lot of misconceptions about the grants, i.e. how they are calculated, how they should be used and how to access the funds, but we were told that they are trying to develop comprehensive guidelines and make the systems more effective as the program unfolds.

This presentation was followed by visit to a school arranged by the Ministry, where the principal explained the processes put in place for them to access the grant and report back to the Ministry. This was to show the overall system put in place for the monitoring and accountability of the grants, as well as from the beneficiaries’ point of view and some of the challenges they face. It became apparent that the management system put in place posed some challenges, as it can appear as bureaucratic, time consuming and inflexible, which many of the participants from the training workshop also pointed out during the question

(Continued on page 4)
period. Their concern was that too much time was taken away from important teaching time.

The final part of the field visit was a visit to the Parliament of Ghana, where the participants received a presentation about the Parliament and some of the parliamentary procedures. The Parliament was not in session at the time of the visit, but since Ghana was one of the participating countries, the other participants were able to get direct input from the present MPs and parliamentary assistant.

**First Francophone training**

The following week, September 24-28 2007, the first training for Francophone countries took place. The participants came from Benin, Mali and Niger. 27% of the eleven participants were female. Present during the training was also Franziska Walter, representing ADA. The training modules had been developed by the consultants Dr. Paul Ouedraogo and Soulé A. B. Abou, a former MP from Benin and also the former Vice-chair of the APRN Executive Committee, who also conducted the actual training.

The training modules reflected the Anglophone training to a large extent, but some differences occurred. The training modules covered *Understanding National Budgets; the Role of Parliamentarians in the Budget Process; the National Budget and the MDGs; the MDGs and the PRSPs; Pro-poor Policies and Public Expenditures; Structure and Content of a Pro-poor Budget; and Gender Equality*. The training also had a specific focus on *Participative Monitoring Tools and Evaluation*, which had not been part of the Anglophone training. The participants received background information on the Citizen Report Card and the Community Report Card, tools on community monitoring that have been part of Parliamentary Centre training programs in the past and that can be effective tools in holding government accountable for poverty reduction programs. During the group exercise, the participants used the budgets from Benin and Senegal to study whether these budgets could be deemed pro-poor or if any considerations were made based on gender.

The participants went on a field visit to the Unilever factory in Tema, where an elaborate HIV/AIDS Program had been developed to support its staff and their dependants. It was an opportunity for the participants to see how government efforts can be complemented by the private sector. The Government of Ghana has since the early 2000 established a multi-sectoral commission, the Ghana AIDS Commission, to direct and coordinate all activities in the fight against HIV/AIDS, which involves all ministries, government agencies, the private sector, various development partners and civil society. Unilever is part of a pioneering group of more than thirty corporations that have teamed up to support work place prevention programs which aims at changing sexual behaviour, fighting stigmatization and provide HIV/AIDS related treatment and counselling. Unilever does not force anyone to test themselves, but provide counselling and support to those who choose to do so. They ensure that no one will lose their job just because they are tested positive. Instead they make sure the person can find a suitable job and pay for treatment, not only for the employee, but also for his or her dependants. The reason for this program, the participants were told, is that Unilever sees it as an investment in its workers and the business itself, as losing workers to HIV/AIDS can be more costly than to invest in their health. The participants found the presentation very informative, but unfortunately not enough time was given for questions. The participants had also wished to meet with some of the beneficiaries, but were unable to do so.

The visit in Tema was followed by a short visit to Parliament, where the participants got a very informative presentation on the history and makeup of the Ghanaian Parliament. Many were surprised to hear that the Speaker was not an elected MP, but
elected by the MPs themselves. In the represented countries the Speaker or the Président is an elected MP, and hence politically affiliated. They were also surprised to hear that the parliamentary staff within the Clerk’s administration was not politically appointed.

This training was very timely for the Francophone countries, as the budget process was about to start upon their arrival in their respective countries. A large majority of the present MPs had never been part of this process previously and expressed their gratitude of having been given the proper tool to fulfill their role in this process.

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Conference on Southern Perspectives on Reform of the International Development Architecture
By Petra Andersson, Program Officer Africa

May 19-21, 2007, a conference called “Southern Perspectives on Reform of the International Development Architecture” was organized by the North South Institute and Wilton Park. With the support from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Parliamentary Centre and four Members of Parliament from Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia were able to participate at this conference, which took place at Wilton Park in West Sussex, UK.

The conference, was attended by high-level government officials, donor agencies, civil society representatives, researchers and policy makers, for example representatives from the World Bank, IMF, the G24 Secretariat, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Foreign Ministries of Sweden, France and Germany, CIDA and Norad among others. It focused on the findings from an ongoing North-South Institute project, which aims at bringing a southern perspective into the reform process of the international development architecture, as most of the previous input has been made by northern governments and experts. The project started in 2005 and the first phase of this project was done in cooperation with the Economic and Social Research Foundation in Tanzania and resulted in the establishment of a Steering Group, consisting of ten southern experts, which continues to play an advisory role.

The second phase of the project aimed at producing three thematic papers on the following topics: (i) Policy Coherence: Aid, Trade and Investment; (ii) Security, the War on Terror and ODA; and (iii) Power Imbalances. These were all presented at the conference. The Country Case Studies conducted in Bolivia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Burundi and Nigeria explored various aspects of the current international development architecture. In addition, they looked at the relationship between the current architecture and the cross-cutting themes identified by the Steering Group, i.e. country leadership and ownership, policy coherence and legitimacy, were also presented at the conference.

