MPs and Climate Change

One of the biggest environmental challenges faced by humanity today is climate change. Whether one lives in Africa, Europe or the Americas, severe environmental effects occasioned by changes in climatic conditions are becoming visible and real on a daily basis. From changes in rainfall patterns and drought in the South to severe winter storms in the North, weather conditions have become highly unpredictable and have wrought havoc on wealthy and poor nations alike. These conditions are playing a fundamental role in shaping natural ecosystems, and the human economies and cultures that depend on them.

Against this background, this scientific issue has now become a global issue that needs to be tackled by both science and policy. Today, climate change is a development issue – it causes poverty, affects food security and has a severe impact on the global economy. Thus, it can no longer be left to scientists alone. For us at the Parliamentary Centre, this is why we think Members of Parliament (MPs) as representatives of the people have an important role to play.

To be sure, the way climate change affects us all depends on where we find ourselves on the global map. As with most things, the hardest hit population group are poor people, the inhabitants of developing countries who are predominantly farmers, depend on rain-fed and rudimentary mechanisms for tilling the land and earning a livelihood. These are people who are far removed from negotiations in Copenhagen and Cancun and who through no fault of theirs, are at the receiving end of the actions of ‘global polluters’. The only way their conditions can change is if there is a policy shift, if there is action on the part of policy makers and the people who represent them. We urge MPs around the world to take a keen interest in climate change issues, to ensure that governments ratify and act on the various global agreements on climate change. They also will need to commit national resources where necessary in order to address the phenomenon and its negative impacts, particularly on poor farmers who constitute the majority of developing country populations.

The poor and vulnerable need help and we hope that MPs will rise to the challenge in order to reduce the impact of what has now clearly become a global development challenge.

Dr. Rasheed Draman, Director, Africa Programs, Parliamentary Centre
On October 1st, 2010, the Parliamentary Centre (PC) underwent a significant leadership change with the departure of Mrs. Amelia Armit and the appointment of Mr. Jean-Paul Ruszkowski as the new President and CEO of the institution. The arrival of Jean Paul (as he prefers to be called) is a value enhancing development and an important step in PC’s goal of re-establishing itself as the main reference in the field of Parliamentary Development and Strengthening. It also represents the welcoming of a key player who will facilitate the implementation of the institution’s new strategic plan of aggressively exploring new territories and business opportunities.

In the face of mounting challenges, the need had emerged for a seasoned leader with an outstanding track record of helping organizations grow and building organizational capacity. Those were indeed the qualities that led the Board to select Jean Paul whom prior to joining the Parliamentary Centre had had an enviable career both in the public and private sectors. In addition to being an International Business Consultant, Jean Paul worked as Chief of Staff and Senior Policy Advisor to Ministers within the Canadian Federal Government. He was also the Vice-President of International Business Development for Canam-Manac Inc., a major international corporation. And, under the umbrella of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Jean Paul assumed the positions of Country Program Manager in Central America, First Secretary for Development in Kenya and Director of Industrial Cooperation for Africa and the Middle East.

Taking over the helm of such a reputable institution in the midst of tumultuous changes would seem a rather daunting if not outright intimidating task to most. But Jean Paul welcomes the challenge. He is firmly committed to using all of his previous experience to carry on PC’s mandate. But, more importantly perhaps, he strongly believes in the idea that effective Parliaments are crucial to democratic governance and sustainable development.

Jean Paul is very grateful to have found at the Centre an outstanding team of very qualified, dedicated, hardworking and intelligent individuals such as Dr. Rasheed Draman, the Director of the Africa Program, whose expertise he can confidently call upon when necessary, as he continues to work diligently to familiarize himself with this new working environment and master the intricacies associated with running a non-profit institution like the Parliamentary Centre.

Jean Paul’s immediate and key priority is to develop a strategy which would render the Centre much less dependent on Canadian Government support. In recent years, perhaps as a result of the global financial crisis, the Canadian government has devoted significantly less resources to international cooperation initiatives. Consequently, non-profit institutions such as PC which have historically relied on government support as their primary source of income have experienced severe hardships. Though the Parliamentary Centre will always be grateful for the aforementioned government support provided to its projects the last few years - especially from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) - Jean Paul is now determined to slowly begin to move PC away from that culture of high dependency by implementing a strategy that will diversify the mechanism through which the Centre’s future projects are financed. As he put it: “Having a very diversified source of funding and less reliance on government support is a much healthier and sustainable approach for any organization, and that is very much the direction in which I would like to take the Parliamentary Centre over the next couple of years”.

Part of that strategy will also involve encouraging Project Managers and other Officers to make a conscious effort to be more proactive than before in seeking out opportunities to help Parliaments around the world and in the process, make PC’s work and the services that we provide better known across different continents.

With regards to Africa, Jean Paul is thrilled to be once again involved with an institution with a strong presence in the region. The four years he spent in Kenya represent some of the fondest memories of his professional life. He is very much looking forward to working closely with the Ghana-based PC team and with our Senior Advisor currently based in Kenya, to continue finding ways to support Parliaments throughout the region. Less than three months into his tenure, Jean Paul is already planning his first visit to Africa. That trip will not only provide him with the chance to get acquainted with the local team in Ghana, but equally as significant it will afford him the opportunity to personally explore new avenues for cooperation.
between PC, African Parliaments and other institutions currently involved in Parliamentary Development & Strengthening in the region.

