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# PARLIAMENT'S ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



A PARLIAMENTARY HANDBOOK











# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**1** NO POVERTY

**2** ZERO HUNGER

**3** GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

**4** QUALITY EDUCATION

**5** GENDER EQUALITY

**6** CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

**7** AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

**8** DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

**9** INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**10** REDUCED INEQUALITIES

**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

**12** RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

**13** CLIMATE ACTION

**14** LIFE BELOW WATER

**15** LIFE ON LAND

**16** PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

**17** PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

## **Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC)**

Since 2002 the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) has established a network of like-minded parliamentarians who wish to combat corruption in their country and globally. With chapters in 57 parliaments worldwide, GOPAC provides support, knowledge and the exchange of ideas among parliamentarians at the regional and global level. Additionally, in most countries the chapters provide an opportunity for parliamentarians from all political parties to collaborate and break down political walls on a key issue – corruption; an issue which has a major impact on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

[www.gopacnetwork.org](http://www.gopacnetwork.org)

## **United Nations Development Programme**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been the United Nation’s primary development agency since 1965. UNDP is also the largest implementer of parliamentary support projects in the world, working with more than 60 national parliaments. UNDP is dedicated to helping parliaments at both the national and sub-national levels to fulfill their mandate to implement the Sustainable Development Goals through the provision of technical expertise, peer-to-peer sharing of knowledge, and high quality publications and knowledge products.

[www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

## **Islamic Development Bank (IDB)**

Established in 1973, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) is an international financial institution created to support development in nations that have a significant Islamic population. Unlike other similar banks, the IDB is not regional and its membership covers countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The purpose of the IDB is to “foster the economic development and social progress of member countries and Muslim communities.”

[www.isdb.org](http://www.isdb.org)

# Acknowledgements

The Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) express their appreciation to the principal authors of this parliamentary handbook, Kevin Deveaux and Charmaine Rodrigues.

Emilie Lemieux, Project Manager, GOPAC, Olivier Pierre-Louveaux, Inclusive Political Processes Programme Specialist, UNDP and Abdihamid Mao, Senior Integrity Specialist, Islamic Development Bank, edited and produced this handbook. Final editing was undertaken on behalf of UNDP by Julia Stewart and Charles Chauvel.

The UNDP Hub for Arab States played a leading role in supporting the production of the handbook. The UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub for Asia and the Pacific, through the work of Doina Ghimici, Programme Specialist for Core Government Functions, shared relevant experiences from its region.

The handbook would not be complete without the invaluable contributions received by Dr. Gavin Woods, Chair of GOPAC's Global Task Force on Parliamentary Oversight, Akaash Maharaj, GOPAC CEO and members of GOPAC's Executive Committee: Dr. Naser Al Sane, Paula Bertol, John Hyde, Romi Gauchan Thakali, Mary King and Hon. Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu; and Patrick Keuleers, Jos De La Haye, Arkan el-Seblani, Claire Cabrol, Jason Gluck, Julia Keutgen, Biljana Ledenican, Melissa Salyk-Virk, Natalia Shafi, Nancy Fashho, Nika Saeedi, Mads Hove, Sandra Lopez, Sebastien Vauzelle and Kawtar Zerouali (UNDP) and Jean-Noé Landry (Open North).

Finally, the House of Representatives of the People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia, through Dr. Fadli Zon, Deputy Speaker and GOPAC Chair, and parliamentary staff members Herinoyo Adi Aanggoro and Endah Retnoastuti, made valued contributions, as did the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the parliamentarians and experts representing 12 countries who participated in a pilot workshop from 30 to 31 August 2016 in Jakarta, Indonesia and contributed their views and experiences.

## Foreword

Sustainable peace and development are essential to the future of the planet and humanity. This vision is laid out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), which aims to end poverty, build peaceful societies and promote prosperity and people's well-being while protecting the environment for current and future generations. Its unanimous adoption by United Nations Member States in New York in 2015 requires these states to now translate the ambitious and transformative Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national priorities and to marshal the required resources and build the necessary partnerships with civil society and the private sector for successful implementation.

Parliamentarians have an opportunity, and a constitutional responsibility, to play a significant role in supporting and monitoring SDG implementation. The Agenda 2030 Declaration acknowledges the "essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets, and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments." Members of parliament are uniquely positioned to act as an interface between the people and state institutions, and to promote and adopt people-centered policies and legislation to ensure that no one is left behind.

The successful implementation of Agenda 2030 requires an integrated approach, partnerships and participation through inclusive political processes and responsive, effective, accountable institutions. It will require global and regional exchanges of experiences between countries to identify solutions for planning, budgeting, implementing and monitoring progress toward achieving the SDGs, as well as tracking where and how funds are spent to curb corruption and assess the impact of these initiatives on the lives of people – especially women and members of marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

This handbook, produced by the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption, the United Nations Development Programme and the Islamic Development Bank, is designed to be an easy-to-use resource that can help parliamentarians and parliamentary staff members play an effective role in implementing the SDGs. It introduces Agenda 2030 and lists good practices and tools from around the world that can be adapted, as needed, depending on the national context.

The SDGs provide an opportunity for societies to engage in inclusive dialogues about our future together on the planet. Parliamentarians can play a leading role in facilitating this debate. We therefore invite parliamentarians around the globe to use this handbook as a practical tool to promote engagement on Agenda 2030.

Sincerely,



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## Executive summary

This handbook has been developed for parliamentarians as a tool to promote parliamentary engagement on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs were adopted, as an integral part of the 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', by all 193 Member States of the United Nations on 25 September 2015. Relying on lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (implemented from 2000-2015), the SDGs define global, long-term development objectives to establish more sustainable means of economic, environmental and social development in all countries. These new global goals, collectively referred to as Agenda 2030, came into force on 1 January 2016 and have a target date for achievement in 2030.

### Sustainable Development Goals

- Goal 1.** End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2.** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3.** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4.** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5.** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6.** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7.** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9.** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10.** Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11.** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12.** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts<sup>1</sup>
- Goal 14.** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15.** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

The SDGs were adopted unanimously by United Nations Member States and endorsed by the executive branch of the government of each country. If the goals are to be achieved in any given country,

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

the country's parliament must play a significant and informed role. The laws needed to create the legal framework for the SDGs will have to be scrutinized and adopted by the parliament. The annual state budget that allocates funding for SDG implementation will need to be passed by the parliament. The parliament must also monitor the implementation of the SDGs by the government to verify that it is appropriate in national and local contexts and parliamentarians must represent their constituents to promote citizen participation in the implementation of the SDGs.

The objective of this handbook is three-fold:

- further inform parliamentarians about the SDGs;
- share examples of how parliaments and parliamentarians can fulfill their roles in implementing the SDGs; and
- offer parliaments and parliamentarians a tool they can use to assess and improve their current capacity for engagement in the achievement of the SDGs.

The handbook starts with an overview of the SDGs and why they are relevant to parliamentarians, demonstrating that almost all the issues that come before a parliament for consideration concern the SDGs. The handbook shows that engagement on the SDGs will be understood as integral to the day-to-day work of a parliament, its staff members and parliamentarians.

Based on a review of the core functions of a parliament - lawmaking, oversight, and representation - the handbook discusses specific methods and tools that are being used by parliamentarians in different parts of the world to actively deliver results for the people whom they represent that support SDG implementation. Innovative approaches to these core functions are highlighted.

Finally, the handbook considers where a parliament and parliamentarians fit into broader implementation of the SDGs within the political system. Consideration is given to working with other implementing institutions, such as the state auditor and the national statistics office. Since parliament operates as part of a broader societal system, the handbook also considers how other actors, such as parliamentary staff members, civil society, political parties and the media can be engaged to better achieve the SDGs.

Each parliament and its parliamentarians understand best the political and social context under which they operate and are best able to determine what can and should be done to allow the parliament to play an active role in SDG delivery. By sharing good practices from other parliaments and discussing the application of international standards to the work of parliaments, the handbook is an opportunity to start a discussion among key actors within and outside parliament on how the institution can best fulfill its mandate.

Several innovative approaches that specific parliaments have taken to engage in oversight of government activity, including budgeting and expenditures, are presented. Some of these good practices have the potential to be 'game changers' in terms of the role of parliament in achieving domestic accountability and development. The examples note experiences with the MDGs (as prior relevant experience to the SDGs), financial oversight and early work on parliamentary engagement with the SDGs.

At the end of each section a short series of questions is presented to stimulate reflection on current parliamentary roles and capacities in relation to SDG implementation as well as to foster discussion on how parliaments can improve their ability to proactively engage in SDG implementation.

# I. Intersection of parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals

## A. Parliaments and sustainable development

As the elected representatives of their people, parliamentarians have a critical role to play in driving forward people-centred development that is reflective of and responsive to the needs of their constituents. In recent decades, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of engaging parliamentarians in efforts to advance environmentally-sensitive, inclusive growth and sustainable development. Through their constitutional mandates, for example, in making laws and overseeing government policies and programmes - including enacting and scrutinizing the government budget - and representing the views of their constituents, parliamentarians are valuable partners in ensuring the accountable, inclusive, participatory and transparent governance that is necessary to achieve sustainable development for all.

Recognizing the valuable contribution that parliamentarians can make to sustainable development is particularly critical as the world moves towards implementing the new Agenda 2030 and its supporting SDGs. The Declaration of Agenda 2030 is an inspirational document, explicitly committing to “leave no one behind” and exhorting that all development should be “people-centered.” This commitment to the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status underpins both the Goals themselves and the means for achieving them. Parliamentarians can be proactive in supporting these efforts.

In September 2015, world leaders gathered at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York to launch the ambitious new sustainable development agenda that will guide the community of nations over the next 15 years. Leaders endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supported by a new set of 17 inter-linked Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Agenda 2030 builds on progress made since the Millennium Declaration was endorsed in 2000 and seek to pick up where the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) left off, building on successes while setting out a bold new framework for sustainable development to address still unmet needs.

Agenda 2030 is ground-breaking in its vision for a more inclusive, prosperous and equal world. It seeks to address the full spectrum of development challenges facing countries and communities, cutting across three critical dimensions of sustainable development – the environmental, social and economic spheres.

The comprehensiveness of Agenda 2030 is complemented by the fact that it is expressly stated to be universally applicable. Rather than focusing only on so-called developing countries, Agenda 2030 recognizes that in an inter-linked, globalized world, all countries must be proactive in addressing the challenges of sustainable development.





Every country has a duty to implement the SDGs, and every country will be required to monitor their progress and regularly report back to the global community on their successes and challenges.

Significantly, while there were only eight MDGs, 21 targets and 48 indicators, the SDGs cover a much broader range of issues, with 17 Goals now supported by 169 targets. Progress towards achievement of these targets will be monitored through a raft of new indicators. These indicators are being developed and overseen by the global Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators, made up of national statistical offices with the United Nations Statistics Division as its Secretariat.<sup>2</sup> Building on lessons learned during the implementation of the MDGs, it is envisaged that these global indicators will be used as guidance for countries to devise their own national indicators. Each country is intended to be able to identify its own priority targets for action. It should then design nationally-appropriate indicators to enable local monitoring—including by parliaments—to assess progress against national baselines and national targets for achievement.

Agenda 2030 is designed to apply to all people, with efforts to be made to disaggregate implementation to guarantee that activities target those most in need. This emphasis on “localization” of the Goals is a critical new element of SDG implementation and, again, is based on lessons learned from the MDGs. As with the tailoring of indicators to each national situation, implementation and monitoring approaches will be customized to the national situation, and will then feed back into global monitoring systems. SDG implementation and monitoring will also be tied to national development plans and strategies to reflect the specific needs of the people in-country, taking into account demographic, geographic, social and economic factors.



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scidev.net/global/sdgs/news/un-sdg-mdg-indicators-consultation.html>.