Discussions followed the presentation of each paper and the diversity of the group attending the conference lead to very interesting discussions. The MPs present had several important inputs and also stressed that Parliaments should not be left out as an active part in this architecture, which often is the case today. Several themes emerged from the discussions. The need for creating a true local ownership was stressed where the involvement of Parliaments, civil society and local authorities should be increased in relation to international donor agencies, such as the Breton Woods Institutions. The country case studies showed that an increasing number of countries, for example Vietnam and Sri Lanka, are now becoming more selective when accepting international support. It was stressed that all aid is in line with the respective country’s priorities and needs, which should also be decided solely by the country itself. One identified trend was that many countries choose to accept aid from countries such as China and Japan that do not impose as strict conditions for funding as the World Bank, IMF and many of the other donor countries. Another relating need was expressed for the creation of mechanisms for mutual accountability, i.e. making sure that donors are being accountable as well, not just the recipients. Increased coordination between donor countries was another important issue. A more people oriented approach was also stressed. Linked with local ownership is the need for development of southern knowledge centers and making sure their channels for influence are strengthened in order to ensure that a southern perspective can be achieved in the international development architecture. Policy coherence, for example between aid and trade, was also identified as a key area for southern development. In addition, the participating MPs stressed the need for researchers to link up with MPs at the beginning of such research so that their views could be reflected in the conducted papers instead of this later stage in the process, which was well noted by the North South Institute.

Please visit the APRN website for a full report from this conference at www.aprnetwork.org. The papers presented at this conference are currently being updated by the authors and will then be made available on the North-South Institute’s website (see www.nsi-ins.ca). The results from the conference and the project will also be compiled in a final report by the NSI and the results from the project will be brought forward at the next meeting in Accra on the Paris Declaration as well as during the follow-up discussions of Monterrey, where it will be very important to make sure the southern perspective is taken into account.
Conference on Strengthening the Role of Parliamentary Oversight and Budget Control in African Development
By Issifu Lampo, Budget and Governance Advisor, PC Africa

AWEP – European Parliamentarians for Africa – recently organized a conference focused on Strengthening the Role of Parliamentary Oversight and Budget Control in African Development with a focus on NEPAD and CAADP (Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme) together with the Pan-African Parliament, the ECOWAS Parliament, the Parliament of Benin, the German Bundestag, and the Parliamentary Centre.

The conference, which took place in Cotonou, Benin on October 3-4 2007, is part of the parliamentary support programme called “Mobilising Parliaments for NEPAD”. It aimed at facilitating a greater involvement in NEPAD process for African and European Parliaments by raising awareness and promoting parliamentary action in various areas of development relating to the NEPAD initiative. This conference was organized with the understanding that members of parliament in Africa and Europe can effectively fulfill their oversight roles in support of development through budget control and legislation, with special focus on the acceleration of CAADP implementation at the national level, having been given high priority by the African Union and NEPAD.

APRN Executive Committee Meeting

The Executive Committee of APRN met in Accra on September 29, 2007. On the agenda was:
- Review of APRN activities during 2007;
- Definition of work plan for 2008;
- Discussions: how to make APRN more sustainable as a network; membership relations and review of membership criteria.
- By-election of Executive Committee member from West Africa as well as new Vice-Chair;

The current Committee was represented by Soulé Adam (Benin), Hon. Idrissa Adamou (Niger) and Hon. William Okecho (Uganda), Hon. Anne Makinda (Tanzania), Chair of the Committee, Hon. Kenneth Thindwa (Malawi) and Hon. Priscilla Mishairabwi-Mushonga (Zimbabwe) were unable to attend the meeting. The current Vice-chair, Soulé Adam, had unfortunately not retained his seat in the last parliamentary elections in Benin, and therefore this was his last attendance. To replace him on the Committee, Hon. Kissima Mangané, newly re-elected in the parliamentary elections in Mali, had previously been suggested and subsequently invited to attend the meeting. Also present during the meeting, was Issifu Lampo and Petra Andersson (Parliamentary Centre) as well as Franziska Walter (Austrian Development Agency) and an interpreter for the French participants. Soulé Adam was selected to chair the meeting by the present members.

During the review of the activities taken place so far during 2007, the focus for 2008 was also discussed. The 2008 work plan will reflect the one for 2007 to a great extent, but additional focus will be put on developing a training program for staff and possibly in-country training as well. The Committee started the discussions on how to make the APRN a more sustainable network and a possible review of the membership criteria. This discussion will continue during the next meeting after more research into the issues have taken place. Last on the agenda, Hon. Kissima Mangané was elected unanimously to replace Soulé Adam on the Committee and Hon. Idrissa Adamou was elected new Vice-Chair.

The Parliamentary Centre and the APRN Executive Committee would like to extend their thanks to Soulé Adam for his contribution and commitment to the APRN.
The MPs who attended the seminar were unanimous in their appreciation of how immensely beneficial the seminar had been to them. The benefits thus derived from the seminar by participating MPs include the following:

- MPs in the West Africa region and European MPs were briefed on the role of parliamentary Oversight and budget control, especially as it related to NEPAD and the CAADP agenda, with a special focus on the role parliament can play in achieving the goals of NEPAD and the CAADP;
- MPs in the West Africa region were provided with a forum for championing parliamentary oversight and budget control, especially as it relates to the CAADP agenda, and the special needs for agricultural development in the West Africa region, including women’s right;
- MPs in the West African region identified measures to integrate more support to parliamentary procedures and legislation for efficient parliamentary budget control, especially agriculture development into their parliamentary work and developed an Action Plan on the topics discussed;
- MPs reached agreement on ways to improve oversight capacity; tracking progress of their governments’ commitments/pledges to support agriculture nationally and regionally (for European MPs relating to the Paris Declaration, for African MPs relating to the implementation of NEPAD and CAADP as well as in the context of new aid modalities such as budget support, sector-wide approaches, etc)
- MPs identified key capacity building needs to ensure improvement of parliamentary procedures and legislation for efficient parliamentary budget control.