Like the Parliamentary Centre, many other institutions such as SUNY, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (EISA) etc, are all committed to improving governance in that part of the world. So, part of Jean Paul's strategy is to make it known that the Parliamentary Centre is very eager to partner with those organizations in a way that benefits us, them and more importantly Africans.

Ricardo Lesperance
Program Officer

Parliaments Face the Reality of Climate Change and Poverty in Africa: Budgeting as a Sustainable Response to Climate Change
By Hon. Ndeye Gaye Cisse—Parliament of Senegal

Assembled in Johannesburg for the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development from September 2 to 4, 2002, the representatives of the peoples of the world voiced concern over the adverse effects of climate change on increasingly vulnerable developing countries.

In the face of global warming, a heavy reliance on natural resources increases the vulnerability of our countries. In Africa, more than anywhere else in the world, natural resources form the basis of the economic and social system. Vital sectors such as agriculture, fishing, tourism, forestry and hydraulics are highly sensitive to temperature changes. The resulting upheaval will dramatically affect living conditions.

All of the economic development efforts by developing-country governments could unravel unless drastic measures are taken to adapt to climate change. Dramatic changes could occur in developing nations that are already severely affected by food insecurity. Drought, the most common manifestation of climate change, is responsible for most of the world's hunger crises, particularly in developing countries.

In Senegal, as in most Sahelian countries, heavy rainfall means a good harvest, greater food security and economic growth. In times of drought, grain yields, the people's food sources are low and do not adequately meet nutritional needs.

In this context of vulnerability and limited capacity for proper responses, Africa's arid and semi-arid regions are experiencing highly insufficient grain yields with dire consequences on food security. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the warmer temperatures and increasingly unpredictable weather will likely result in a reduction in crop yields (-6.9 percent in the case of corn, an important staple).

In response to global warming, which is further depleting our natural resources, particularly in rural areas of endemic poverty, parliamentarians must engage in a reflection process to identify new development strategies and policies that take into account the climate variable, which is becoming a key requirement for sustainable development, especially in our developing countries.

The deteriorating effects of climate change on the precariousness of living conditions call for a strong response from decision-makers, particularly African parliamentarians, who must now, more than ever, address the people's expectations. While the Executive is responsible for defining and implementing policy directions, the national elected representatives play a key role in monitoring and controlling development projects and programs to ensure that they are in line with the concerns of the citizens they represent.

The parliamentarians' response to climate change, which continues to adversely affect the development of our countries, must translate into increased awareness of climate change among the people. In this regard, elected representatives must become more involved in raising public awareness by drawing attention not only to climate change events, but especially to adaptation strategies and tools to face the climate challenge and foster sustainable and harmonious development.

Clearly, any poverty reduction strategy in this era of climate change will require a shift in attitude and behavior, particularly on the part of Africans, who will be greatly affected by the changing climate. According to the FAO, Africa's poorest will be hit the hardest.
An increasing human population called for a shift from dependency on the natural environment to the production of some of the essentials of life hence cultivation of crops and domestication of some animals (husbandry). With time, man became more sophisticated and the processing of raw materials to finer products evolved. At the rudimentary level, the production process of whatever form depended a lot on human power (manual labour) until mechanical setups that could harness the power of the so called ‘beasts of burden’ such as buffaloes, cattle, camels, donkeys and horses were developed. It is by no accident that for a long time (and even today) energy was measured in terms of horse power. The foregoing demonstrates clearly that energy has been a core element of human development.

The invention of electricity, motorised machines, fuelled engines and the discovery of petroleum has propelled industrialisation by leaps and bounds and changed human life forever. Mode of economic production, transportation etc. all took a new turn. However, poorer societies the world over, continue to depend on sources such as fuel wood to satisfy their energy needs. Most of the world’s poor live in close touch with the environment for their very survival - herbs for medication, game for meat, etc.

However for centuries numerous resources have been harnessed from the environment to satisfy energy and other needs without replenishing same, thereby disturbing the natural balance in nature. A major cause of the imbalance is a seeming overload of the atmosphere with carbon dioxide (CO2) which, naturally, acts as a blanket that prevents heat from escaping into outer space from the earth’s surface. In its original form, a thick layer of ozone (O3) screens the earth from direct contact with the ultraviolet rays from the sun that can be injurious to lives. However, years of usage of ozone depleting chemicals (especially Chlorofluorocarbons, CFCs) such as aerosols and refrigerants has reduced the effectiveness of the shielding potency of the ozone layer. This means that more heat than is required is reaching the earth’s surface. In most part of the world the status quo has been the clearing of natural vegetation for fuel wood, furniture, housing, farming, grazing etc. without replanting.

The removal of vegetative cover and other invasive life style of man on the environment meant that the soil is exposed to the direct sunlight that evaporates soil moisture at a faster rate than normal. Deforestation is eventually resulting in desertification. An increasing disappearance of flora and fauna species is adding to the list of extinct or endangered species.
With the increased burning of wood, coal and petroleum products (as well as other combustion processes) and industrial discharges, more CO2 (alongside methane, nitrite and sulphide gases) are released into the atmosphere with less vegetative cover to absorb it. The ocean which used to be a good absorber of CO2 is gradually losing this quality because of the destruction of various aquatic life forms through dumping of toxic wastes. Consequently, the thick layer of CO2 formed over the earth’s surface traps the excess heat from escaping from the earth’s surface, keeping it warmer than normal – Green House Effect (Global Warming).