UNDP Madagascar  
Youth raise Global Goals at Social Good Summit in Madagascar on September 2015

### **Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals: How inclusiveness and broad ownership was facilitated**

Responding to the critique from some stakeholders that the MDGs were an internationally-driven agenda, representing a “top down” approach to development, Agenda 2030 was developed through a deliberately open and inclusive process of engagement, with and between United Nations Member States, parliaments, civil society, the private sector and the public at large. While the MDGs were developed by a relatively small group of development experts, Agenda 2030 was formulated through inclusive public and stakeholder consultations designed to reflect the aspirations and needs of people around the world.

Over the course of more than three years, efforts were made to reach out to a wide range of stakeholders across the globe to access their input, ideas and opinions on priorities for action. For example, through the MyWorld ([www.myworld2015.org](http://www.myworld2015.org)) online platform, almost 10 million people around the world shared their views with the United Nations on the priorities for issues to be addressed through the SDGs. Efforts were made to systematically reflect upon what had worked during MDG implementation, what could be improved upon and what still needed to be done over the coming 15 years. The inclusivity and openness of the process was intended to build a stronger sense of ownership for Agenda 2030.

### **B. Including parliamentarians in the Agenda 2030**

Many voices, including those of parliamentarians, helped to shape Agenda 2030. Whereas parliamentarians were arguably brought into the process of MDG implementation and monitoring relatively late, this time around there was an explicit recognition from the outset that the engagement of parliamentarians – not only as lawmakers, but also as elected representatives of their people – was critical for buy-in if the SDGs are to be effectively adopted, implemented and achieved. Parliamentarians were involved in assessing gaps, opportunities and priorities for action during the formulation of the new development agenda through global, regional and national groupings. This input was fed back into the final production of Agenda 2030.

## Global parliamentary inputs into Agenda 2030

Parliamentarians around the world actively engaged in the process of developing Agenda 2030. Many parliamentarians were involved via regional groupings, through organizations such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa and the Southern African Development Community.

Globally, the Inter-Parliamentary Union supported parliamentarians to feed their ideas into official processes. As early as March 2013, the 128th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly adopted the Quito Communique, stating: “Stronger parliaments will have to play a central role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This will include ensuring that development policies and plans are drawn up through participatory and inclusive processes, and with regular progress reports submitted to parliament for review.”

Parliamentarians from 130 legislatures went on to endorse the Hanoi Declaration - The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning Words into Action at the 132nd Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in April 2015. Parliamentarians explicitly committed to a more inclusive and open implementation process going forward, stating: “[We] commit to doing our utmost to strengthen national ownership of the goals, particularly by making them known to our constituents. People must understand how the goals are relevant to their lives. As representatives of the people, we are responsible for ensuring that each and every voice is heard in the political process without discrimination and irrespective of social status.”

Subsequently, in early September 2015, the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament endorsed a declaration on “Placing democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development: Building the world the people want.” This declaration stressed the importance of ensuring that Agenda 2030 adopted a human rights-based approach to implementation and would safeguard inclusive and equal outcomes for people.

For more details see:

Quito Communique: [www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/quito-comm.htm](http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/quito-comm.htm);

Hanoi Declaration: [www.ipu.org/conf-e/132/rpt-gendebate.htm](http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/132/rpt-gendebate.htm); and

Declaration of 4th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament: [www.ipu.org/splz-e/speakers15/declaration.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/speakers15/declaration.pdf).

As countries now look forward towards implementing the SDGs, it will be essential for parliamentarians to proactively reflect upon their role in SDG implementation and monitoring. While in some countries national legislatures were closely involved in implementing the MDGs, the level of parliamentary engagement was globally quite variable. A key lesson learned from MDG implementation concerns the central role that parliamentarians can and should play in ensuring that SDG implementation reflects the diverse needs of the constituents they are elected to represent, and benefits all groups of people, especially the most disadvantaged. More than any other state officials, parliamentarians have a direct relationship to the public through their role as elected representatives. This provides an invaluable opportunity to promote domestic accountability for SDG achievement that is “people-centred,” meaningfully addresses the diverse needs of the nation’s population (whether considered by reference to geographic, social, sexual, ethnic, cultural or economic categories) and benefits all.

## C. The parliamentarian's goal: Sustainable Development Goal 16



While parliamentarians have a responsibility to support and monitor implementation of all 17 SDGs and safeguard the integrity of Agenda 2030, Goal 16, known as the 'Sustaining Peace and Good Governance Goal,' has special significance for parliamentarians. SDG 16 aims to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." Over the next 15 years, parliamentarians will have a leading role in advancing all facets of this Goal. This will be done through parliament's mandate to make laws, oversee the executive branch of government and

represent people's interests, as well more directly as one of the institutions specifically responsible for ensuring accountability and inclusion.

While the targets under Goal 16 all have relevance for parliamentarians, Targets 16.6 and 16.7 directly cover their work. Target 16.6 calls for the development of "effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels." Target 16.7 seeks "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels." To achieve these targets, parliamentarians will need to explore different ways of improving their work processes and systems. For example, by opening parliamentary committees to the public, releasing more parliamentary information, encouraging better outreach by legislators and implementing specific strategies to improve the position of women and members of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Currently, two global indicators will likely be used to monitor this target: Indicator 16.7.1: proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service and the judiciary) compared to national distributions; and Indicator 16.7.2: proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group.

### Questions for reflection

- Has a report assessing the final status of MDG implementation been produced which could be shared with parliamentarians to enable them to assess achievements, gaps and ongoing needs and priorities?
- Have any awareness-raising or information sessions been held for parliamentarians on Agenda 2030?
- Has your parliament formally endorsed the SDGs, for example, by debating and passing a motion or resolution in the plenary?
- Has your parliament initiated a discussion on how it can work to support implementation of SDG 16? Noting that parliament is an SDG 16 'custodian institution,' has parliament developed a specific plan in support of SDG 16?



## II. Parliament's role in development effectiveness and the Sustainable Development Goals

Over the past 15 years or so, governments have been encouraged to concentrate more explicitly on what has been called “development effectiveness.” Development effectiveness means ensuring that countries make the most effective use of all their resources – both the national resources provided by taxpayers, as well as Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided by development partners, more commonly referred to as “aid” – in addressing sustainable development challenges. Reflecting upon the development effectiveness agenda and its contribution to MDG implementation, Agenda 2030 specifically incorporates statements on the importance of building partnerships for impact, in recognition of the critical importance of ensuring that financing for the SDGs is made available and used most effectively.

Agenda 2030 explicitly recognizes the importance of developing processes that: *“will be voluntary and country-led, will take into account different national realities...will help to mobilize the necessary means of implementation and partnerships, support the identification of solutions and best practices and promote the coordination and effectiveness of the international development system....; will be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people and will support reporting by all relevant stakeholders; ...will be people-centered, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind.”*<sup>3</sup>

### Building partnerships for development

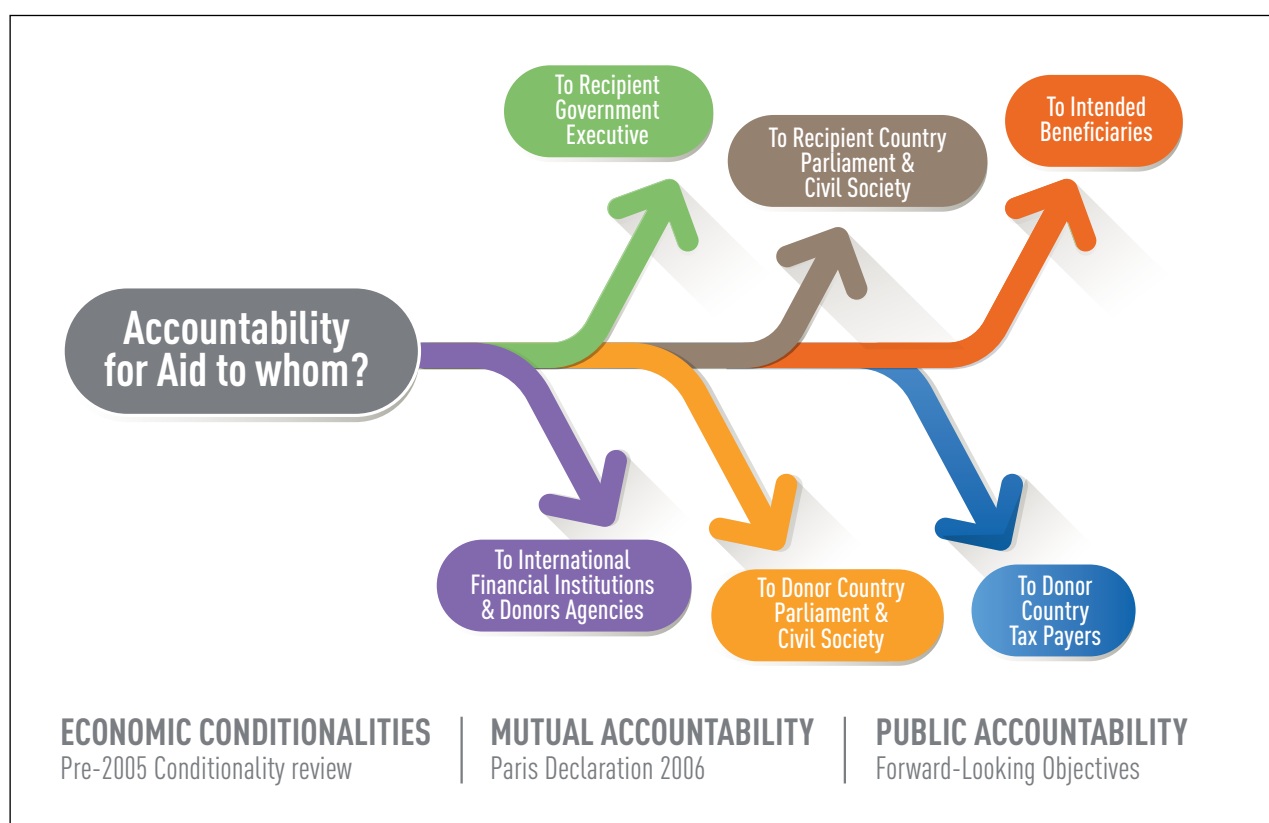
Agenda 2030 clearly recognizes that identifying processes and means of implementation will be critical to the success of the entire framework. To this end, the final SDG–Goal 17–sets out how Agenda 2030 should be advanced, prioritizing “revitalizing global partnerships for development.” Goal 17 recognizes that development is not just about ODA, but must take a broader approach to ensuring that efforts are sustainable, locally-driven and owned.

Specifically, Goal 17 identifies a range of high-level global priorities, including making progress on debt reduction for highly indebted countries, ensuring access to barrier-free trade, promoting private sector investment and enhancing global macroeconomic stability. It also highlights the importance of capacity building to empower national actors to more effectively harness international frameworks.

ODA often accounts for a significant share of expenditures by governments in developing countries, including a significant number of least developed countries and small island developing states. Rising scepticism about the effectiveness of aid in many western countries is increasing the demand for evidence about the effectiveness of such assistance. At the same time, questions are being raised in developing countries about keeping such funds “off budget,” and therefore away from the transparency, accountability and audit requirements that apply to domestic budget resources. As a key accountability institution, parliaments have a crucial role to play in promoting development effectiveness. Yet to date, ODA funding is still not always delivered through the annual state budget, making oversight of its expenditure even more challenging for parliament.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/busanpartnership.htm>.