For more information about this conference, please visit www.awepa.org or www.aprnetwork.org.

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Helsinki Conference on Parliamentary Reform in Africa, October 3-5, 2007

This conference was part of an annual collaboration between the Parliament of Finland and the World Bank Institute under the auspices of the on-going support provided by the Government of Finland to the World Bank Institute for its work on parliamentary development. The theme of this year’s workshop was “Parliamentary Reform in Africa”.

The Parliamentary Centre, as a close partner of WBI has always been part of these conferences in Finland either by way of identifying participants or providing resource persons or both. This year, the Centre performed both roles: we helped identify the participants for the conference from several of our partner Parliaments; and the Director for Africa Programs, Dr. Rasheed Draman took part as a resource person. He presented a paper on Parliaments and Poverty Reduction: Progress So Far.

Dr. Draman’s paper focused on recent work done in partnership with and with funding from WBI that examined Parliaments’ role in poverty issues. There were two studies in all. The first was in 2006 and included Ghana, Niger, Tanzania, Malawi, Kenya, Senegal and Zambia. A second study in 2007 focused mainly on Francophone countries - Burkina Faso, Benin, Rwanda, Mali, and Madagascar.

The studies revealed that overall, Parliaments have a better score now than when Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) introduced; there has been a marked improvement in Parliament’s role; most Parliaments are beginning to assert themselves and are pushing for significant roles in poverty policy; and Parliaments are willing to play active role when they are ‘given’ the opportunity. However, the studies also revealed that the Executive continues to dominate budget policy. This is particularly more pronounced in francophone countries. There is also a culture of secrecy/lack of transparency; questionable autonomy of Supreme Audit Institutions; a disconnect with the poor and minimal Civil Society Organization (CSO) input, particularly in francophone countries; and clear and serious gaps – lack of resources, skills etc. for Parliamentary monitoring.

The meeting brought together about two dozen MPs from 9 different countries: Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Finland. One of the presenters was Hon. William Okecho from Uganda, who is a member of the APRN Executive Committee.

The World Bank Institute used the platform created by this conference to highlight some of the important reforms that are taking place within parliaments in Africa. And some of those reforms are first of their kind in the world. The fact that Africa is leading the way needs to be underscored, the World Bank emphasized. Prominent among these include the leadership Rwanda is showing in terms gender balance in Parliament (the highest in the world); as well as the emerging reforms in the Budget Process with the establishment of Budget Offices (such as in Uganda) to help Parliaments perform their Financial Oversight Roles effectively.

Hon. William Okecho, who is a member of APRN’s Executive Committee, gave the presentation on Uganda’s Budget Act, which has increased consultation during the preparation of the budget as well as during the monitoring of the budget implementation. It has also established an independent parliamentary budget office (PBO) which provides assistance to parliamentarians throughout the budget process. This is particularly important as MPs often lack the capacity to analyze the government’s proposals on their own. Uganda’s PBO has become a model for many countries worldwide and a more in-depth presentation about his model will be features in the next issue.

For more information about this conference, please visit www.worldbank.org/wbi or www.aprnetwork.org.
Pilot Projects on Community Monitoring in Ten African Countries
By Petra Andersson, Program Officer Africa

Between 2003-2007, the Parliamentary Centre implemented a major program called the Africa Canada Parliamentary Strengthening Program (ACPSP) with funding from CIDA under the Canada Fund for Africa. Part of this program was an extensive training program for MPs, parliamentary staff and civil society representatives on community monitoring. It aimed at strengthening parliamentarians in their oversight role and increasing their knowledge on how to hold their government accountable, specifically with regards to poverty reduction programmes.

During 2004-2007, following this training on community monitoring, pilot projects have been undertaken in Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The pilot projects were an opportunity for parliaments and civil society to work together to evaluate the effectiveness of various governments programs aimed at reducing poverty for a given community, as well as a practical tool for MPs to perform their oversight role vis-à-vis the citizens.

Several lessons learnt from the training program on community monitoring and the pilot projects that followed were highlighted in the March issue of the APRN newsletter. Here follows a more in-depth presentation of the various pilot projects.

Benin
In 2005 and 2006, the Benin Parliamentary Network for Poverty Reduction undertook a community monitoring pilot project that analyzed the impact of the government’s water reserve and dam project on the living conditions of the population in the commune of Nikki. This area was chosen because it experiences a very short rain season compared to other regions, which is why water reserves play a crucial role in the lives and livelihood of the local population. A delegation of five MPs, three members of civil society and two parliamentary staff were selected to implement the pilot project. Members of the parliamentary press as well as local press were also part of the delegation. The delegation interacted with the local population in several communities in the region and interviews were made according to pre-prepared questionnaires of the Citizen Report Card and the Community Score Card.

The delegation visited 12 of the 16 local villages in the area were able to question approximately 200 of the beneficiaries of the governments program. The field work was done in close partnership with the local NGOs “L’ONG partenaire de Nikki” and “SOMNIA-ONG”. The information obtained from the conducted survey and interviews showed that all the villages used the water reserves and dams mainly for fish breeding, animal husbandry, market gardening and for domestic use. The reserves and dams were administered by a management committee, consisting of members from the community and local representatives. However, it became clear that the financial resources resulting from the water retentions were collected by the local authorities alone, who in turn decided how to use the collected funds in various priority programs. It also became clear that very little of the generated resources were used to ensuring proper maintenance of the water reserves and dams, which threatens the durability of the government program. Although the water reserves and dams remain vital for the local population, the study could not see that the government program had increased the level of income and improved the living condition for the beneficiaries in the local communities, as intended. One unforeseen problem was also identified in one area, where the population considers crocodiles to be holy creatures. The presence of crocodiles in the water has led to the depletion of fish stock, which in turn has caused a decline in fishing and a decreased financial income for the local population.