The first decade of the twenty-first century was the hottest since recordkeeping began in 1880. With an average global temperature of 14.52 degrees Celsius (58.1 degrees Fahrenheit), this decade was 0.2 degrees Celsius (0.36 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than any previous decade. In fact, 9 of the 10 warmest years on record occurred in the past decade (Amy Heinzerling, 2010; http://www.earth-policy.org).

The direct consequences of this phenomenon affects different parts of the world differently including but not limited to the drying up of water bodies, change in rainfall patterns, droughts, heat waves, bush fires, melting of ice caps, rising sea level, flooding and acid rains. The implications of these changes have been very dire for millions, especially the poor. In Africa, majority of the populace are farmers practicing rain fed agriculture from which they earn very little that cannot lift them above the poverty line. Long periods of droughts mean crop failure and famine, water scarcity and its attendant diseases that further worsen the living conditions of the poor and reduce life expectancy as witnessed in Ethiopia in the 80s, Niger and parts of Kenya and its northern neighbours recently.

"Climate change is a quintessential public health problem," said Michael McGeehin, director of the Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects at the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, an agency of the federal government of United States. Climate scientist Brenda Ekwurzel has noted that climate change is not all about saving polar bears and other faraway creatures and habitats. "More and more, studies demonstrate that the health care impact and health care costs related to climate change," she said, "are directly related to us." (http://www.ens-newswire.com)

Another effect of droughts is the scarcity of pasture for livestock and the effect on the livelihood of pastoral/nomadic groups. The struggle for control over water and grazing fields has led to countless conflicts across Africa.

In 2007/2008 global crop failure culminated in food shortage, price hikes and social unrest in many countries. Floods have wreaked havoc around the world displacing whole communities and rendering millions homeless in Pakistan and Northern Ghana. In September 2007 more than a million people across a swathe of 17 African countries suffered the effects of severe floods – displacement, destruction of already poor infrastructure and deaths.

Heat waves across India and Europe left in its wake an estimated 35,000 lives. Raging bush fires recently destroyed vast stretch of farmlands in Russia sending panic signals and price hikes of wheat, the raw material for flour used in making bread that many poor people depend on. Rising sea levels have and continue to devour a number of coastal settlements from Senegal to Guinea-Bissau, and Ghana.

Africa’s harbour cities of Cape Town, Lagos and Alexandria are under threat from rising sea levels which could displace millions and cause massive economic losses. Speaking at an international climate change conference in Cape Town, Geoff Brundrit of the Global Ocean Observing System in Africa said even a slight increase in sea levels could wreak havoc on some countries.

"Disaster risk is high when the chance of occurrence of a hazard is high, when the vulnerability to damage from that hazard is high and when the capacity to cope with the consequences of the occurrence is low," he said. Brundrit told AFP that many African countries had "no resilience" to increasingly damaging storms as a result of the changing climate, and were often hit by the next before properly recovering from the last.

According to Brundrit, "adaptation through protection will be difficult and expensive" across Africa’s coast and immediate assessment needs to be done and policies put in place. "If you are really going to take cognisance of sea-level rise, put buffer zones along the coast where you restrict development," he said (http://www.ens-newswire.com).

So can this trend be reversed? The Industrialised world are most guilty for the worst forms of carbon emissions - from industrial setups, vehicular fumes, etc- chief among them being USA, China and Australia. Instead of addressing a rather extravagant energy use and the concomitant environmental effect, the lead industrial countries are now talking about carbon credit trading, a rather subtle way for polluters with deep pocket to maintain the status quo (for more on this see http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-carbon-credit-trading.htm).

Current projections are that, the world would have to maintain a global temperature rise of not more than 2°C to avoid total...
annihilation of the planet. At greater than 2°C, focussing primary discussion and advocacy on adaptation and its costs is misplaced because the climate will very likely move more quickly than species’ capacity to adapt to it. The only rational course of action is extremely strong abatement: we have only 10-15 years to avoid crossing catastrophic tipping points. The 2°C is an unacceptable degree of risk. The 2°C level is far from “safe” and a political compromise because, practically speaking, it is going to require great effort to avoid it (www.carbonequity.info/PDFs/2degree.pdf).

A reversal of the trend will therefore require a massive reduction of carbon emissions through the substitution of the traditional energy sources with cleaner ones – solar, wind, biofuels etc. This has been on the international agenda for some time now but sadly enough the worst polluters like US and China are not complying and the poor victim nations are also not united with a resolve, common or individual, to bring about positive change. From the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment adopted at Stockholm 1972; Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992; and The Kyoto Protocol 1997 (coming into effect 2005) - an international agreement linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that sets binding targets for 37 industrialized countries and the European community for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions: this amount to an average of five per cent against 1990 levels over the five-year period 2008-2012. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) a leading international body for the assessment of climate change established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts is yet to realise its set targets of transforming global climate knowledge in action.