It is important that parliamentarians are aware of all ODA provided to the executive branch of government and how best to monitor its implementation. This may require parliaments to more proactively call for budget transparency and to verify that budget laws and regulations explicitly apply to overseas as well as domestic resources. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (Ownership, Harmonization, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability), the subsequent Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) and the Busan Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Busan HLF4) are milestones in anchoring the commitments and obligations of partnership within a mutual accountability framework that recognizes that effective aid must align itself to country-led development strategies. Mutual accountability aims to place the aid relationship on a two-way contractual basis, in which donors commit to providing effective aid and recipients commit to using aid well and transparently. This governance result can only be achieved through mechanisms rooted in public accountability, as the diagram below demonstrates.<sup>4</sup>



Several agreements have been endorsed over the last decade establishing key mechanisms and protocols for greater development effectiveness. In the context of Agenda 2030, it will be useful for parliamentarians to familiarize themselves with the critical development effectiveness processes and frameworks below.

- **United Nations High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development:** The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is the United Nation’s primary forum for follow-up and review of Agenda 2030. This forum is tasked with providing political leadership, guidance and recommendations on all aspects of Agenda 2030 implementation and follow-up, including by tracking progress, encouraging the formulation of more coherent policies informed by evidence and country experiences and addressing emerging issues as they become apparent. The first annual HLPF took place in 2016 and included voluntary reviews of 22 coun-

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.agora-parl.org/resources/aoe/parliamentsandaideffectiveness>.

tries and thematic reviews of progress on the SDGs, including how effectively countries are implementing partnerships for development effectiveness. Each HLPF will also host a range of side events, including forums in which parliamentarians should be involved.

### **United Kingdom: Ensuring value for money through parliamentary oversight of overseas development assistance**

The United Kingdom, as a major provider of overseas development assistance (ODA), takes a proactive and innovative approach to promote development effectiveness, which includes a clear role for parliament in overseeing the delivery of ODA and guaranteeing value for money.

The UK Parliament has established an International Development Committee in the House of Commons, which is a select committee comprised of eleven backbench parliamentarians. The Committee has an investigative mandate. It sets its own programme and chooses subjects for inquiries. For each inquiry, a press notice is issued listing the terms of reference and inviting interested parties to send written submissions. For most inquiries, the International Development Committee also holds question and answer “oral evidence” sessions with witnesses, which are public.

In support of the International Development Committee, the UK has also established the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI). Although an agency of the executive branch, this commission is functionally independent of the government and reports directly to the International Development Committee. ICAI undertakes independent reviews of UK aid spending and its contribution to development results. When the commission produces a report, the government is required to publish a response explaining whether it accepts, and how it will respond to, the report’s recommendations. The International Development Committee’s Sub-Committee on ICAI then holds a hearing on the report and on the government’s response.

ICAI’s mandate covers all UK overseas development assistance, whichever department spends the funds. In addition to the Department for International Development, its reviews have covered ODA-spending departments such as the Department of Energy and Climate Change and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and interdepartmental funds, such as the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund and the International Climate Fund.

For more information, see: [www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/international-development-committee/role/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/international-development-committee/role/) and <http://icai.independent.gov.uk/about-us/>.

- **Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011):** The Busan Partnership is an international agreement that represents a critical shift away from a one-way donor-recipient relationship towards equal partnerships based on mutual accountabilities for guaranteeing impact from development funding. The Busan Partnership committed countries to four key principles: (i) ownership of development priorities by developing countries; (ii) a focus on results and sustainable impact; (iii) partnerships for development that recognize the diversity and complementarity of functions; and (iv) transparency, accountability and shared responsibility. The Busan Partnership led to the creation of the Global Partnership on Development Effectiveness Cooperation (GPDEC), a forum to secure accountability in the implementation of the Busan commitments at the political level. The GPDEC takes its direction from high-level forums held every two years that bring together political leaders, including parliamentarians. The first

High-Level Meeting was held in Mexico in 2014.<sup>5</sup> The meeting hosted a specific parliamentary forum that gathered parliamentarians from across the world to articulate a parliamentary perspective on the key themes of the meeting, including domestic resource mobilization and identification of ways parliamentary participation can lead to better development outcomes.

- **Addis Ababa Action Agenda’ (2015):** The Addis Ababa Action Agenda is the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development held in June 2015. Recognizing that ODA is not the only—and not even the biggest—international source of financing for development, the Addis Agenda sought to initiate a more comprehensive consideration how to most effectively mobilize the trillions of dollars estimated to be required to finance Agenda 2030. This new global framework covers financing from sources such as development cooperation, international taxation, trade and a host of regulations and institutional reform. The Addis Agenda links particularly to more effective means of SDG implementation under SDG17.
- **International Aid Transparency Initiative:** The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) ([www.aidtransparency.net](http://www.aidtransparency.net)) is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiative that seeks to improve transparency over aid, development and humanitarian resources to increase their effectiveness in tackling poverty. Its secretariat is hosted by a UNDP-led consortium. IATI brings together donor and recipient countries, civil society organizations and experts in aid information who are committed to working together to increase the transparency and openness of aid and to monitor aid flows. The IATI Standard, a format and framework for publishing data on development cooperation activities, is available for use by all organizations in development, including government donors, private sector organizations and national and international NGOs. Parliamentarians are encouraged to review data provided on the IATI portal to learn more about development funds being spent by and provided to their government, and about the sources of those funds. This information can assist parliamentarians to more effectively monitor the budget and its impact.

### Questions for reflection

- If your country is a recipient of Official Development Assistance, is ODA included in the annual budget as a form of revenue for the government?
- How does your parliament monitor the distribution and use of ODA, either as a donor or as a recipient?
- Do you have a parliamentary committee tasked with overseeing your government’s implementation of development commitments, including impact assessments of aid received or delivered?
- Does your parliament have the information and powers necessary to effectively review how effectively ODA is spent?

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see: [www.ipu.org/splz-e/mexico14.htm](http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/mexico14.htm).

<sup>6</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/frameworks/addisababaactionagenda>.



## III. Coordinating efforts for better implementation

### A. Making the Sustainable Development Goals a priority and coordinating their implementation across government branches

The relationship between the parliament and the executive branches of government is complex. To start, in many countries, a constitutional division separates the authority and responsibilities of these two branches, as well as the judiciary, the third branch of government. While the executive branch is responsible for enforcing and implementing laws and budgets, it is the role of the parliament to pass laws and review fiscal plans. In addition, the parliament is responsible for overseeing the work of the executive branch and ensuring accountability for its actions.

Political differences may exist about the best means of achieving a country's long-term development. But it is highly desirable to strive for a consensus across the political spectrum concerning the broad goals and objectives for the development of a nation, even beyond the 2030 deadline set for the SDGs.

A country's commitment to implementation of the SDGs is made by the executive branch and all reporting relating to progress is officially done by this branch. However, this should not mean that the parliament is excluded from the process. From the start of SDG implementation, parliament should be engaged in all aspects of planning for implementation. This is not only for political expediency, but to foster deep ownership of the SDGs by the parliament and parliamentarians. When laws are adopted or amended and budgets need to be adjusted, parliament should be able to debate the changes with full awareness of the context.

The way that a government will coordinate SDG implementation across all of its areas of activity will depend on a range of factors, including the political system of the particular country. However, specific good practices can be identified from past experiences of some countries, as described below.

- **National development task force or steering committee:** Some form of taskforce or steering committee may be established by the government to oversee and guide SDG implementation. While such a body is usually set up by the executive branch, good practice is to provide for inclusive membership, not only by including representatives of parliament (both from the government and the opposition), but also from the private sector and civil society. If parliament is represented on such a committee, it is important to establish a formal report-back mechanism from its representatives, ideally via an appropriately-mandated committee to the plenary.
- **National development plan formulation:** A national development plan is a multi-year, strategic roadmap setting out how a country aims to achieve sustainable human development. The national development plan outlines key priorities and indicators for measuring success. National development plans need to be specifically reviewed and aligned with the SDGs to create a single national blueprint for development that incorporates global SDG commitments and localizes them to address national and sub-national priorities. Parliament should be engaged in the formulation of the national development plan (or any other form of SDG implementation plan): it should be tabled in - and discussed and approved by - parliament prior to implementation.

## Indonesia: Supporting inclusive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through a joint secretariat

Indonesia is fully embracing the need to implement the global development goals. Starting with the MDGs, and now applying it to the SDGs, the government is working to put in place an inclusive process for delivering on the goals. This will include the establishment of a Joint Secretariat under a Presidential Decree that consists of senior officials from the executive branch, national civil society organizations, private sector, academia and extended invitations including the parliament. The mandate of the Secretariat will be to formulate and implement development goals at a strategic level. It also is a key venue for addressing any political or organizational roadblocks impeding the achievement of the goals.

- **National development plan implementation:** After its adoption of a national development plan, the executive branch should regularly report back to parliament, normally on a yearly basis, on progress achieved and challenges faced with the plan's implementation. The parliament's rules of procedure should allow the government's report to be referred to an appropriately-mandated parliamentary committee for detailed consideration, including hearing submissions from the public on its contents, and a report back to the plenary allowing the committee's report to be tabled and publicly debated there. At the global level, countries may also voluntarily produce periodic progress reports that will be considered by the United Nations High Level Political Forum. These reports should also be tabled in parliament and discussed.
- **Coordinating with lead ministries:** In some countries, national development plan oversight is led by one ministry, for example, the planning, finance or development ministries. The parliament's rules of procedure should provide for a regular (ideally annual) review by an appropriately-mandated committee of the performance of such ministries, with a report back to the plenary for tabling and public debate. Such a mechanism ensures that parliamentarians and the public are aware of development implementation issues and challenges.

### Questions for reflection

- Is parliament engaged in the preparation of the national development plan or some other form of SDG implementation plan through, for example, a multi-stakeholder steering group?
- Are parliamentarians, including from the opposition, engaged in the implementation and oversight of the national development plan, either through participation in some form of cross-sectoral taskforce or through parliamentary processes, such as the parliamentary committee system?
- Does the national development plan require tabling and debate in parliament before it can be implemented?
- Is the executive branch reporting regularly to the parliament on implementation of the national development plan, including SDG implementation?

## B. Working with other oversight institutions

Parliament's role as a key institution for oversight of the implementation of laws and expenditures by the government will be discussed in detail later in this handbook. However, it is important to note that other oversight institutions exist that also have a role in monitoring the work of the government. Some of these institutions may report to the executive branch, while others report directly to parliament. No matter the specific details of their mandate and reporting structure, coordinating efforts with these institutions is vital to ensuring effective oversight of SDG implementation.

Below is a list of typical government oversight institutions.

- **Supreme audit institution:** The supreme audit institution refers to the agency of government that conducts and publishes detailed financial and performance audits of the component agencies of the government. In some countries, this agency is known as the Auditor-General, while in others it may be called the Court of Accounts (or the *Cour de Comptes*). Whatever its name, the role played by the institution in monitoring government expenditures is critical, and its detailed analysis benefits parliament as it goes about its work. Usually such bodies are required to table their reports annually to parliament and a committee is then tasked with undertaking a more in-depth review of the findings and reporting back to the plenary to facilitate the report's debate. This process can be used to look more closely at whether and how government expenditures have been used to make progress on national development plan (including SDG) implementation.

### Brazil: Promoting cooperation between parliament and the state auditor

Article 72 of the Constitution of Brazil provides that the Federal Audit Court and the Joint Budget Committee of Congress have a joint mandate to investigate irregularities in the annual state budget and its implementation. The Joint Committee has the authority to request testimony and documents from ministries and agencies of the government. If not forthcoming, the Federal Audit Court must render an opinion within 30 days on whether or not the request from the Joint Committee is appropriate. If the Court agrees with the Committee, the ministry or agency must comply with the request of the Committee to submit to its investigation.