The pilot project had several positive impacts. As a result of the interaction with MPs and other delegates, the population became aware of the necessity of becoming more involved in the maintenance of the water reserves and dams themselves in order to ensure their durability. Moreover, the MPs have suggested a reorganization of the government’s financial management of this project so that the local population would be encouraged to maintain these public works. The delegation also realized that it is very important to be clear to the beneficiaries of the purpose of the study from the beginning, as their presence had created high expectations among the local population that the delegation would be able to provide them with immediate funding.
Ghana

The community monitoring pilot project organized in Ghana was carried out by the Committee on Gender and Children of the Parliament of Ghana in partnership with Institute for Policy Alternatives IPA. It aimed to assess the effects of the Capitation Grant and free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE), established by the government in order to increase access to education, improve the quality of education delivery and ensuring the attainment of gender parity in schools. The project focused on the Nkwanta North District, where seven out of ten people are affected by poverty. Those hardest hit by poverty are usually women and children, which is why special attention was put on girl-child education in the project. Although there is no specific allocation of funding for girl-child education in the national budget, the government is supporting several projects to ensure enrolment of girls in school. The pilot project came in contact with two NGO programs that support girls in primary school through feeding programs and by providing schools uniforms.

A delegation consisting of eight MPs, three parliamentary staff and two civil society representatives engaged with key stakeholder institutions, namely the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Services at both national and district levels; the Nkwanta North District Assembly; and World Vision International in two different focus group discussions. This resulted in the development of two questionnaires using the Citizen Report Card methodology - one directed at children and one at adults. After the questionnaires had been pre-tested, the survey was conducted in six selected communities by twelve enumerators. A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed. In addition, six focus group sessions where civil society groups, representatives from the district government and the local population was represented, were conducted with the help of the Community Score Card in one in each of the selected communities. The study focussed on the level of enrolment in schools; access to free education; affordability of other costs not covered by the grant; availability of teachers; adequacy of classrooms; and availability of textbooks. The pilot project discovered that the Capitation Grant and fCUBE have increased the levels of enrolment in primary and Junior Secondary Schools had increased steadily since their introduction, and since 2002/3 girls have enrolled at a higher rate than boys. However, some parents feel that it is still too expensive to send their children to school, even with the Capitation Grant, due to costs for school uniforms, food and exam fees, which are not covered by the grant. The services provided to girls in primary school by the NGOs were seen a good complement to the government program, but more needed to be done. Other challenges identified by the study were the inadequacy of teachers in the community; inadequate classrooms and equipment; distance between homes and schools and high illiteracy levels among the people in the communities.

A specific recommendation of the pilot project is therefore that there should be a distinct effort by governments to promote girl-child education by allocating specific resources in the budget and by developing a policy to support girl-child education. The participants of the pilot project also recommend including the monitoring process into PRSPs in the future, where a dialogue between community members and service providers should be promoted.

Kenya

The community monitoring pilot project in Kenya looked at the impacts of HIV/AIDS initiatives supported by the government of Kenya in the Ranchuonyo District in the Nyanza Province. It brought together close to 15 civil society groups, parliamentary staff and members of the parliamentary committee on Administration, Finance and Planning. It was the first time these parties met with the actual beneficiaries to discuss performance and effectiveness of governmental programmes.

The Citizen Report Card, the Community Score Card and focus groups were used to enable the community members to express their views on public service performances as well as letting service providers express their concerns. The pilot project demonstrated that most Kenyans in the area are aware of HIV/AIDS and personally know someone who is either infected or has died from the disease. However, this has not led to a subsequent change in behaviour change or a reduction in the widespread stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS. The study also showed that the awareness of how HIV/AIDS can be transmitted varies. 92% knew that unprotected sex with an HIV/AIDS infected person was a mode for transmission, but only 67% were aware that condom use was a way of reducing possible HIV infection. Further, 82% of the respondents did not know that an infected mother can transmit HIV to their unborn child or through breastfeeding. The study therefore suggested that there is a gap in the government’s HIV/AIDS policy and that emphasis might be placed in the wrong area.

Apart from these lessons learnt on the awareness of HIV/AIDS and the perceptions of the government funded programs, some key lessons learnt from the pilot project process were that the participatory approach was very useful in allowing immediate feedback on public service programmes. It also showed that this method was an effective way to engage the citizens in policy development. Further, it made apparent the lack of capacity of parliamentary committees and civil society organisations have to monitor government policies and program, due in part to lack of financial resources and personnel. However, poor budgeting and insufficient allocation of resources by the government also played a role in lessening the effectiveness of policy implementation.

After the study, several disseminations workshops and meetings have taken place to share the findings with the community, civil society organisation, private sector representatives, Parliament and various ministerial departments. So far no changes have been made to HIV/AIDS policies, but the involved civil society
organisations and parliamentary committees continue to engage in policy dialogue on HIV/AIDS and hope to be able to focus on additional government policies and programs as well as to recommend alternative pro-poor policies in the future. One outcome of the engagement with the media was that the results of the study have been published, which has meant a wider spread and a direct contribution to public information.

**Mali**

The community monitoring pilot project of the National Assembly of Mali focused on the impacts and quality of a government program directed at people living with HIV/AIDS in the region Ségou, which is particularly vulnerable due to the influx of seasonal workers and growing prostitution. In addition, the project looked to evaluate the capacity of the organisation L’ONG Walé, a local non-governmental organisation focussing both on preventive information and providing health services to people living with HIV/AIDS. This organisation had been selected by the government as the sole provider to implement the program in the region. The National Assembly of Mali has established a special parliamentary network for poverty reduction, currently consisting of 35 MPs. A delegation consisting of five MPs, two parliamentary assistants and one representative from civil society were selected from the network to implement the pilot project.