As time runs out for the world to take corrective measures world leaders have failed at conferences after conferences - the latest being Copenhagen 2009 - to arrive at a consensus. As the Cancun Conference on Climate comes off in November 2010, there is a lot of scepticism as regards how much that could be achieved. But should Africa wait for all these international protocols to be ratified before taking action?

It has been proven that local environmental reclamation efforts can yield quite impressive dividends in protecting local climate even if it is to a small extent. Afforestation projects through agro-forestry have been found to improve local rainfall patterns, prevent soil erosion, improve soil fertility, serve as wind breaks, absorb sound and dust pollution, and readily provide fodder for livestock that can improve the living standards of the poor significantly. This is where the efforts by the Kenyan Nobel laureates Wangari Maathai need to be replicated across Africa. As she succinctly puts it; “it’s the little things citizens do. That’s what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees”.

According to Brundrit, African nations need effective policies and swift action to reverse the current trend of the effect of climate change. This is where parliamentarians have a major role to play across the trilogy of their mandate i.e. representation, legislation and oversight.

In order to effect their representative role for their constituents, MPs should lead in bringing the precarious plight of the people to the fore on both local and international platforms by calling for practical steps to address the effect of climate change so as to alleviate the suffering of the poor. By asking the right questions and taking the leadership (including themselves), businesses, and the general citizenry to task, they will be helping a great deal in enhancing awareness of issues around climate change and hopefully educate some response. MPs must be the real voice of the voiceless for which they are voted for.

As part of individual MPs efforts (through MPs constituency projects as is the case in most African countries) they should be seen leading through initiatives at the constituency levels by mobilising the people to establish woodlots and undertaking public education on climate change. Climate change could even be made a political campaign issue if MPs are to demonstrate more commitment.

On legislation, the issue of climate change requires legislative assemblies across Africa to enact potent laws and regulations that spell out punitive sanctions that are deterrent enough to potential polluters of the environment. Where there is no law there is no transgression says the Bible and to add to that John Locke says “When there is no law, there is no freedom”.

A legal framework that will help establish strong institutions capable of safeguarding a safe and healthy environment for the development of the people is what African countries require. At a minimum such laws should set the parameters for land/resource use and requirements for Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for all industrial undertakings. International protocols on environment should also be indigenised for them to have relevance and ownership at home with no exemptions or special treatment of foreign companies. The pursuit of cleaner energy sources must also be championed by legislators and this could be anchored in policy and legislation.
The oversight function of parliamentarians is very essential if the voices, the pieces of legislations and the institutions are to yield any fruits. Effective oversight will ensure the enforcement of environmental standards as established by law. This will require that MPs continue to monitor the performance of institutions charged with responsibilities related to the environment. Parliamentary Committees with environmental oversight functions must go by the principles of Management By Working Around (MBWA) as arm chair supervision will not work. On-field visits both scheduled and unannounced will help keep all players on their toes. The executives will also have to be held accountable in ensuring that commitments to national laws, international protocols and government promises on the environment are followed through or demand acceptable explanations.

In conclusion, Wangari Maathai says “it is important to nurture any new ideas and initiatives which can make a difference for Africa”. She adds “in a few decades, the relationship between the environment, resources and conflict may seem almost as obvious as the connection we see today between human rights, democracy and peace”.

Well, need I say more?

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Budgeting for Youth Employment
By Issifu Lampo, Budget and Governance Advisor—Parliamentary Centre

The spectre of youth unemployment being witnessed in Africa in recent years is giving cause for great concern to governments, policy makers and parliamentarians across the continent. During a recent budget oversight training workshop that took place in Accra (25-29 October, 2010) under the auspices of the Parliamentary Centre (PC) with financial support from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) for members of parliament from Francophone African countries which included Burkina Faso, Benin, Senegal, Mali, and Rwanda, the issue of unemployment, particularly youth unemployment featured prominently in the deliberations.

That unemployment and paucity of opportunities has blighted the lives of many a youth in Africa cannot be gainsaid. The increased phenomenon of rural migration to urban centres, the worrying trend of substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and a myriad of other social ills can be attributed partly to lack of opportunities for the teeming unemployed youth. In response to the canker of spiralling youth unemployment, governments in Africa have designed policy responses aimed at stemming the tide of youth unemployment and creating opportunities in the world of work. It is the case that governments of all the five countries represented during the training workshop have developed employment programmes designed to provide employment opportunities for their youth. The major weakness however, has been the apparent lack of funding on a sustainable basis for these otherwise well crafted programmes.