See: Constitution of Brazil at <http://english.tse.jus.br/arquivos/federal-constitution>

- **National human rights institution:** Most countries have an independent body that promotes – and monitors and investigates violations of – human rights. Given that numerous SDGs relate to equality and the promotion of people's rights and of the needs of marginalized groups, the parliament should take a particular interest in the work of this agency. National human rights institutions are often required to report annually to parliament, which provides an opportunity for parliament to dig deeper – usually via an appropriately-mandated parliamentary committee – into their findings and examine whether and how a right-based approach to development (including SDG implementation) is being taken.
- **National anti-corruption commission:** In some countries, one agency is responsible for all aspects of anti-corruption—civic education, investigation, prosecution—while in other countries a number of organizations may have mandates for these various components. Either way, the parliament, particularly oversight committees, such as Public Accounts, Budget and Finance or Government Assurances Committees, will exercise scrutiny over the work of the agency or agencies concerned. In some parliaments, such as Hong Kong and New South Wales, specific anti-corruption committees monitor the work of independent anti-corruption agencies.

- **Other oversight agencies:** Various other agencies exist that conduct oversight activities, such as an Environmental Commissioner, Ombudsman, Advisory Council on the Status of Women and Director of Public Prosecutions.

### Tunisia: Independent constitutional body on sustainable development

The 2014 Constitution of the Republic of Tunisia provided for the establishment of several independent constitutional bodies, including the Commission for Sustainable Development and the Rights of Future Generations. Members are appointed by the Assembly of the Representatives of the People (lower house of parliament) with the following mandate, provided by Article 129 of the Constitution:

*The Commission for Sustainable Development and the Rights of Future Generations shall be consulted on draft laws related to economic, social and environmental issues, as well as development plans. The Commission may give its opinion on issues falling within its areas of responsibility.*

*The Commission shall be composed of members with competence and integrity, who undertake their tasks for a single six-year term.*

See: Constitution of the Republic of Tunisia at <http://tunisia-tn.com/constitution-of-the-republic-of-tunisia/constitution-of-tunisia-independent-constitutional-bodies-2/>.

Parliament should encourage, where appropriate, the sharing of evidence and analysis conducted by one oversight institution with the other. It may also encourage the sharing of technical expertise, such as the secondment or testimony of experts employed by the oversight agencies to a committee of the parliament. The key is to recognize that each institution has its strengths and weaknesses and to encourage cooperation in a manner that maximizes each body's capacity and avoids duplication of function and resources.

### Questions for reflection

- What are the independent oversight institutions in your country?
- What are the oversight committees in your parliament?
- Is there a clear and well-functioning relationship between your parliament and your country's oversight institutions?
- What barriers prevent such a relationship and how can they be minimized or eliminated?

## C. Working with national statistics bodies

In many countries, one government agency or ministry is responsible for the collection, interpretation and publication of key statistics, such as unemployment rates, annual birth and death rates, cost of living and health indicators. For purposes of this handbook these will be known as the National Statistics Office. A National Statistics Office is critical in the implementation of the SDGs, for it is the central collector of data that will determine if, when and to what extent, indicators and benchmarks for each SDG have been achieved. Some National Statistics Offices have been tasked with the development of global indicators for the various SDGs through the Expert Group on SDG Indicators.

### Mongolia: National Statistics Office and the development goals

In Mongolia, the National Statistics Office has taken the lead in defining indicators for the SDGs. The National Statistics Office has been tasked by the government to:

- design methodologies for the national SDG indicators in conjunction with related institutions;
- compile national level statistics using data from the National Statistics Office and those from relevant institutions; and
- submit national baseline indicators.

The National Statistics Office then works as part of a team of ministries, including the Ministry of Finance, to monitor the implementation of the Goals.

Source: [http://www.unsiap.or.jp/programmes/ms\\_materials/ms12/T3\\_2\\_MNG\\_The%20case%20of%20SDGs%20%5bCompatibility%20Mode%5d.pdf](http://www.unsiap.or.jp/programmes/ms_materials/ms12/T3_2_MNG_The%20case%20of%20SDGs%20%5bCompatibility%20Mode%5d.pdf)

The collection of data related to progress in SDG implementation and the national development plan should be clearly assigned to the National Statistics Office. Parliament should, through its oversight function, verify that the necessary data is collected, processed and shared and that the National Statistics Office has the resources and capacity to do so. Once collected and shared, the data will provide evidence that can be used by parliament in its oversight of SDG implementation. For instance, if malaria deaths have not decreased, parliamentarians may want to push for more funding for malaria prevention. If the percentage of girls attending secondary school has not increased, the parliament should consider what needs to be done to ensure the rate does increase, such as new legislation, better enforcement or more funding.

### Questions for reflection

- Is there a National Statistics Office in your country?
- Does your parliament have a mechanism – such as a regular review by an appropriately-mandated committee – to confirm that the National Statistics Office has sufficient resources to do its job, and that its technical work is free from political interference?
- Does your parliament have access to data collected by the National Statistics Office?
- How should parliament best use the data it gets from the National Statistics Office?

## D. Working with international and regional bodies

It is important for parliaments and parliamentarians to know that they are not alone in their efforts to monitor SDG implementation to achieve key development objectives. Many regional and global organizations work to promote the achievement of one or more of the SDGs. Some of these groups may already be engaged with your parliament; if not, they can be engaged to support the work of parliamentarians and parliament to build capacity and support your efforts to be a full and active partner in the implementation of the SDGs in your country.



Regional Workshop on Parliaments and SDGs, 30 to 31 August 2016, Jakarta, Indonesia.

Below are six broad categories of organizations that support parliaments in building capacity and with which parliaments can work to better perform their core functions in relation to the SDGs.

- **Inter-parliamentary assemblies and networks of parliaments:** As an institution, your parliament is likely a member of a regional or global network of similar institutions (e.g., Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Arab Parliament, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, Pan African Parliament, Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum, Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas, ParlAmericas). These groups meet regularly to debate issues of common interest, and conduct workshops and provide handbooks and other materials to educate parliamentarians and staff members on key development issues and the role of parliament regarding them.
- **Networks of parliamentarians:** Networks of individual parliamentarians exist that work through national, cross-party chapters and on regional and global levels to promote key development issues, such as climate change (GLOBE International), renewable energy (Climate Parliament) and anti-corruption (GOPAC). These organizations do not rely on institutional endorsement for their work, but build international links between individual parliamentarians to build a consensus for change.
- **Multilateral organizations:** Organizations that are often affiliated with the United Nations and have a mandate to support the work of parliaments (such as UNDP, which is the world's largest



implementer of parliamentary strengthening programmes) or have a specific thematic mandate (like UN Women, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and the United Nations Population Fund). This group would also include the World Bank and regional and thematic development banks (for example, the Islamic Development Bank). These organizations will have long-term plans for support to the development of a country that can include support for the capacity of the parliament. Such support brings with it world-class expertise and knowledge.

- **United Nations human rights bodies:** Agenda 2030 seeks to realize the human rights of all. Parliamentarians' role in overseeing SDG implementation is mutually reinforcing with their role to promote and protect human rights, including by domestication of international treaties and conventions and by ensuring compliance with international human rights concepts in law and in practice. Participating in reporting to human rights treaty bodies and to the Universal Periodic Review provides a good way for parliamentarians to engage<sup>7</sup>.
- **International NGOs:** Some international NGOs have a specific mandate to work with parliaments to build their capacity, for example, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the International Republican Institute, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and some national political foundations and multi-party democracy institutes. Others have a sectoral mandate that includes work with parliaments to achieve their goals, such as Transparency International which is anti-corruption focused, and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative that concentrates on promoting transparency in - and better oversight over - extractive industries.
- **Development partners:** Some countries provide funding to parliaments through bilateral projects in capacity building and infrastructure. These include the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). Other countries, such as Kuwait, administer sovereign wealth funds that are used to support specific projects with parliaments.

## Questions for reflection

- Have discussions on SDG implementation been initiated in the parliamentary assemblies, associations and networks affiliated with your parliament?
- What multi-lateral and bilateral projects are supporting the work of your parliament?
- Should the efforts of these networks and projects be focused more specifically on the SDGs?
- How do parliamentarians in your country contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights? For example, do they engage in your country's reporting to the Universal Periodic Review and human rights treaty bodies?

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Human Rights Council 26/29, Contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review.

## IV. Lawmaking: Strengthening the enabling environment for the Sustainable Development Goals

### KEY FUNCTIONS OF PARLIAMENTS

#### LAWMAKING

This is the process by which a parliament considers draft legislation and ultimately approves its final form. Almost all parliaments have a role to play in reviewing draft laws before they are adopted, including the ability to recommend amendments to draft laws. Some parliaments are more active in the development of draft laws prior to debate in the chamber. Others rely almost exclusively on the government to develop, draft and introduce laws for debate. Special rules often apply to the legislation containing the annual state budget – commonly considered one of the most significant laws considered by a parliament.

Implementation of the SDGs will require countries to use a wide range of policy and programme approaches. While legislation is rarely the complete policy response necessary to tackle a problem, it is often a critical first step in ensuring an enabling environment conducive to action. Additionally, recognizing that the annual state budget is also enacted as a law of parliament, the lawmaking function of parliaments takes on additional critical importance in terms of ensuring that funds are effectively directed towards addressing the most important national SDG priorities.

#### A. Identifying law reform priorities

Many SDG targets will require law reform to enable their achievement. One lesson learned from MDG implementation is the need for a systematic approach to enable parliamentarians to undertake comprehensive law reform to provide for the implementation of national development priorities.

#### Tunisia: Constitutional and legal protection of the environment

A national constitution offers the strongest legal protection possible for a right and is one of the most critical acts of lawmaking that a country will ever undertake. Although constitutional reform is not an everyday aspect of the work of parliamentarians, in many legal systems, constitutional amendments are enacted by parliamentarians and can be a useful tool for entrenching development priorities in the basic law of the country.

For example, in January 2014, in Tunisia, lawmakers adopted a new constitution in the wake of the 2011 revolution and embedded strong provisions in support of the environment and addressing climate change, to safeguard that these critical issues were integrated into the priorities of every subsequent government.

The new constitution made Tunisia the first Arab country—and only the third country in the world—to include an explicit constitutional commitment to the preservation of the environment and a safe climate. This provision was included in the new constitution following considerable lobbying by a group of parliamentarians – with support from an NGO called Climate Parliament, working in partnership with UNDP – who were committed to actively lobby for law and policy reform in support of environmental issues. The new climate clause obliges the state to guarantee “a sound climate and the right to a sound and balanced environment” and to “provide the necessary means to eliminate environmental pollution.”

Subsequently, the same group of parliamentarians lobbied the government for a new renewable energy law. This law was eventually drafted by the Ministry of Energy, and sets national targets for renewables as well as establishing an Energy Transition Fund to help finance renewable projects through the redistribution of fossil fuel subsidies. After helping to draft the new law, the group of parliamentarians led the campaign to steer it through parliament; the law was adopted in April 2015.

At the outset of SDG implementation, consideration could be given to undertaking an SDG Law Reform Needs Assessment, which could be used to review all SDGs and their targets. This should be done to: (i) identify which targets require new laws or amendments; (ii) prioritize those law reform needs and amendments; and (iii) create a medium to long-term legislative reform agenda to guide on the drafting and enactment of laws. This could also be useful in promoting better coordination of law reform in support of the SDGs. For example, gender equality is covered specifically in SDG 5, but also cuts across the implementation of every other SDG. As such, it will be useful to assess the entire range of existing laws at the same time to identify which issues could be covered by the same law reform package, rather than tackling each SDG separately, and then enacting separate amendments and laws.

Another example is SDG 16, Target 16.5, which calls on countries to “substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms,” with the United Nations Convention Against Corruption providing a guiding framework for implementing this target. That said, tackling corruption and promoting public accountability underpins the achievement of the entire Agenda 2030. Significantly, a key element of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and the broader effort to tackle corruption is ensuring legislative reform to enable more effective prevention, investigation and prosecution of corruption. Reviewing all corruption-related legislative gaps together could be very useful in ensuring that reforms to address bribery and corruption tackle all aspects of these issues in one comprehensive legislative package.