Service providers from L’ONG Walé and beneficiaries who were members of an association for people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) called Keneya-ton were interviewed for the project. Keneya-ton had been put in place by L’ONG Walé to enable PLWHA to organise themselves and to improve their social inclusion in the community by organising small income-generating projects. It was also noted from interviews that the beneficiaries were more open and willing to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in various activities organised by L’ONG Walé. In addition, according to the survey, the beneficiaries were very satisfied with the services provided by L’ONG Walé. Even PLWHA from other regions come to L’ONG Walé, who serves them as best they can. One major concern expressed both by service providers and beneficiaries was the lack of resources or the organisation, both financial and human, as it is completely dependent on donor funds. For example, L’ONG Walé provides testing and ARV medicines, but has few resources to help treat opportunistic diseases. As a result of this project, parliament has proposed changes to its laws for NGOs, in order to allow L’ONG Walé, Keneya-ton and other similar organisations to benefit from state funds and to be included in the national budget. This change in status is suggested to be applied particularly to NGOs working in the area of HIV/AIDS.

The community monitoring training has enabled the Malian MPs to communicate more effectively with the beneficiaries of government funded projects. They now demand to be involved in all the various aspects of budgetary oversight and do not approve financing agreements without scrutinizing it through the lens of the community monitoring tools. The pilot project has also contributed greatly to breaking down the barriers between the Parliament and civil society.

**Niger**

The National Assembly of Niger has been an active member of the APRN since 2004 and the APRN works closely with its Parliamentarian Network for Poverty Reduction. For the community monitoring pilot project in Niger, the local network for poverty reduction analyzed a micro-credit program in Matankari, a rural area in the Dosso region, geared specifically towards women as three out of four poor people in Niger are women. One of the main objectives was to see which impacts this programme has had on the lives of the women who participated.

Prior to the survey, a delegation of six MPs, two parliamentary staff and two members of civil society were selected to implement the pilot project and received training on the community monitoring tools to be used. Three working groups were then created with representatives from each partner, which then organised a working session with service providers, local authorities and the female beneficiaries to conduct the surveys.

The interviewed women expressed that they felt that they had benefited from the program and that the income from their small business had enabled them fulfill their needs to a certain extent. The surveys showed that almost 100% of the women had been able to pay back their loans, including the interest. There was, however, some confusion on what this interest should be. Some paid a 10% interest, others 12%. The program itself had set an interest of 1% per year. This might have contributed to that after the women had reimbursed their loan, not a single woman was able to reinvest and found themselves in almost the same situation as before the program. This has highlighted the need for banks to have a line of credit where it is not necessary to have a guarantor. Nonetheless, the survey did show that as a result of the government’s micro-credit programme, the women have become more aware of their rights, they have increased their capacity and have new tools to embark on new activities that could help them find a way out of poverty.

As a result from the pilot project, the National Assembly of Niger has experienced a new openness towards civil society and a greater appreciation of its role. The project has also had a positive impact on putting gender on the agenda in Parliament and the impact of lobbying and advocacy of the poverty network following the project has led to that the government has increased the resources available for poverty reduction. It has also allocated a portion of its budget for monitoring of government programs, thus demonstrating its commitment to poverty reduction and to parliamentary oversight.
Senegal

The community monitoring pilot project of the National Assembly of Senegal evaluated the impacts of a literacy program in Sangalkam, which is part of the Government’s program for poverty reduction. Prior to the field visit, the community monitoring tools, a potential partnership between the parliament and civil society and the way forward were discussed extensively by seventeen Members of Parliament, four parliamentary staff and eight members from civil society, in a two-day planning workshop. The participants developed a joint plan and selected a monitoring committee consisting of four MPs, one parliamentary staff and two civil society representatives to implement the pilot project, where the Citizen Report Card and the Community Score Card were to be used.

The main objectives of the literacy project in Sangalkam, which is supported by a vast information programme, are to increase educational levels, technical and professional competences and to increase the self-sufficiency of the target groups, i.e. women, young boys and girls, the handicapped and the elderly. Several governmental and non-governmental organisations are working together in its implementation. The pilot project was to focus on the functioning of the literacy classes, i.e. analyse the impact of the literacy classes on the lives of the participants, analyse the impact of the rural council as a voice of the community and as an administrator, and to verify the coherence of the literacy classes to the PRSPs.

The survey showed that most of the participants of the alphabetisation programme were female (93%). Although a majority of the registered students did follow the classes (87.5%), most of the classes experienced problems of participants being absent on several occasions. The reason for the non-attendance was in large a result of lack of motivation. This was in part attributable to that the micro-financing programmes that were supposed to be linked to the literacy classes were not functioning as they should have, and thus not enabling the target groups to become self-reliant following the program. One goal of the program was that some of the participants would in turn teach literacy classes, which was also affected negatively by the non-functioning micro-financing programme.

However, the survey showed that participants attributed the competences acquired during the literacy training to them being able to start up modest business activities, for example making and then selling soap, and thus allowing them to have a small income. Their literacy skills have also inspired them to seek new knowledge and competences, for example on how to manage their family resources better and to improve sanitary conditions. Therefore the literacy program showed great relevance to the PRSP process, although several improvements to the program need to be done.

During the pilot project a positive relationship developed between Parliament and civil society, and between parliamentarians themselves, as they began to work together more. Once the parliamentarians and their staff realized that they could efficiently verify their decision to support a given project, they now always try to take in consideration and analyze how beneficiaries benefit from and appreciate the work done. In addition, female parliamentarians have taken a particular interest in establishing a more continuous monitoring and evaluation of government programs and have also expressed the need to use instruments as the Gender Budget Analysis tool when analyzing the budget.