During the week-long Budget Oversight Training, the 16 Francophone members of parliament and their staff undertook a field visit to the head office of the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) in Accra, Ghana. The visit afforded members the opportunity to learn about the youth employment programme in Ghana. The National Coordinator of NYEP, Mr. Abuga Pele briefed members about the programme, pointing out that the program was launched in October 2006 by the then New Patriotic Party administration which has since expanded in scope and has been enhanced qualitatively. The NYEP seeks to provide a combination of self-employment opportunities, wage earning jobs and voluntary service activities, all in an effort to absorb beneficiaries into mainstream labour market. He noted that under the current administration, additional modules have been developed to include the following: Youth in Agriculture, Teaching Assistants, Health Assistants, Community Protection, Waste and Sanitation, ICT-mobile phone repairs, Paid Internship, Health Extension, Garment Making and Vacation Jobs.
Under the Vacation Jobs module for instance, students in both Secondary and Tertiary Institutions are offered opportunities to earn an income, make the best of their leisure time and also offer voluntary service to their communities. Mr. Abiga Pele intimated that District Employment Task Force have been constituted in all the districts in the country with a view to liaise with the labour department to help identify job opportunities and help place students. The visiting MPs expressed their satisfaction about the delivery of the brief presentation and were also impressed with the elaborate nature of the Ghana National Youth Employment Programme, especially the fact that funding sources are reliable and sustainable. The programme draws 10 percent of its resources from the National Health Insurance Scheme, 20 percent from the GET Fund, 15 percent from the District Assembly Common Fund, and 20 percent from the Communication Service Tax while the rest comes from the government budget.

Following the briefing on the various modules that have been rolled out under the NYEP, the MPs also visited some beneficiaries of the National Youth Employment Program in one of the poorest suburb of Accra, Mamobi. The beneficiaries were mostly young girls who have been enrolled into the module on dress making. Each and every one of them - about thirty young ladies - were assigned to a sewing machine. The MPs interacted freely with the young ladies who were excited to play “host” to the august visitors. They answered with gusto to the questions posed by the honourable members.

The feedback session after the visit revealed general satisfaction on the part of the MPs and they were of the view that the Youth Employment Program fashioned out by the Ghanaian Government is unique and could serve as a useful model for other African countries to replicate.

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I know poverty because poverty was there before I was born and it has become part of life, like the blood through my veins. Poverty is not going empty for a single day and getting something to eat the next day. Poverty is going empty with no hope for the future. Poverty is getting nobody to feel your pain and poverty is when your dreams go in vain because nobody is there to help you. Poverty is watching your mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters die in pain and in sorrow just because they couldn’t get something to eat. Poverty is hearing your grandmothers and grandfathers cry out to death to come take them because they are tired of this world. Poverty is watching your own children and grandchildren die in your arms but there is nothing you can do to prevent it. Poverty is watching your children and grandchildren shed tears in their deepest sleep.

Poverty is suffering from HIV/AIDS and dying a shameful death but nobody seems to care. Poverty is when you hide your face and wish nobody could see you just because you feel less than a human being. Poverty is when you dream of bread and fish you never see in the day light. Poverty is when people accuse you and prosecute you for no fault of yours but there is nobody to say something on your behalf. Poverty is when the hopes of your fathers and grandfathers just vanish within a blink of an eye.

I know poverty and I know poverty just like I know my father’s name. Poverty never sleeps. Poverty works all day and night. Poverty never takes a holiday.

Africa was poor, Africa is poor and Africa will continue to be poor if we Africans are not ready to change Africa. Africa will remain poor if Africans are not ready to make Africa rich. There is poverty in Africa and there is hunger everywhere on the continent of Africa. HIV/AIDS continues to kill Africans in record numbers. There is no doubt Africa is poor. At this point, the question is not why Africa is poor but how can we improve the economic conditions on the continent and what can we do as
Assess the importance of consumption patterns and population growth as factors contributing to climate change.

Draft proposals to stimulate more active participation of MPs in African negotiations on climate change.

Encourage African Parliaments to participate in the campaign to raise political awareness of the challenges presented by global warming and climate change.

Set up a body within the African Union (AU) to deal specifically with parliamentary action on climate change.

Urge the African Union (AU) to continue to marshal political support for upholding the principles of good governance, democratic accountability and transparency in the context of African efforts to combat climate change.

Update of APRN Activities for the Period of July—December 2010
By Issifu Lampo, Budget and Governance Advisor - Parliamentary Centre

The APRN is pleased to report that since the publication of the June issue of its bi-annual newsletter, four budget oversight training activities took place. Three of them were dedicated for MPs and staff of Parliaments while the other one was designed for parliamentary staff only.


The first of these training, “Financial Oversight Functions of Parliamentarians: Tools and Mechanisms for Optimum Government Budget Analysis”, took place on July 26-30, 2010, in Accra, Ghana. Participants of the training workshop came from Ghana, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. They were twelve participants in total. Of the twelve participants, four (4) of them were women and eight (8) men.
The training which lasted five days aimed to strengthen the capacity of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to perform their financial oversight functions effectively and efficiently, equip participants with tools with which to undertake critical analysis of government budgets with pro-poor and gender sensitive perspectives; and to provide the platform for members to interact and share country experiences and best practices in parliamentary strengthening process. The feedback received from the participants pointed to the fact that the following modules for the training program were well received and internalised.

- Understanding National Budgets
- The Role of Parliament in the Budget Process
- Analyzing Government Budget Statements: Gender Equity Issues
- Parliament and the Revenue side of the budget
- Analyzing Government Budget Statement, how Pro-Poor should a Budget be?
- HIV/AIDS and National Budget
- MDGs and National Budget

Most of the expectations of the various representatives seemed to have been addressed, especially those that dealt with content issues. This was underscored by the end of program evaluation conducted. As per the evaluation results, 11 out of 12 participants were either satisfied or very satisfied with the extent to which the training met participants’ expectation. Again, participants were satisfied with the value of new information they received. Ten out of the twelve participants indicated that the information they received is very useful to their work in parliament.

