

ACCOUNTABILITY STRENGTHENING PROGRAM

PROJECT DETAILS

Country(ies): Russia
Duration: Sept 2004 – April 2008
Budget: CAD \$ 1,373,658
Funder: Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
Partner(s): Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Accounting Chamber of the Russian Federation, Association of Accounting Chambers of Russian Federation, Select Regional Legislatures and Accounting Chambers
Status: Closed

- Increasing transparency and accountability in the use of government funds through strengthening parliamentary oversight at the federal and regional levels;
- To strengthen budgetary accountability in the Russian federation through the development of a system of state financial control;
- Reforming the internal administrative and financial management of the Russian Federal Assembly (the Duma and the Federation Council).

About the Parliamentary Centre

The Parliamentary Centre is a Canadian not-for-profit, non-partisan organization that supports parliaments around the world. Our assessment, strategic planning and training programs, combined with research products and networking channels, help legislatures measure their performance, build capacity, tackle key issues and promote mutual learning.

In short - we help legislatures better serve their people.

About the Project

The Accountability Strengthening Program (ASP) was among Canada's most successful technical assistance initiatives in the Russian Federation. The overall goal of the project was to contribute to the establishment of efficient, transparent and accountable structures of governance by:

Accomplishments

The project helped to introduce performance auditing in four Russian regions: assistance was provided in developing relevant methodology and conducting six pilot audits, the results of which were reviewed by the relevant legislative assemblies. The audits focused on government programs with significant social impact, such as support to the disabled, healthcare, children in northern areas and road construction. The results of performance auditing are attractive to parliamentarians as they focus on the economic and efficient management of public funds, as well as the effectiveness of government programs.

ASP also assisted in the development of draft legislation on state financial control proposing a clear delineation between the external and internal audit of the spending of public funds.

ASP assisted in the improvement of internal management practices in the Federal Assembly: a system of members' office budgets was introduced that allows to spend funds available for parliamentarians' work in constituency and Moscow offices in a more flexible, efficient and accountable way.

While not initially expected, it was very encouraging that Russian partners became strongly interested in approaches used in Canada to guarantee the independence of parliament from the executive branch of power. Inspired by the Canadian model, the Federation Council Commission on Internal Economy submitted a series of proposals for legislative amendments aimed at reducing the dependence of the Federal Assembly on the Government. These were the first formal steps taken aimed at strengthening parliament's independence in Russia.

Testimonials

A number of Russian parliamentarians and audit officials at the federal and regional levels repeatedly evaluated ASP as the best project for technical cooperation with another country that they have been involved in.

An independent evaluation of ASP conducted in the spring of 2007 concluded that the ASP was highly successful in contributing to the development and adoption of new approaches and policies for reforming oversight of expenditures at the national and the regional levels in the Russian Federation. It was also concluded that the project assisted Russian counterparts to develop options for making parliaments at the national and regional level independent with respect to their budgeting and personnel administration processes. The evaluation report also indicated that the project was well conceived, designed and executed, and was highly relevant to both Russian and Canadian priorities. It was also indicated that the ASP was highly successful and highly appreciated by the Russian partners in terms of the partnership approach of the Canadians and that strong local ownership of reforms addressed was in place.



From March 12-19, 2006, an ASP delegation headed by Auditor General Sheila Fraser travelled to Russia to participate in discussions at the Federation Council of a joint federal-regional audit report providing overall analysis of healthcare programs in the Russian Federation.