Promoting public accountability and tackling corruption underpins all of the SDGs, which are clearly focused on ensuring accountable delivery of services and development outcomes to the public. That said, SDG 16 specifically calls for more accountable governance: Target 16.5 aims to “substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms”; Target 16.6 aims to “develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”; and Target 16.10 aims to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.” Clearly, legislators will have a critical role in ensuring that the enabling environment effectively addresses corrupt behavior.

## B. Drafting Sustainable Development Goal-related legislation

Every legislature has different procedures for drafting, submitting and enacting laws. However, in general, parliamentarians may be called upon to engage on three types of draft laws (described below), all of which can be effective vehicles for promoting SDG-related law reform.

- **Government-sponsored draft laws:** In most parliamentary systems, it is the government that will be responsible for drafting a proposed law before it is sent to the parliament for consideration. As the government moves forward with implementing its localized SDG plan, ensuring a coordinated programme of SDG-related legislative reform will be critical. To this end, parliamentarians can be proactive in pushing the government to take action on drafting a law. Many mechanisms exist, such as Question Time, interpellations, written questions to ministers and

proposing a resolution or a non-binding motion which can draw attention to issues of public interest. Committee inquiries can also be useful, and can have the added benefit of integrating public consultations on the issues and enabling parliamentarians to provide concrete recommendations to the government on issues requiring law reform and how they should be handled.

- **Draft laws submitted by parliamentarians:** In many presidential systems with a separation of powers, and in parliamentary systems that are semi-presidential, members of a congress or parliament may frequently draft and introduce proposed laws. Depending on the rules of procedure, it may be difficult to get such draft laws listed for consideration. However, they can still be a useful way of putting pressure on the government to take legislative action to address SDG issues, enabling parliamentarians to call attention to particular development-related issues.
- **Citizen-initiated legislative initiatives:** In some cases, citizens and/or civil society groups themselves may take the initiative to draft legislation, which they may then ask individual parliamentarians to take up and submit for consideration by parliament (see section VII below).<sup>8</sup> Although rarer, in some systems, it may even be possible for citizens to call for their own “citizen’s referendum” on an issue; if successful, such referenda can be used to enact or change laws.

### Lebanon and Morocco: Legislating for a stronger anti-corruption legal framework

The Lebanese Parliament has been active in spearheading a push to enact a stronger national anti-corruption framework that aligns with the United Nations Convention against Corruption. In 2012, the parliament set up a sub-committee on anti-corruption tasked with working on specific bills relating to corruption. The sub-committee worked in partnership with Lebanese Parliamentarians against Corruption and with support from UNDP. The sub-committees worked on four draft laws. The first was an amendment to the laws addressing illicit enrichment and asset declaration, developed by the sub-committee working in collaboration with a multi-stakeholder working group made up of representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Administrative Justice, Interior and Finance, the Central Bank and other critical regulatory bodies, as well as UNDP. The sub-committee has also worked closely with the National Network for the Right of Access to Information, a multi-stakeholder advocacy group chaired by a Lebanese parliamentarian, to draft laws on whistleblower protection, the Right to Access to Information and setting up an Anti-Corruption Agency.

In Morocco, the country launched a new national anti-corruption strategy in 2015 and the parliament is now working to put forward critical pieces of legislation to strengthen the enabling environment for tackling corruption. A new whistle-blower protection law, Freedom of Information Law and a Conflict of Interest Law are all in the legislative pipeline and will give parliamentarians an opportunity to make progress on SDG 16.5 by passing strong accountability laws and monitoring their enforcement.

See: [www.transparency-lebanon.org/En/WhatWeDoDetails/5/12/0](http://www.transparency-lebanon.org/En/WhatWeDoDetails/5/12/0).

<sup>8</sup> See the Finland Citizen Initiative: <https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/lakiensaaminen/kansalaisaloite/Pages/default.aspx>.



**UNDP Tunisia**  
Debates of the Tunisian Constitution, 20th January 2014. Photo: Olivier Pierre-Louveaux.

Ideally, proposed draft laws dealing with development-related issues will explicitly identify whether and how they support Agenda 2030 and specific SDGs and their targets. This could be included in the explanatory memorandum to the draft law and in the speech introducing the draft law. Currently, however, this is not common practice. To address this, parliaments themselves may wish to commission an SDG Impact Analysis from their own parliamentary secretariats to identify how the proposed draft law impacts on SDG achievement. Alternatively, the rules of procedure can be amended to require the sponsor of the law to produce such an analysis when the draft law is introduced. Some countries already undertake socio-economic, environmental, and gender impact assessments of draft laws. Lessons learned indicate that such a process can be systematized through the adoption of a simple checklist, which can then be applied by the parliamentary secretariat to each draft law produced for consideration. Parliamentarians can then use this information to identify areas for amendment.

### Questions for reflection

- Do parliamentarians have sufficient legal and procedural avenues and legislative capacities to initiate, consider and amend legislation to support the SDGs?
- Has the government or parliament undertaken (or do they plan to undertake) a review of the law reforms required to implement the SDGs which can inform parliament's legislative agenda over the coming months and years?
- Does the explanatory memorandum attached to each draft law require an explanation of whether and how the draft law contributes to SDG achievement?
- Do the rules of procedure of parliament require that parliamentary committees consider all draft laws to assess their contribution to SDG achievement? Does this occur in practice?



# V. Budgeting for Sustainable Development Goal implementation

## KEY FUNCTIONS OF PARLIAMENTS

### BUDGETING

Budget oversight is the process by which the parliament attempts to ensure, throughout the national budget cycle, that the government spends money lawfully and appropriately. It may do this by providing recommendations for the budget formulation; by reviewing, debating and approving the State budget; by overseeing its implementation; and by auditing the government's accounts, revenues and expenditures

If the SDGs are to be implemented effectively, it will be critical that their implementation is properly funded and that financing is targeted to ensure efforts reach the most marginalized and vulnerable. Different forms of funding will pay for SDG implementation. This includes private sector funds, funding from charities, ODA, foreign direct investment and revenue generated by the state, such as tax and customs revenue. Parliamentarians should be aware of these forms of funding and form a view as to whether the various sources of revenue are being well-coordinated to avoid duplication and overlap.

The annual state budget law is the primary funding instrument that every single country will need to use to direct resources towards SDG implementation. As such, it is essential that the mix of lawmaking and scrutiny that comprises parliamentary budget processes is designed and implemented to most effectively enable parliamentarians to engage in the process of budget formulation and endorsement. The overarching question to consider is whether budget processes make sure the budget really delivers outcomes within the SDG framework, keeping in mind the overarching goal of ensuring that efforts are "people-centered" and that no-one – especially from marginalized and vulnerable groups – is left behind.

## BUDGET CYCLE APPROACH

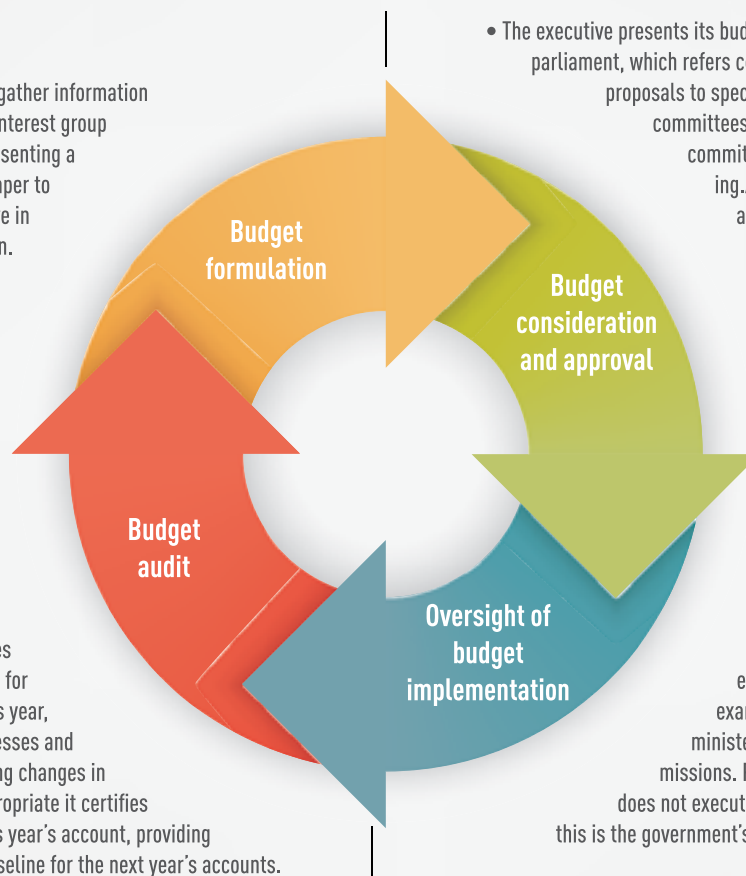


- Parliaments may gather information and public and interest group opinion, presenting a recommendation paper to assist the executive in budget formulation.

- The executive presents its budget proposal to parliament, which refers consideration of the proposals to specialist legislative committees, with the finance committee often coordinating. After consideration and possible amendment the budget is presented to the plenary for approval.

- Parliament, in conjunction with a Supreme Audit institution, audits government revenues and expenditures for the previous year, identifying weaknesses and recommending changes in practice. If appropriate it certifies the previous year's account, providing a baseline for the next year's accounts.

- Parliament and its standing committees will monitor budget execution, including for example questions to ministers and observation missions. Parliament itself does not execute the budget, this is the government's job.





## A. Annual state budget

The national budget approval process should be an ongoing annual cycle involving the executive branch and legislature in estimating expenditures and revenues, applying available funds to priority programmes and monitoring implementation and expenditure. As the Budget Cycle graphic above shows, although the executive branch is formally responsible for developing the budget, parliamentarians can nonetheless play a role in advocating for budget priorities in advance of (and sometimes even during) the budget preparation process. In some countries, they can even use their lawmaking and oversight powers to propose formal amendments to the budget once it has been tabled in the parliament.

Most parliaments have some form of dedicated budget estimates or committee review processes which are intended to facilitate review of the proposed budget. This includes holding public hearings with government officials to drill down into the details of budget proposals and better understand what the budget seeks to deliver. In some countries, civil society may also be involved in this process, participating in hearings to provide feedback on the effectiveness of government programme delivery and/or lessons learned regarding expenditure leakage or failure to reach beneficiaries. Informally, parliamentarians can draw on civil society budget analysis or engage more directly with their own constituents to identify which government programmes worked and which failed to deliver benefits to those in need.

Additionally, following up with concerned government agencies and ministries on the recommendations of state audit reports can usefully inform the contribution of parliamentarians throughout the budget cycle. In some parliaments, this is done systematically via committee processes, under the leadership of the public accounts committee and with the participation of sectoral committees.

### **Bangladesh: Budgeting in support of renewable energy**

In Bangladesh, nearly 72 percent of the population lives in rural areas and more than two thirds of households have no access to electricity. The Bangladesh Government has committed to provide electricity for all by 2020, but currently most of Bangladesh's power supply is sourced from natural gas and fuel imports, and much of the country's new energy capacity is planned using coal power plants. However, Bangladesh has made huge strides in creating a long-term plan for funding renewable energy. In June 2014, the Bangladesh Government announced two key budgetary provisions for the advancement of renewable energy in the country: (i) a budgetary allocation of Taka 15 million (US\$ 190,000) to fund a new Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA); and (ii) the establishment of a Renewable Energy Fund of Taka 400 million (\$51.65 million).

These concrete budget outcomes in support of SDG 7 (renewable energy) were the result of a long campaign by parliamentarians. In September 2012, parliamentarians from different political parties formed a local Climate Parliament Group, with support from the Climate Parliament NGO in partnership with UNDP. These parliamentarians agreed on a set of priorities, including to lobby for scaling up contributions of renewable energy for electricity production and to create a policy, financial and technology enabling environment to encourage the use of renewables.

In November 2012, the local Climate Parliament Group of MPs played a significant role in the passage of the SREDA Act, a ground-breaking initiative that established the new SREDA as the national focal point for the promotion and development of sustainable energy.