**Highlights of the Training Workshop**

One of the highlights of this training workshop was the visit made to the Parliament of Ghana by the visiting members of parliaments of Malawi, Zimbabwe and their Ghanaian counterparts participating in the training workshop. The parliament of Ghana was in session at the time of the visit. The Speaker of the National Assembly of Ghana was pleased to introduce the visitors to members of the Ghanaian legislature who received them with rapturous applause.

Later, the public relations outfit of the Parliament of Ghana organized a briefing session for the visitors. Colleague members from Ghana representing the two main parties in the Ghana parliament - the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) - held a briefing session with the visitors.

The Convention Peoples Party’s sole representative in the Ghanaian parliament in the person of Hon. Samia Nkrumah was part of the MPs who briefed the visitors on the operations of the National Assembly of Ghana.

**Summary of the Briefing:**

- Ghana has 230 constituencies and 230 parliamentarians;
- 19 out of the 230 parliamentarians are women;
- Ghana has 170 district Chief Executives, of which 12 are women;
- The political system is a hybrid of presidential and parliamentary system where 50 percent of cabinet members are chosen from parliament;
- The President is the head of government, and in his absence the vice-President takes charge. In a situation where both the president and the vice-president are out of the country, or indisposed, the speaker of the national assembly assumes the saddle of steering the affairs of the state of Ghana;
- The Speaker of Parliament, the Chief Justice of the republic and the Attorney General and Minister of Justice are all women. It was noted that this development on the surface is very encouraging with respect to gender considerations but in practice, women empowerment has a long way to go.

**Some Practical Challenges of the Hybrid System in Ghana were outlined as follows:**

- Having to appoint 50 percent of Cabinet Ministers from Parliament undermines the independence of Parliament and puts a great deal of strain on Ministers who have to juggle between their role as Ministers and part of the Executive arm of government and performing their legislative and oversight roles.
- MPs do not have offices. This undoubtedly makes it difficult for them to work effectively and efficiently.

The briefing generated enormous interest among the visitors which is underscored by the questions and answers exchanges.
below:

- Has there been a situation where a nominated candidate by the president for a ministerial position has been rejected by the appointment committee of Parliament? (Instances of such occurrence were cited)
- Is Parliament empowered to summon a Minister to the floor to answer questions relating to his/her ministry? Again, the Ghanaian MPs answered in the affirmative.
- Are there efforts to increase the number of women in the Ghanaian parliament? There are no discernible plans on the part of the government or the various political parties to increase the number of women. Civil society groups are advocating for a deliberate policy of positive discrimination to bridge the gender gap in political representation. Some CSO groups are supporting women candidates in local council elections.
- Does the parliament of the republic of Ghana have a role in the appointment of the Chief Justice as it is the case in Malawi? The response from the Ghanaian MPs was negative. They intimated that the President of the Republic appoints the Chief Justice with advice from the Council of State (an advisory body with no legislative or juridical powers).
- What is the land tenure system in Ghana like? It was noted that land in Ghana is largely vested in traditional rulers (Chiefs) in trust of the people. Government has plot of land for public use and can acquire land from the chiefs for public use.

Aside of the useful and insightful information members gained with the visit to the national assembly of Ghana, one of the critical results achieved by the visit was the bonding that took place between the visiting legislatures and their Ghanaian counterparts. Exchanging information about the work of partner Parliaments and exploring pathways to strengthen the work of Parliament with the view to reduce poverty and enhance the livelihoods of citizens is one of the cardinal goals of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) project.

Another highlight of the July training workshop was the visit made to the Ridge Hospital as part of the field trip component which affords participating members of parliament and their staff the opportunity to observe how government’s pro-poor policy expressed in the national budget is being translated on the ground.

The visiting delegation which included representatives from Malawi, Ghana and Zimbabwe were received by the medical director of the Ridge Hospital, Dr. Kofi Apori. The presentation made by the officials of the hospital focused on the extent to which maternal care delivery, one of the eight goals of the MDGs, is being implemented.

As part of efforts being made by authorities to improve maternal health care delivery at the facility, the “Kybele-Ridge Model” was developed (For more information about this initiative, please refer to the links section at the end of this issue). This was a collaborative initiative between the Ridge Hospital and the Kybele Hospital in United States of America. Per the model, the hospital authorities aimed to improve on:

a) Intervention time  
b) Clinical treatments  
c) Patient monitoring  
d) Referrals from within and outside Accra, and  
e) Client responsiveness.

The hospital authorities noted that these interventions have chalked impressive results including a drop in overall fatality case from 6.1% in 2005 to 1.1% in 2009. Some of the challenges faced by the hospital were also shared with the visitors. Foremost among those was lack of space for infrastructural development, poor environmental conditions, late referrals from health centres, and poor data capture.

The introduction of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) in 2004, witnessed an upsurge in patronage of services of the hospital with the concomitant effect of pressure on the existing facilities and drop in quality of service.

It was agreed among the participants that a monitoring system has to be put in place to ensure promises made by parliamentarians especially, are delivered on. This, it was suggested, will stem the trend where parliamentarians are quick to make promises but slow to deliver, a situation the director of medical services at the ridge hospital dubbed “diarrhoea of words, and constipation of delivery”.