Tanzania

The Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources, Environment and Poverty Reduction within the Parliament of Tanzania has played an active role in setting the PRSP agenda in Tanzania and to build capacity in the areas of monitoring. New mechanisms have been developed to monitor spending of public funds through sharing reports on money allocation with all parliamentary committees.

As part of this capacity building, the parliamentary committee chose the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP), a program put in place by the government to improve primary education under the auspices of the PRSPs, which focus on enrolment expansion, quality improvement as well as capacity building and strengthening institutional arrangements, as the area of study of the pilot project. The government has involved school committees, which are composed of teachers, community members and political leaders at community level, in the decision-making and implementation of the PEDP. The focus of the pilot project was to look at how resources had been utilized, accountability and perception of community members of the quality of participation in the process, as well as engaging the community in the decision-making process.

The survey showed that most of the participants of the PEDP programme were female (93%). The majority of the registered students did follow the classes (87.5%), most of the classes experienced problems of participants being absent on several occasions. The reason for the non-attendance was in large a result of lack of motivation. This was in part attributable to that the micro-financing programmes that were supposed to be linked to the literacy classes were not functioning as they should have, and thus not enabling the target groups to become self-reliant following the program. One goal of the program was that some of the participants would in turn teach literacy classes, which was also affected negatively by the non-functioning micro-financing programme.

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community in assessing the performance of the PEDP and to sensitize them on the need to monitor poverty reduction programmes on a continuous basis.

The study took place in the Dodoma and Morogoro regions. The former has a high level of poverty due to unfavourable climatic condition, whereas the latter is rich in natural resources. Several factors were considered in the selection of study areas from each region including the cost, urban setting, proximity or remoteness to district headquarters, accessibility (transport and infrastructure), willingness to participate and availability of contact persons. Nine communities in total participated in the data collection. Prior to the actual fieldwork, the research team met with service providers, which resulted in the design of the questionnaires to be used. In collaboration with district education officers, they also visited the survey communities to make preparatory arrangements for the fieldwork, to present the survey objectives to the communities and to conduct pre-testing of the community monitoring tools.

General findings showed that the population is aware of the PEDP and its objectives to improve primary education. With the help of the Community Score Card and the Citizen Report Card, the pilot project was able to show that beneficiaries and service providers feel that the quality of education has improved with the introduction of the PEDP, which has lead to increased school enrolment and a lower drop-out rate. Teacher-pupil relationships have also been improved. In addition to the PEDP, primary school fees have been abolished and several school feeding programs are also taking place especially in the rural Dodoma areas with funding from the World Food Program. This has also played a role in higher enrolment and lower drop-out rates. A lot of the focus of the PEDP has been to improve infrastructure. Working conditions for teachers are still poor, as they don’t receive proper training and are inadequately remunerated. In addition, the number of teachers are not proportional to the number of pupils, as they have increased significantly. The number of secondary schools are also insufficient to meet the need as more pupils are able to continue in higher education, which also needs to be further addressed.

The community monitoring tools proved very effective in conducting parliamentary oversight, and to form partnerships with the community itself. Due to the experiences from the pilot project, the Parliament of Tanzania is now interested in incorporating community monitoring tools into the day-to-day activities of parliament.

Uganda
The community monitoring pilot project in Uganda was spearheaded by the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament of Uganda in conjunction with DENIVA, a network of Ugandan non-governmental and community based organisations. The project focused on social and public accountability monitoring of HIV/AIDS programmes in the remote district of Lira, an area of Uganda that has been strongly affected by the conflict with the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), with the intent of assessing the accessibility of HIV/AIDS services by the poor. While the regional HIV prevalence rate has been estimated to 9%, VCT results show a 26% prevalence in the Lira district, a figure that seems to be on the rise. Although there are numerous government and community based HIV/AIDS programs in the area, delivery of services, as well as to monitor and assess their effectiveness, have been difficult in this environment.

During the pilot project process, time was given to debrief all the members of the Public Account Committee in order to secure their approval and cooperation, as well as creating a sense of ownership for the project. Several other steps were taken to facilitate the implementation and effectiveness of the study. Before the surveys took place, everyone involved in the project were trained on the community monitoring tools, the developed questionnaire was pre-tested in the district and a community mobiliser focussed on establishing a rapport with the camp leaders. Important data was also collected from the various service providers from both government and community based organisation to feed into the Citizen Report Card questionnaire aimed at the six communities. Then every community was briefed on the key aspects of the survey and the communities were then able to elect delegates to represent them in the score process of the indicators they themselves had been able to generate, in order for them to feel part of the process. The Community Score Card as well as several focus groups were also used, where the collected information from the CRC played an important role.

The survey found that awareness of HIV/AIDS in the Lira District is very high, as a result of many being infected or affected by the disease. However, this has not translated into behavioural change. Conditions in the camps have led to a moral decline, split families and widespread prostitution. The conditions of the health facilities in the area are poor and resources are very scarce. For example, the Lira referral hospital has only six doctors serving seven districts, available equipment cannot serve the need and ARV-drug supply is limited. According to the findings from the score card, the people also reported dissatisfaction with extremely long waiting times, poor follow-up after testing and a shortage of food supplements. Despite the various actors active in the region, there is a shortage of funds to carry out the programs, partly due to poor coordination, bureaucracy, duplication of services and corruption.