In November 2013, the local Climate Parliament Group of MPs began their budget advocacy in earnest. Parliamentarians met with and submitted a multi-party memorandum to key ministers calling for adequate budgetary and others support for SREDA and the establishment of a clean energy fund. This advocacy continued for the next six months in the lead up to the budget, with Climate Parliament Group MPs meeting repeatedly with the Ministers of Power and Finance. Through their sustained advocacy, including well-timed interventions during the budget preparation processes, the Climate Parliament Group of MPs secured the outcomes described in the first paragraph, above.

See: "Climate Parliament MPs Successful in Creating a Special Fund and SREDA for Renewables," Press Release, Blitz Comprehensive Tabloid Weekly, [www.weeklyblitz.net/2014/06/bangladesh-climate-parliament-mps-successful-creating-special-fund-sre-da-renewables/](http://www.weeklyblitz.net/2014/06/bangladesh-climate-parliament-mps-successful-creating-special-fund-sre-da-renewables/).

Notably, however, the legislation and rules that guide the budget process usually limit the ability of parliaments to make major changes to the proposed budget. In many countries, parliament's failure to pass the budget law as proposed can lead to the government falling. In others, parliament can reduce a proposed budget allocation through an amendment to the budget draft law, but cannot vote to increase expenditure. In yet other countries, parliament has more room to move funds across budget lines, without exceeding the overall budget ceiling; but even this is usually guided by strict rules concerning amendment.

Beyond parliamentary involvement in the recurring processes of budget preparation and approval, parliamentarians can also support—via advocacy and the creation of an enabling legislative environment—budget reforms that better facilitate SDG delivery. SDG implementation requires whole-of-government approaches. As such, parliamentarians can support innovative ways for the budget to enable various forms of cross-government work.

Detailed financial analysis and costings provided in support of a national budget vary across jurisdictions. In some countries, only quite minimal information is provided to explain the impact of proposed budget measures. At the outset of Agenda 2030 and SDG implementation, consideration could be given to reviewing the current budget documentation provided to parliament to assess its adequacy in terms of providing guidance on how the budget is designed to progress SDG achievement. Parliamentarians, especially parliamentary budget and committee members, may then wish to consider proactively working with the ministries of finance to agree on an SDG-friendly format for budget documentation.

### **Rwanda: Promoting parliamentary oversight of ODA**

In Rwanda, over the last decade parliament has instituted changes to the budget process to ensure that more meaningful budget information is provided when the government submits its draft finance law to parliament. The finance law now provides an integrated view on spending organized by delivery programmes, rather than by government institution.

Since 2008, the Rwandan Parliament has also demanded that more contextual information be provided with the budget, specifically on the ways in which the budget affects men and women differently, although this information is only included in supplementary documentation. The government has also compiled a consolidated list of national accounts that included all aid that has reached the government sector in 2007, whether administered by government, donors or third parties; this exposed under-reporting of aid on budget, as well as discrepancies with aid databases. The exercise enabled the government to look more closely at the integration of aid in the budget cycle, for all types of aid to the government sector, whether it was administered through government systems or not.

Source: Balch, J. and Heim, K. (undated). The Poverty of Parliamentary Oversight of ODA, pp. 12-13, [http://paperroom.ipsa.org/papers/paper\\_2894.pdf](http://paperroom.ipsa.org/papers/paper_2894.pdf).

It is also important that the budget documents include not only domestic revenue collected but contributions made through ODA and international loans. In some countries receiving ODA, this money is kept 'off-budget,' or in a separate 'development budget.' However, it is critical that ODA is integrated into the national budget so that parliamentarians can properly assess the total budget being allocated towards national development priorities and scrutinize proper accountability of the entire budget, including ODA. Otherwise, there is a risk that ODA in some sectors will lead to unsustainable budgets, while other sectors remain under-funded. Additionally, it is more difficult to validate public accountability for ODA expenditures if they are not included in the budget.

The role of partner country parliaments in improving the effectiveness of aid flows was clearly stated in the 2005 Paris Declaration, which explicitly recommends that: (i) partner countries commit to strengthen the role of their parliaments in development strategies and budgets; and (ii) donor countries commit to providing timely, transparent and comprehensive information to enable partner country executive branches to provide comprehensive budget reports to their citizens and legislatures. Despite this, efforts to bring ODA into the official budget have been variable, though some good examples of budget oversight of ODA exist.

### Questions for reflection

- Does the budget submitted to parliament for review and enactment attach an adequate explanation of how budget measures seek to progress SDG achievement? If not, what information could be added to provide a better picture for parliamentarians?
- Do the rules of procedure require the committees responsible for assessing the proposed budget to: (i) assess whether and how the proposed budget contributes to SDG achievement; and (ii) provide recommendations on strengthening the budget in order to more effectively contribute to SDG achievement?
- Do the rules of procedure or other conventions or practice require the government to consider the advice and recommendations of parliamentary committees and to provide an explanation to parliament for their response to such recommendations? Are there any processes available to require a response from the government to the parliament's budget advice and recommendations?

## B. Overseeing Sustainable Development Goal budgets and expenditures

One of the most critical roles for parliamentarians in supporting effective SDG implementation is to confirm that the funding allocated for SDG achievement is effectively and accountably spent in a manner that produces sustainable and impactful results. This dovetails with the development effectiveness agenda (as discussed in section II) in that the overall objective is to ensure that both domestic money and international funds are spent in the most effective way possible. Development effectiveness looks at issues of both value-for-money and actual results for people, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable.<sup>9</sup>

In most parliaments, budget oversight is undertaken by specialized parliamentary committees mandated with reviewing the government's expenditures at the end of the budget cycle. Although these committees play a critical role as part of the domestic accountability framework in any country, they are commonly under-resourced, with both limited funds to carry out hearings and field monitoring activities, as well as limited staff member capacities to assist them with their analysis and reporting.

In some countries, attempts have been made to set up some form of independent Parliamentary Budget Office, or at least a budget unit within the parliamentary secretariat, to enable higher quality support for this vital task. Such units should be staffed with budget and finance specialists that can provide expert economic and financial advice and analysis to parliamentarians.

### Morocco and Jordan: Supporting parliamentary budget analysis

In the Arab Region, several good practices come to mind of parliamentarians accessing support from dedicated budget units.

In Morocco, the Budget Analysis Bureau supports both houses of Morocco's parliament. The Bureau has expanded the legislature's role in evaluating and executing the national budget by producing budget analysis papers which enable parliamentarians to better understand the budget and provide more effective analysis. The Bureau reports to the House's decision-making body, where all political groups are represented, and the budget committee. The Bureau is mandated to analyse the national budget and evaluate its execution, assess the executive branch's policy of public debt management, analyse the financial impact of legislation and undertake research about parliament's inclusion in the budget process. The inclusion of parliament in the budget cycle was recently extended from 70 days to six months. The Bureau responds to requests from parliamentarians and is a reference for those drafting legislation, including amendments to the national budget. Both budget committees in the bicameral parliament use Budget Analysis Bureau products.

In Jordan, the Parliamentary Budget Office reports primarily to the Finance and Economic Committee. Its work includes budget analysis reports and lists of questions for each segment of the budget (used by the Finance and Economic Committee). The Parliamentary Budget Office also provides reports analysing the performance of government based on budget data that are used by all interested parliamentarians. Other committees have not yet made full use of the Parliamentary Budget Office. Day to day activities include analysing economic news, developing macroeconomic indicators, training parliamentary staff members, answering parliamentarians' inquiries and preparing reports about the government's fiscal and monetary performance.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.awepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Safeguarding-the-Interests-of-the-People-Parliamentarians-and-Aid-Effectiveness.pdf>.

Source: These examples are taken from the McGill and World Bank online course on parliamentary development, Unit 5: Examples of Independent Budgetary Units, found at <http://parliamentarystrengthening.org/EAP/PBO/Unit%205.pdf>.

When the parliament is unable to source these skills from within its own staff members, consideration can be given to seconding staff members from other accountability institutions. For example, in some countries, the national audit office will second staff members to support the parliamentary public accounts committee during their annual hearings. Such arrangements can be particularly useful in small jurisdictions where such expertise is difficult to source. Consideration can also be given to drawing on civil society to provide such analysis or to contracting economic expertise from academic institutions.

In the context of SDG budget monitoring specifically, one of the key challenges that parliaments will face is the need for disaggregated data to assess the impact of spending in terms of achieving the overarching goals of the SDGs, namely to be “people-centered,” and to particularly target efforts towards the needs of the marginalized and excluded. Notably, as discussed earlier, localizing the SDGs will also be critical to success, and is necessary to ensure that funds and programmes are properly targeted to those most in need. In this regard, parliamentarians have a critical role to play in helping collect data on the needs of their own constituencies to feed back into larger national development planning and budgeting processes. Facilitating two-way feedback loops will be essential in helping to gather information directly from people.

This could be particularly valuable in many countries where budget data is poorly collected and produced. At the outset of the Agenda 2030 and SDG implementation, parliamentarians, especially parliamentary public accounts or budget and finance committee members, may wish to consider proactively working with ministries of finance and the national statistics office to identify gaps in current data collection and reporting and to work on improving how information is collected, disaggregated and provided to parliament. Parliamentarians can also work to access information about their home constituencies and the special needs they may have which need to be reflected in budget allocations and expenditures. Such proactive data collection could have flow on benefits for overall SDG reports, which will be required both to track progress against national SDG plans and to feed into global monitoring systems.

One of the most challenging parts of budget oversight is tracking where the money was spent and what impact it had on people’s lives, for good or for bad. While audit institutions can assist with assessing whether funding was spent in accordance with laws and regulations, performance audits are less common, though parliaments may want to consider providing these powers to their state audit institution through law reform. Information and communication technologies are increasingly being used to assist with budget oversight and accountability, including in support of parliamentary oversight. By collecting and publishing finance and expenditure data, new technological tools are now allowing data to be more easily disaggregated (e.g., by sex, demographics, geography) and interrogated by parliamentarians and others interested in assessing where funds actually went.

## **Serbia: Utilizing innovative budget monitoring tools to track Sustainable Development Goal expenditures and impacts**

In Serbia the National Assembly is working with GOPAC Serbia and UNDP to create a budget and expenditures portal that will enable better monitoring of public budget expenditures. The portal draws on good practice from the Brazilian Parliament's SIGA Portal, one of the best public information budget systems, which allows easy access to government databases on public plans and budgets through a single online query tool. The Serbian National Assembly's Committee on Finance, State Budget and Control of Public Spending worked in close cooperation with the Ministry of Finance Treasury Administration to agree to a memorandum of understanding and protocols around sharing of data.

In addition to collecting raw data from the Treasury Administration, the Serbian Portal will cross-reference data provided by the Treasury Administration with the State Audit Institution, Public Procurement Office and Public Debt Agency by integrating their databases. Combining public budget expenditures, audit findings and public procurement data is a global innovation in budget oversight. Until the portal was introduced, no systematic mechanism for the Serbian National Assembly to scrutinize public expenditures existed. The new portal allows for review and analyses which should generate savings, as well improve public service delivery by identifying waste and mismanagement. A pilot version of the portal started running on 1 December 2015. In the first phase the portal will be tested by the Committee on Finance, while in the next two phases it will be opened to all members of parliament and the public.

For more information see: [www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/presscenter/articles/2015/12/07/portal-for-monitoring-public-finance-a-paradigm-shift-in-parliamentary-oversight-in-serbia.html](http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/presscenter/articles/2015/12/07/portal-for-monitoring-public-finance-a-paradigm-shift-in-parliamentary-oversight-in-serbia.html).