One significant upshot of the Ridge visit was the promise made by the Ghanaian MPs who took part in the field trip to Ridge Hospital, to invite doctors from Ridge to the parliament of the republic of Ghana to make a presentation to the women caucus in the Ghanaian parliament. This aimed to apprise them of the
Despite the time constraint that beset this training workshop, it nevertheless chalked significant results. Participants gained new knowledge about the role of members of parliament in the budget process, with particular focus on the budget scrutiny and oversight responsibilities of parliamentarians.

**III. - Anglophone Training Workshop on “Enhancing the Capacity of Parliamentary Committees and Parliamentary Staff to Assure Effective Function of Parliamentarians”**

Shortly after the August 30-31 in-country budget oversight training workshop, another training workshop was organized in Gaborone, Botswana, September 6—10, 2010. This training workshop targeted parliamentary committee staff as well as other parliamentary support staff under the theme “Enhancing the capacity of Parliamentary Committees and Parliamentary Staff to Assure Effective Function of Parliamentarians”.

Beneficiary countries were partner parliaments from Southern African countries namely Botswana, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Even though invitations were extended to the parliament of Zambia, they were unable to send representatives because of crowded parliamentary calendar. In all, 20 representatives (9 females and 11 males) from the three parliaments mentioned above participated in the workshop.

The Deputy Clerk of the Parliament of Botswana, Ms Monica A. Tselayakgosi warmly welcomed participants to the workshop. She reminded participants the vital role parliamentary staff plays in assuring effective budget oversight. This can be done, she noted, by providing world class support services that facilitate quality legislation and oversight activities. This can only be achieved when staff is adequately capacitated, and is abreast with all the latest development tools of the game. She urged participants to strive to improve efficiency at all times through collaborative partnerships and benchmarking for international best practices. And since Southern Africa is part of the global village, efforts must be made by the regional actors to adopt these international best practices to continually improve on service delivery.

She noted that this training workshop which was being delivered in partnership with the Parliamentary Centre (PC) and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) offers opportunity for learning and sharing experiences with colleagues, and is therefore timely, appropriate and a welcome development. She expressed the hope that participants will be equipped with the latest tools which they will be able to use to execute multi-tasks responsibility with efficiency and dispatch. Ultimately, these should enable participants to deliver quality results with fewer resources and be able to engage their communities through the use of the Community Score Card (CSC).

Some of the sentiments expressed by the Deputy Clerk in her opening remarks were re-echoed by the participants. Their expectations of the training workshop are shown below:

- Improved knowledge on the specific country
experiences in the budget oversight process

- Gain knowledge on the implementation of the budget, especially how parliamentary committees monitor the activities of the government
- How to best coordinate the activities of different parliamentary committees
- To have a better understanding of the committee system and new techniques used to ensure committee effectiveness
- Share country experiences of the work of the PAC and other committees
- Gain a better understanding of **Performance Auditing** and share country experiences
- Understand how the **Community Score Card (CSC)** is used to monitor service delivery in the community.

The modules designed for the five -day training chimed with some of the expectations expressed by participants as shown below:

- Understanding National Budgets
- Parliaments and the Revenue side of the budget
- Analysing Government Statements: Gender Equity issues
- Analysing Government Budget statements - how pro-poor should budget be
- HIV/AIDS and National Budget
- MDGs and National Budget
- Budget Implementation, Monitoring and Control
- Audit and Evaluation
- Parliamentary Committees
- The Role of Parliamentary Staff
- Introduction to Parliamentary Research
- Introduction to Information Management and ICT
- Effective Tools for Budget Planning and Implementation
- The Community Score Card (CSC)

Judging by the number of modules designed for this training, it was more detailed and intensive than, for example, the training programme designed for MPs and staff. The training was participatory and interactive, and participants expressed their satisfaction with the training programme. They were especially impressed with the content and delivery of the presentations. Key indicators such as relevance of the subject matter, new information gained by participants, usefulness of the issues discussed in relation to the work they do in parliament were all rated highly. For instance, out of the total of 19 participants who took part in the evaluation, 50% of them rated the relevance of the modules **very highly**, 45% rated it **high** and the remaining 5% rated it **averagely**. A similar pattern can be observed with the usefulness of the training in relation to the work they do as committee staff and researchers in parliament. Again, 60% rated it **very highly**, 35% rate it **high** and 5% rated average.

The presence of Parliamentary Centre Staff in Botswana for Parliamentary Staff training of three southern African countries generated a great deal of interest in the media as well as among academic staff from the University of Botswana. The Budget and Governance Advisor of Parliamentary Centre granted an extensive radio interview to a journalist from the state radio of Botswana. This interview provided publicity for the training activity the Parliamentary Centre conducted in Botswana as well as providing insightful information to the citizens of Botswana about the work of Parliamentary Centre in general. Additionally, a Professor from the Political and Administration Studies Department of University of Botswana, Dr. Bothlale Emmanuel invited PC staff to his faculty to make a presentation on the “Budget Process” to final year students of the faculty.

Following the presentation the University staff expressed the desire to collaborate with PC in information sharing and build more sustainable relations between the university and PC.