The findings of the study have since been presented at community meetings and in a dissemination workshop involving policy makers, researchers, academics, government officials and MPs. Not all, especially some researchers, were supportive of Parliament’s role in the monitoring process, as they thought that the CRC was too complicated. However, during the pilot project, many MPs visited the Lira District for the first time. This enabled them to get a greater
understanding of the social conditions and challenges the people in the district face. This has facilitated advocacy in parliament on behalf of the people living in the camps and displaced by the conflict. The success of the pilot project has prompted the Ugandan Parliament to develop strategies to institutionalize public and social accountability tools. For example, these tools were incorporated in its draft strategy paper for public Financial Management 2006-2009. Although the proposal was not adopted by the Ministry of Finance, Parliament still tries to increase its resources to be able to undertake similar monitoring and evaluation of government programs to increase accountability and strengthen its oversight role. A major challenge for further spread of the knowledge of the community monitoring tools has been that almost all of the MPs involved lost their seats in the last election. As for many other countries, this stresses the need for additional support to training of parliamentary staff, and especially committee clerks, in order to create a sustainable knowledge base.

**Zambia**

The National Assembly of Zambia and the Committee on Economic Affairs and Labour in particular chose to evaluate the government’s Food Security Pack program, which was introduced by the government in 2000, for their community monitoring pilot project. The aims of this programme are among others to economically empower vulnerable but potentially viable farmers, to diversify the number of crops used, to market entrepreneurship and to develop a seed/cereal bank. The pilot project study took place in six agricultural camps in the Kafue District, where the researchers interviewed various service providers, conducted six focus group discussions and surveyed over 300 beneficiaries. It was discovered that the Food Security Pack has to some extent been useful in increasing food security of viable but vulnerable farmers, most of whom are female-, child- or elderly headed households or households affected by droughts or other natural misfortunes. However, it also showed that most beneficiaries still lack the capacity to be self-sufficient after they leave the programme. The study illustrated that there was inconsistence in the content in the food packs as well as a limited variety of crops in the packs. On several occasions the packs had also been distributed late, resulting in meagre crops. In addition, the selection of beneficiaries in the communities was not consistent or transparent, nor was natural and socio-economic factors taken into full account, resulting in a large number of qualified beneficiaries not being included in the programme or taken off the programme before they were self-sufficient. It also became apparent that service providers had not been able to monitor or evaluate the programme on a regular basis, due in part to lack of resources. Closer monitoring might have revealed the shortcomings of the programme at an earlier stage, resulting in more sustainable and more economically efficient measures. A strengthening of Parliament’s oversight role will be an important step towards the establishment of stronger feedback mechanisms from the beneficiaries of government programmes.

The Zambian pilot project procedure was negatively affected by a high turnover of Members of Parliament and poor involvement by its civil society representatives. The first phase was as a result undertaken by members of staff and civil society only. The involved parliamentary committee has therefore conducted an additional study to enable the involvement of more parliamentary staff and newly elected members of parliament. This filed study showed very similar results. Prior to the second phase, a one day training session was conducted for the Members of Parliament, but it was felt that additional and more regular training for Members of Parliament needs to be done to help them improve their oversight role. Key lessons learnt are therefore the need to focus on building capacity among parliamentary staff, so they can offer support to Members of Parliaments in their oversight duties on a continuous basis, as well as clarifying the respective roles between Parliament and civil society and perhaps even institutionalising the relationship to ensure each partner performs its task.

**Zimbabwe**

In Zimbabwe, the community monitoring pilot project was led by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) together with the Women and Aids Support Network (WASN). The focus of the project was to monitor the government’s “Plan for the nationwide provision of Antiretroviral Therapy 2005-2007” and to assess the availability of anti-retroviral (ARV) medication for people living with HIV/AIDS. It also aimed to analyze whether the government assistance programs reached the most vulnerable, in particular to women and children. In addition, it sought to identify the criteria and methods used for the

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patient’s selection as well as to develop a way forward to engage with stakeholders (Government, MPs, CSOs Media and donors) for improving ARVs access and treatment for the vulnerable. The pilot project was carried out in the Glen Norah constituency in the Harare region, which has a particularly high population density and many low income families. It’s estimated that over 90% of the population is not formally employed, with a majority engaged in informal activities such as vending, cross border trading, and small-scale manufacturing, often meaning high mobility and hence an increased risk for exposure to HIV/AIDS. Orphaned children due to AIDS is also a growing problem in the area, with little support at this point.

Enumerators for the study were selected from a group of people living with HIV/AIDS and were subsequently trained in community monitoring tools such as the citizen report card and the community score card. The respondents were selected from different social backgrounds (education, age, sex, class and religion) and a majority of them were people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. In total, 138 people were interviewed using a structured questionnaire (Citizen Report Card). The survey identified limited financial resources as the key constraint to access ARV medications, as many need to prioritize paying for food, accommodation and school fees. Not only was there a cost for doctors consultation fees in many cases, but the costs for the drugs themselves were too high for those affected. The government has a programs giving access to free drugs to vulnerable groups, but a majority of the respondents had no access to these programs. Some stated difficulties in understanding the process on how to access these drugs, others claimed that health staff only provided drugs to those who favoured the government and the ruling party. The interviewed also pointed out the link between ARVs and the cost of transportation, as testing facilities and medicines rarely are accessible out in the local communities. In addition, it was expressed that the access to services was a very long process, ranging from 5 years to three months between testing and access to ARV therapy. This stopped many entitled beneficiaries from getting access. Another limitation was stigmatization in the family, community, school and health facilities. Community members suggested that financial assistance and the expansion of food programs would be one way to address the limitations to the government program. Others suggested that mobile clinics that provided testing, counselling and treatment services should be used. Services for children had not been taken in consideration sufficiently within the program, which has been raised in Parliament.

After the survey, a meeting of various stakeholders working in the area of HIV/AIDS, parliamentarians and health service providers took place, in total 76 people. The Community Score Card was used to discuss the policy framework on HIV/AIDS and its impact on ARV treatment; the institutional framework to Support HIV/AIDS initiatives; support to vulnerable groups living with HIV/AIDS; monitoring the provision of ART by government; and local level support to people living with HIV/AIDS. Several recommendations resulted from the discussions, for example that ARVs should be accessed at primary health centers to avoid transportation costs and increase transparency; that a monitoring framework involving members of parliament and the public should be put in place and that periodic reports on the use of public funds for HIV/AIDS should be made. These and other recommendation are to be presented to various parliamentary committees as well as the National Council in order to seek ways to incorporate the findings of the report into various HIV/AIDS policies.