### **Questions for reflection**

- Do public accounts or budget committees have the human and financial resources to undertake their own budget impact assessments (e.g, through site monitoring visits to assess implementation of SDG-related programmes)?
- Do the rules of procedure enable public accounts or budget committees to effectively interrogate government officials to properly assess: (i) the effectiveness of government expenditures on SDG-related issues; and (ii) accountability for funds spent?
- Do the rules of procedure guarantee an effective response from government to the reports and recommendations produced by public accounts and budget oversight committees?
- What resources can parliamentarians draw upon to help them analyse budget expenditures and assess their impact? Are there any think tanks / academic institutions / civil society organizations that could assist with such analysis?



## VI. Monitoring implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

### KEY FUNCTIONS OF PARLIAMENTS

#### OVERSIGHT

Oversight is the process by which the parliament monitors the quality of the work of the government regarding implementation of the law, development plans and budgets that have previously been adopted by the parliament. Various methods of oversight will be discussed in detail later in this handbook, but these include committee inquiries, question time and interpellations.

One of the most important duties of parliamentarians—whether as members of the government, opposition or non-aligned—is overseeing the executive branch to ensure accountability for the efficient and effective delivery of expenditures, laws and programmes to the population. To this end, parliaments are usually given strong powers of inquiry, interrogation and oversight. Agenda 2030 recognizes explicitly that ensuring accountability during SDG implementation is of critical importance to guarantee that the Agenda is effective in delivering results for people. In this regard, parliaments play a critical role as one of the most powerful domestic accountability mechanisms in a country. Parliaments establish the accountability-enabling environment through the enactment of laws, but they also have direct responsibilities for ensuring accountability through their own oversight efforts.

#### A. Committee oversight of Sustainable Development Goal implementation

Committee oversight is one of the strongest mechanisms available to parliaments to engage in SDG implementation. Committee oversight gives parliamentarians an opportunity to assess in more depth whether policies, laws and programmes are effectively implemented in support of the SDGs and, if not, to make recommendations on how to improve implementation. Parliamentary committees usually have powers to demand information and documents from government bodies, to interrogate government officials and to hold hearings and examinations (including through field visits) to inform their understanding of how the government is discharging its duties towards the population. Committees give parliamentarians the opportunity to undertake detailed examinations of critical issues, by allocating more time to individual issues and engaging a wide cross-section of stakeholders in their deliberations. In this regard, parliamentarians can play an essential role as a link between the State and the people, including the most marginalized and vulnerable. Ideally, committees consider public engagement a core part of their functions. When committees proactively engage in monitoring and oversight they can be one of the strongest domestic accountability mechanisms available to make sure that SDG implementation stays on track.

Considerable debate has taken place regarding how best to use the committee system to effectively oversee implementation, first of the MDGs and now of the SDGs. Early in MDG implementation, there was much enthusiasm for the idea of establishing a single dedicated parliamentary MDG committee with the overall responsibility for overseeing MDG implementation. Because the MDGs affected so many aspects of everyday life, and because the SDGs are even broader in their application, a concern with the single committee approach is that it may lead to a duplication of work between it and the parliament's ordinary committees.

## Fiji and India: Implementing gender equality through gender-sensitive parliamentary mechanisms

In Fiji, the Standing Orders of the Parliament have mainstreamed gender equality in the work of parliamentary committees, recognizing that all standing committees have a role to play in ensuring gender issues are considered. Standing Order 110(1) lists the authority of each committee to review draft laws, conduct oversight inquiries and other key functions. Standing Order 110(2) then states: “Where a committee conducts an activity listed in clause (1), the committee shall ensure that full consideration will be given to the principle of gender equality so as to ensure all matters are considered with regard to the impact and benefit on both men and women equally.” This clause has already led to a change in how parliamentary committees in Fiji operate. In 2015, the Natural Resources Committee conducted hearings and produced a report on the creation of a new park. To be in compliance with Standing Order 110(2), and so that the voices of women were being heard, the Committee invited several civil society organizations that work with women to make presentations on the topic and to provide their views on the impact of the park’s development on affected women.

In India, the Committee on the Empowerment of Women is a dedicated parliamentary committee with broad authority, including to: (1) consider reports from the National Commission for Women and report on measures that should be taken by the government to improve the status of women; (2) examine measures taken by the government to secure women’s equality in all matters; (3) examine measures taken by the government for education and representation of women in legislative bodies and other fields; and (4) examine any other matters referred by the Presiding Officer of either House or of their own volition. In 2015/16, the Committee considered issues such as: women in detention and access to justice; women’s health care; corporate social responsibility towards women; implementation of laws to protect women from domestic violence; sexual harassment of women at workplaces and in educational institutions; insurance schemes for women; empowerment of tribal women; and the condition of women workers in the informal sector. All of these inquiries were undertaken in partnership with other committees with applicable terms of reference.

For more information on the Fiji example, see: Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Gender Sensitive Parliaments: A global review of good practice*, 2011, [www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf) and Standing Orders of the Parliament of Fiji, [www.parliament.gov.fj/getattachment/Parliament-Business/Rules-of-the-House/SO-210316.pdf.aspx](http://www.parliament.gov.fj/getattachment/Parliament-Business/Rules-of-the-House/SO-210316.pdf.aspx).

For more information on the India example, see: [http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/intro/committee\\_on\\_empowerment.htm](http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/intro/committee_on_empowerment.htm) and [http://164.100.47.192/Loksabha/Committee/CommitteeInformation.aspx?comm\\_code=8&tab=2](http://164.100.47.192/Loksabha/Committee/CommitteeInformation.aspx?comm_code=8&tab=2).

Many committees will already be engaged in activities that contribute to SDG oversight, as their sectoral mandates likely cover one or more of the SDGs. To ensure more holistic SDG oversight, however, consideration should be given to reviewing the breadth of the mandate of, and the practical aspects of oversight undertaken by, all existing committees. For example, most parliamentary health sector committees will already be considering some issues covered by SDG3, which concerns good health and well-being. But often, the work of such committees may be focused on issues of immediate constituent concern, such as medical practitioner fees, or waiting times for operations, and not so much on other matters within the ambit of the goal, such as health promotion, disease prevention, and national health improvement strategies. Similarly, a parliamentary education sector committee will almost certainly be already covering some aspects of SDG4, which concerns quality education. But the emphasis of oversight may be on education sector salaries or class sizes, rather than longer-term strategies to eliminate gender disparities in educational outcomes. Focus and scope need to be addressed. If parliament decides to mainstream oversight of SDG achievement through existing committees, the SDG targets for which each committee is to be responsible should also be clear from the relevant terms of reference.

If a parliament is committed to establishing a specific SDG Committee to act as a focal point and to take the lead in ensuring SDG monitoring and oversight, consideration could be given to mandating an existing committee. For example, if the parliament already has a Social Affairs Committee or Poverty Reduction Committee with a broad mandate to consider sustainable development or poverty alleviation issues, this committee might also be well-placed to act as an effective SDG focal point within parliament.

Such a committee could also help coordinate efforts by other committees to consider SDG-related issues and could have a role in reviewing any national SDG reports produced by the government. Alternatively, because the SDGs have a global element, the Foreign Affairs Committee may be tasked with this focal point role.

In Romania, the Foreign Policy Committee has established a Subcommittee for Sustainable Development which has begun a series of consultations with relevant governmental institutions, academics and representatives of civil society, with a view to establishing a roadmap for revising the National Strategy for Sustainable Development in line with the new SDGs.

Whatever decision is made, ideally, some sort of cost-benefit analysis and/or position paper should be commissioned to consider the various options before parliament decides how it would like to set itself up to engage with SDG oversight. Below are some advantages of using dedicated versus sectoral SDG committees in parliaments.

### Using existing subject committees

- Committees are usually already well-established and will have funding and staff members.
- Subject expertise will already exist within the Committee membership and staff members.
- There will be no need to change the rules of procedure to create a new Committee (though the rules could still be reviewed to more explicitly reference SDG oversight in the terms of reference of each committee) and therefore parliament can immediately begin work on SDG issues.
- It gives more time to undertake in-depth scrutiny of legislation and to provide oversight in relation to each SDG and target (compared to a single SDG Committee which would be required to consider all SDG-related laws and policies).

### Creating a new SDG committee

- The launch of a new SDG committee provides an opportunity for parliament to make a clear public statement about the importance that parliament attaches to the SDGs.
- The committee could act as a central SDG focal point within parliament, both for the government to work with and for civil society and the public to direct their advocacy efforts.
- A single committee may make tracking of SDG-related legislation easier (though the breadth of SDG issues means that virtually all laws will now have some relevance to the SDGs and should be considered in cooperation with the relevant sectoral committee).

Of course, it is perfectly possible to adopt both approaches: review and revise the mandate of existing committees to better fit with Agenda 2030 and create an overall SDG committee to review progress and coordination generally, or re-purpose an existing committee with the latter task.

## Questions for reflection

- Has your parliament undertaken a review of existing parliamentary committee rules of procedure and mandates to make sure that the SDGs are part of each committee's purview and to assess whether and how the committees can be strengthened to support SDG implementation and oversight?
- If your parliament is considering setting up a dedicated SDG parliamentary committee, has:
  - a cost-benefit analysis been undertaken, in particular to assess the extra staff members and funding resources that would be needed to support such a committee?
  - the idea been considered to re-task another committee to operate as an SDG focal point committee?
- Do sectoral committees have the legal authority and resources (human and financial) to undertake their own SDG impact assessments of proposed laws and programmes (including, where required, through onsite monitoring to assess implementation of SDG-related programmes)? If not, what are the gaps in capacities and what can be done to address them?
- Do the rules of procedure enable sectoral committees to effectively interview and engage government officials to properly assess whether and how their policies and programmes have contributed to SDG achievement?
- Do the rules of procedure require an effective response from the government to the reports and recommendations produced by committees? If not, how can they be improved to mandate government responses?

## B. Parliamentary inquiries

One of the strongest powers that most parliaments wield is the ability to initiate an inquiry into any matter of public interest. Although rules of procedure may require different processes to be followed to initiate such inquiries, these are a valuable tool that parliamentarians can use to draw attention to SDG issues of importance. An inquiry can be conducted through an existing committee. For example, the terms of reference of some committees enable them to initiate hearings into "any matter related to the mandate of the committee." Alternatively, parliament may pass a resolution in plenary

tasking an existing committee to undertake a specific inquiry into an issue. If there is no committee with subject matter jurisdiction, or when an inquiry may require more dedicated resources, a parliament may also choose to establish an ad hoc or special committee with a specific, singular mandate to undertake an inquiry and then disband upon completion of its work.



UNDP India  
India elections 2014. Photo:Prashanth Vishwanathan.

Parliamentary inquiries can be critical policy and monitoring mechanisms in support of the SDGs. They allow parliamentarians to call witnesses, ask for and examine government documents, organize public hearings and debate in greater depth the issues related to addressing a policy problem.

Importantly, the process of engaging the public is of particular benefit—most parliaments allow for written, oral and online public submissions, as well as for experts and others with specialized knowledge to appear in person and present oral evidence. At the end of an inquiry, the committee will produce a report, which represents a critical opportunity for parliamentarians to present the government and the public with policy, legal and programme recommendations for action. Such reports can be very useful in countries with divided politics to peacefully present different responses to the same policy challenges, with majority and minority views enabling parliamentarians of different political persuasions to still have an opportunity to share their ideas and insights.

### **Australia and the United Kingdom: Combatting out human trafficking**

It is a tragic reality that human trafficking, particularly of women and children, remains a pernicious problem. The SDGs specifically call for governments to act to combatting trafficking. Target 5.2 calls for the elimination of “all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.” Target 16.2 aims to “end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.” To address this cross-jurisdictional, multi-faceted challenge, ensuring that legislative frameworks and other supportive mechanisms are adequate is a crucial step.

In Australia, the Federal Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement initiated an inquiry into human trafficking in December 2015. The inquiry looked at issues of culture, law enforcement, transnational crime, migration and technology, as well as identified practical measures to address these challenges. Twenty-one submissions were made to the inquiry, predominantly from civil society organizations and women’s networks working on the issues.