The training programme designed for Parliamentary staff was intended to cover eight (8) working days instead of the normal 5 days designed for “Budget Oversight” training workshops for MPs and Parliamentary staff. The 8 days in this instance, was to allow for in-depth analysis and provide ample time for group work exercises. Unfortunately, the host for this workshop, the Parliament of Botswana could only oblige five (5) working days. This posed tremendous challenge with respect to how to fit the models into a five-day training programme. This resulted in less time for group exercises and in some instances less time for presentation of some of the models.

Crucially, the community engagement (field visit) component of the training programme did not take place because the local coordinators advised against it. In their view the political environment at the time of the workshop was not conducive to undertaking citizen assessment of public services.
A crucial lesson learned from this workshop is not to locate the venue of the training workshop in the same city or town where the parliament of the host country is located. In the case of Botswana it was highly disruptive as most of the participants from Botswana showed up late at the training workshop because they had to pass through parliament each morning before coming to the training venue.

Representatives from the three southern African countries who participated in the training workshop contributed enormously to its astounding success by sharing invaluable insights and perspectives with their colleagues on a myriad of issues. These ranged from the role of parliamentary staff in the budget process to the applicability of planning and monitoring tools in project/programme management. By their active participation they gained new knowledge and acquired valuable skills, especially on how to use the community score card to engage citizens at the community level.

Participants also took the unique opportunity the training platform offered them, to share country experiences, and on a personal level bonded with colleagues, and this could lead to the prospects of creating networks among parliamentary staff of member countries.

On the whole, participants were satisfied with the content and delivery of the presentations even though it was acknowledged there is room for improvement in both content and delivery of presentations, especially improving on time management.

The few challenges experienced with regards to time constraints even though significant did not seriously undermine the quality of the presentations and group exercises conducted. In order to strengthen and sustain the training programme under the auspices of Parliamentary Centre, the following recommendations were made:

- Set up a network of parliamentary staff among member countries for regular consultations and experience sharing.
- Provide time for special training on the Community Score Card.
- Design follow-up programmes after training workshops to monitor how knowledge gained is being applied.
- Training workshops should be designed to target specific parliamentary committees.
- Establish an active line of communication between facilitators and participants to ensure constant dialogue on critical issues.
- Provide refresher training programmes for beneficiaries of this workshop, especially on monitoring and evaluation tools.
- Develop a mechanism to ascertain the impact the workshop has made on beneficiaries and how they have been able to bring about change.
- Facilitate exchange programme in order for other countries to appreciate practices.


The final training workshop that took place during the second half of 2010 was the workshop on “Financial Oversight Functions of Parliamentarians: Tools and Mechanisms for Optimum Government Budget Analysis” for Francophone countries, 25—29, 2010 in Accra, Ghana. A total of 16 representatives, 12 MPs (9 males and 3 females) and 4
parliamentary support staff, composed of 3 males and 1 female, participated in the budget oversight training workshop. The partner parliaments represented in the workshop included the Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Rwanda and Senegal.

The following modules were presented by the two facilitators, staff from the Parliamentary Centre (A former Member of Parliament from the republic of Benin) and a consultant. These formed the basis for plenary discussion and working group break outs which were engaging as they were interactive.

- Understanding National Budgets
- The Role of Parliament in the Budget Process
- Analyzing Government Budget Statements: Gender Equity Issues
- Parliament and the Revenue side of the budget
- Analyzing Government Budget Statement - how Pro-Poor should a Budget be?
- HIV/AIDS and National Budget
- MDGs and National Budget

During the week-long budget oversight training, the 16 Francophone members of parliament and their staff undertook a field visit to the head office of the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) in Accra, Ghana. The visit afforded members the opportunity to learn about the youth employment programme in Ghana.

The National Coordinator of NYEP, Mr. Abuga Pele briefed members about the programme, pointing out that the program was launched in October 2006 by the then New Patriotic Party administration which has since expanded in scope and has been enhanced qualitatively.

The NYEP seeks to provide a combination of self-employment opportunities, wage earning jobs and voluntary service activities, all in an effort to absorb beneficiaries into mainstream labour market.

He noted that under the current administration additional modules have been developed to include the following: Youth in Agriculture, Teaching Assistant, Health Assistants, Community Protection, Waste and Sanitation, ICT-mobile phone repairs, Paid Internship, Health Extension, Garment Making and Vacation Jobs.

The MPs also visited some beneficiaries of the National Youth Employment Program in one of the poorest suburb of Accra, Mamobi. The beneficiaries were mostly young girls who have been enrolled into the module on dress making. Each and every one of them, about thirty young ladies, were assigned to a sewing machine.

The MPs interacted freely with the young ladies who were excited to play “host” to the August visitors. The visit proved useful as MPs learned valuable lessons which they promised to replicate in their countries as soon as they get the opportunity.
V.– Executive Committee Meeting of the African Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network (APRN)  - December 20, 2010, Accra, Ghana

The last activity of the APRN 2010 Work-plan was the Executive Committee Meeting (ECM) which was convened in Accra on December 20th, 2010 to review and approve the work-plan and budget for the following year, but more importantly to address the sustainability of the network as the financial support provided by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADA) is slated to end in 2011.

Parliamentary Centre Officials and APRN Executive Committee Members during the meeting in Accra - December 20th, 2010

Links and Resources

4.- Kybele Founder —http://kybeleworldwide.com/about.php?sub=founder