The lessons learnt from the training on community monitoring tools and the pilot projects for the Parliamentary Centre and the participating partners have been substantial, not the least for Members of Parliament to realise that they now have simple tools to monitor poverty reduction programmes and to hold their governments accountable for implementing them in the best interest of the beneficiaries. These lessons are not only important for the participating countries, but also for other countries in Africa and around the world where the Parliamentary Centre works.

If you want more information about the pilot project or the training program on community monitoring, please contact us at info_Ottawa@aprnetwork.org.
Members of Parliament (MPs) and parliamentary staff from Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria in Africa and from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in South Asia recently took part in learning program on “Professional Development for Parliamentary Staff”. The course modules were simultaneously delivered through a series of video conferences, where the participants were given an opportunity to share experiences. Following the videoconferences, the participants completed the accompanying exercises on the internet in a self-paced manner, and were also able to communicate with each other through a virtual discussion forum. The overall learning program focused on:

- Parliament in Government Systems (focus on the different tiers of legislation systems and on parliamentary-executive relations)
- Core Parliamentary Functions (operational functions of parliament)
- Parliament and Development (current issues in international development)

The training program was funded and developed by the World Bank Institute (WBI) in collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). However, thematic experts from around the world, including the Parliamentary Centre, contributed to the development and implementation of the 13 training modules which formed the learning program. Although primarily intended for Parliamentary Staff, it will also be of benefit to MPs and individuals interested in learning more about the core functions of Parliaments.

The training module developed by the Parliamentary Centre focused on parliamentary committees. Its main objective was to introduce parliamentary staff and MPs to parliamentary committees by focusing on functions, powers and procedures, needs and related issues that govern the effectiveness of parliamentary committees. The training course therefore aimed to increase the understanding of participants on the important role of parliamentary committees in the legislature, as it is commonly recognized that if committees are suitably resourced and take their responsibilities seriously, they can make a very large contribution to the operations of parliament, to greater engagement of society in the business of legislation and ultimately, to the enhancement of the status and dignity of Parliament.

The PC training module was comprised of the following units:

1. Parliamentary Committees in Democracies
2. Effectiveness of Committees
3. Procedural and Administrative Support
4. Research Services for Parliamentary Committees
5. Parliamentary Committees and the Law Making Process
6. Government Accountability and Parliamentary Committees
7. Transparency, Participation and Outreach

The training was not only successful in strengthening the capacity of the participants. It was also an innovative way of conducting training and sharing lessons learned which enabled the inclusion of a greater number of people; allowed for more countries at the same time for increased knowledge sharing; offers ongoing learning; and permitted carrying out the training in a more cost effective manner.

Next Issue

The next number of the APRN Newsletter will feature more background information on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which was endorsed by over 100 signatories from partner governments at the second High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF) in 2005.

On September 2-4 2008, the third HLF will take place in Accra, Ghana. This will be an opportunity to review the progress made in implementing the Paris Declaration, but the action needed and bottlenecks to overcome in order to make progress in improving aid effectiveness for 2010 and beyond will also be discussed. This meeting will broaden the dialogue by also inviting civil society and new emerging donors in addition to the existing partner countries.

The APRN and the Parliamentary Centre want to make sure that our members are well informed about the key issues to be discussed at the HLF 3 and that we are able put forward a parliamentary perspective to these discussions.

We would therefore like to invite you to send us your contributions on aid effectiveness – and specifically on how the key issues to be discussed relate to Parliaments and what role Parliaments should play in this process. A select number of articles will be published in the APRN Newsletter in the months leading up to the meeting in Accra. Please send your contribution to info_Ottawa@aprnetwork.org.
Contact Us:

African Poverty Reduction Office (APRO)
Dr. Rasheed Draman
Director, Africa Programs
H/No. E68/9 Ablade Raod, Kanda (Opposite Readwide Bookshop)
PMB CT. 113, Cantonments Accra, Ghana
Phone: (233) 21 242345
Fax: (233) 21 223815
Email: dramar@parl.gc.ca or rasheedd@yahoo.com

Parliamentary Centre
Head Office
Petra Andersson
Program Officer, Africa
255 Albert St. Suite 802
Ottawa, Ontario Canada, K1P 6A9
Phone: (613)237-0143 ext. 326
Fax: (613) 235-8237
Email: anderp@parl.gc.ca

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Links and Resources

Poverty Reduction:

“Moving out of Poverty - Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives”
Edited by Deepa Narayan and Patti Petesch, November 2007

“Minding the Gaps: Integrating Poverty Reduction Strategies and Budgets for Domestic Accountability”
April 2007

“Delivering on the Promise of Pro-Poor Growth: Insights and Lessons from Country Experiences”
Edited by Tim Besley and Louise Cord, 2007

“Poverty and Equity: Measurement, Policy and Estimation with DAD”
By Jean-Yves Duclos and Abdelkrim Araar, 2006
http://www.idrc.ca/openebooks/229-5/

Budgetary Oversight:

“The Role of African Parliaments in the Budgetary Processes Especially in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework”
Economic Commission for Africa, April 2007

Economic Commission for Africa
http://www.uneca.org/era2007/

Edited by Elias T. Ayuk and Mohamed Ali Marouani, 2007
http://www.idrc.ca/openebooks/335-5/

“Parliament, Budget and Gender”
UNDP, IPU, WBI and UNIFEM, 2004

EU Africa Summit, December 2007