In the United Kingdom, the parliamentary Home Affairs Committee initiated an inquiry into human trafficking in 2008 and reported in 2009. This is a useful example of how parliamentary action can precipitate executive action. In 2013, following up on the recommendations from that initial inquiry, the government tabled a Modern Slavery Bill. In March 2014, the parliamentary Joint Committee on the draft Modern Slavery Bill then held additional targeted public hearings on the issue. This committee had a narrower remit to consider whether the draft law would be effective in protecting the victims of slavery and trafficking and would indeed secure convictions of the perpetrators. Significantly, the draft law passed in 2015 and in 2016 and a motion was lodged in the House of Commons commending the inclusion of specific targets in the SDGs related to human trafficking.

#### **Sources**

Australia: [www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Law\\_Enforcement/Human\\_trafficking](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Law_Enforcement/Human_trafficking); [www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-archive/home-affairs-committee/hacpn080118no21/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-archive/home-affairs-committee/hacpn080118no21/); and [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/cmhaff.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/cmhaff.htm).

United Kingdom: [www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/draft-modern-slavery-bill/news/-evidence-session-draft-modern-slavery-bill-1/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/draft-modern-slavery-bill/news/-evidence-session-draft-modern-slavery-bill-1/) and [www.parliament.uk/edm/2015-16/1255](http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2015-16/1255).

## Questions for reflection

- Do the rules of procedure enable your parliament to conduct inquiries that can be used to examine SDG-related issues?
- Do the rules of procedure enable inquiries to effectively interrogate elected and appointed government officials to properly assess the effectiveness of government action on SDG-related issues?
- When inquiries are established, are sufficient human and financial resources available to committees to effectively discharge their mandates (e.g., funding to organize public hearings and staff member skills to undertake research, provide expert advice and produce quality committee reports)?

### C. Written and oral questions and interpellations

One of the simplest but most effective parliamentary methods for demanding accountability from the government is through mechanisms that enable parliamentarians to directly interrogate government ministers regarding matters falling within their portfolios. These mechanisms differ depending on the form of the legislature, but their aim is the same: to ask questions of ministers, written and oral (Question Time), and to demand a public response.

- **Written and oral questions:** This is a process used in parliamentary systems, whereby a certain portion of sitting time is dedicated to questioning ministers. Questions can be posed by government-aligned or non-government members. In a parliamentary system, these Ministers often already sit in the house as members. Follow up questions by other members may be provided for. Often, the requirement to answer oral questions is reinforced by a system where members of parliament may ask ministers questions in writing, and where minister's answers are published as part of the parliamentary record.
- **Interpellations:** Interpellations are used in systems with a strong separation of powers where ministers do not ordinarily sit in the House and must therefore be summoned to the parliament to answer questions from members. Accordingly, interpellations need to be submitted with notice to give a minister sufficient time to arrange to attend the parliament. In some parliaments, an interpellation can be linked to a motion of non-confidence in the minister or the government.

#### Sri Lanka: Putting parliamentary pressure on the government to act on SDG issues

In Sri Lanka, Question Time is used as an opportunity for parliamentarians to ask ministers about the progress of implementation on specific SDG issues. Sri Lanka's parliamentary website represents global good practice as it serves as a mechanism for enabling parliamentarians to publicly demonstrate their commitment to proactively overseeing SDG implementation and enables people themselves to access information from the government on what is being done (and not done).



Parliamentarians from other countries might find the parliament of Sri Lanka's website useful as a source of possible lines of questioning that they could consider asking in their own country. For example, in 2014 a parliamentarian used Question Time to ask the Minister for Finance and Planning for information on district poverty lines. The question was posed to the Minister as follows:

- Is he aware that the Department of Census and Statistics published the District Poverty Line every month based on the minimum expenditure per person per month to fulfil the basic needs?
- Will he inform the House of:
  - (i) the latest available official Poverty Line for Colombo District; and
  - (ii) the basic needs that are included in calculating the aforesaid poverty line?
- If not, why not?

See: [www.parliament.lk/en/business-of-parliament/parliamentary-questions](http://www.parliament.lk/en/business-of-parliament/parliamentary-questions).

Regardless of which form of questioning is used, these interrogatory mechanisms can be extremely useful ways for an individual parliamentarian to raise an SDG issue of public interest in the House and to demand an answer from the government on what it is doing in response. Questions can examine SDG planning and implementation processes broadly (e.g., What is the status of the preparation of the national SDG plan? When will it be tabled in parliament?), or can be much more specific and inquire about implementation of a specific SDG or target (e.g., What is the government doing to address issues of inequality in accordance with SDG 10?). They can even question specific activities in relation to a target (e.g., What is the government doing to strengthen the delivery of services by the vocational education institution in XX province in accordance with SDG 4, Target 4.4?).

### Questions for reflection

- Do your parliament's rules of procedure allow questions, written or oral, and interpellations to be used in practice to meaningfully hold government ministers to account? If not, what are the weaknesses of the current system and how can they be addressed?
- Do non-government members of parliament get sufficient time and opportunity to use questions, written or oral, and interpellations effectively? If not, what can be done to improve existing practice?
- Are interpellations and their responses, and questions and answers from questions, written or oral, broadcast and published on the parliamentary website? Are written questions and answers provided for, and are these required to be published? If not, how can information from these procedures be more effectively shared with the public?

## VII. Representation: Engaging people and facilitating public participation

### KEY FUNCTIONS OF PARLIAMENTS

#### REPRESENTATION

In fulfilling the functions of lawmaking and oversight, a parliament represents those that elected them to parliament. For a parliament to maintain legitimacy, it is critical that accountability to voters should take place systematically throughout the parliamentary term, rather than just at election time. It is important that the people should have ample opportunities to provide feedback on the work of the parliament and of individual parliamentarians.

The legitimacy of a parliament and its members comes from the fact that they are elected to represent the people of a country (or state or province). The members sit in an assembly to make decisions on behalf of all people. This means that the institution and its individual members must conceive of and maintain active means of engaging the public to routinely ascertain their interests, opinions and concerns. To failing to do this can result in a threat to the legitimacy of the institution and can result in accountability difficulties at the next election for the members.

Beyond the constitutional basis for parliaments to be representative, practical and legal rationales exist for effective public engagement. The SDGs specifically call for more inclusive government institutions (including parliaments) through SDG 16 and call for political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status. Therefore, countries that are committed to implementing the SDGs are implicitly committed to building more inclusive and effective parliaments over the coming years.

Parliamentarians cannot be experts in all topics that they will be called upon to consider. Yet, they have a responsibility to those who work and live under the laws that they pass and the budgets they approve to make sure that people are widely consulted on processes that affect them. Greater constituent input can create higher quality laws and budgets and is more likely to garner public acceptance and satisfaction. This does not mean that parliamentarians must agree with every constituent's concern, but it does mean they are better equipped to perform their role when they have heard from a broad cross-section of the public and then use what they have learned from consultations to prepare for the votes they cast and the interventions they make in parliament.

The benefits of public dialogue on the work of the parliament applies equally to SDG implementation. It is critical that the legal frameworks established and the funding allocated to achieve the various SDGs should be based on the insights and the perspectives of people who will be affected by, and who will benefit from, such changes. The SDGs need to be understood by people as a set of objectives that can make their lives and their communities better.

We have discussed specific technical aspects of the work of a parliamentarian as a legislator—working in parliament to achieve policy reforms in the national interest. However, the reality for most members of parliament is that they are constantly being asked to respond to the needs and concerns of people. A parliamentarian will receive numerous text messages, telephone calls and personal requests for assistance on any given day. Responding to these requests can be a full-time job in and of itself.

The challenge for many parliamentarians is to initiate and maintain a dialogue with citizens that is policy oriented. The objective is to seek the input of constituents on an ongoing basis at both local

and national levels, to gain insight from their experiences and to ensure that the laws passed and the monitoring conducted by parliament reflects such interests and concerns.

### South Africa: Public participation framework

Section 59 of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) states that the National Assembly must “facilitate public involvement in the legislative and other processes of the Assembly and its committees.” To put those words into action, a 2013 Public Participation Framework recognized a hierarchy of public engagement based on the four levels listed below.

Level 1: Inform citizens of the work of the parliament and government.

Level 2: Consult the public and seek their input.

Level 3: Involve the public through the establishment of a dialogue.

Level 4: Collaborate with the public by creating opportunities for partnership.

Despite these constitutional provisions, recent academic studies have noted the use of courts to enforce the provision when governments and legislatures have been remiss and when inclusivity has been lacking in the public participation process.

Sources: [http://www.parliament.gov.za/live/content.php?Item\\_ID=304](http://www.parliament.gov.za/live/content.php?Item_ID=304) and [http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/JSS/JSS-39-0-000-14-Web/JSS-39-3-14-Abst-PDF/JSS-39-3-275-14-1620-Mubangizi-B-C/JSS-39-3-275-14-1620-Mubangizi-B-C-Tx\[4\].pdf](http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/JSS/JSS-39-0-000-14-Web/JSS-39-3-14-Abst-PDF/JSS-39-3-275-14-1620-Mubangizi-B-C/JSS-39-3-275-14-1620-Mubangizi-B-C-Tx[4].pdf)

Below are some different means by which a parliamentarian and a parliament can build a public dialogue with people.

**Local public forums:** Either within a constituency or a local community, a parliamentarian can organize public forums, either formal or informal, in which people have an opportunity to provide feedback on a specific issue (e.g., a draft law under consideration; the state of education in the community) or a more general discussion to solicit a range of concerns.

**Public consultations:** As noted in Section VI above, parliamentary committees should be engaging civil society and the public as they consider draft laws and conduct inquiries. Such consultations can range from the informal (such as public forums and reporting sessions) to the more formal (e.g., public hearings); and from the technical (e.g., surveys) to the simple (e.g., requests for submissions via SMS). Consultation can also come in the form of virtual engagement, including online feedback, surveys and social media.



UNAMA  
Third Dai Kundi Annual Reporting Conference in Afghanistan on January 2012. Photo: Aurora Verceles Alambra

## Ghana: Connecting citizens to parliament and its application to the SDGs

In 2015, the Committee on Government Assurances of the Parliament of Ghana, with support from external partners, launched a web portal that allows citizens to provide feedback on its ongoing work and to raise concerns about government activities in their communities. Through offline and online tools, citizens have actively embraced the new format and it has resulted in a committee whose work is more effective and more efficient. Such a 'game changer' allows committees to directly connect with local concerns and guarantee that those voices are being heard during deliberations.

Source: Ekow Essabra-Mensah, "Connecting Citizens to Parliament initiative records massive success," B&FT Online, 24 May 2016, <http://thebftonline.com/business/economy/19095/connecting-citizens-to-parliament-initiative-records-massive-success-.html>.

**Party consultations:** Most members are also representatives of a particular political party. Parties usually have a branch structure. Through such branches or through party-organized consultations, a parliamentarian can gain insight into the perspectives of their supporters.

**Civil society partnerships:** Depending on the subject or issue that is before the parliament for decision, more than likely a local or national civil society organization exists that is advocating or working in the field. By partnering with one or more of these organizations, the parliament (or individual parliamentarians) can expand their reach and ensure that voices that might not otherwise be heard are given the chance to provide input to their work.

**Social media and new technology:** Broader access to mobile telephones and the internet by people has opened opportunities for parliaments and parliamentarians to engage them in a dialogue on the work of parliament and to seek their feedback and ideas on an ongoing basis.

**Surveys:** With advances in technology, the cost of conducting a survey has been drastically reduced. Parliaments and parliamentarians are increasingly using online tools to gather feedback from public prior to deliberations on a draft law or as part of an oversight inquiry.

**One-on-one and small group meetings:** Individual parliamentarians can arrange to meet with people who have concerns or issues they wish to raise on a one-on-one or small group basis.

### A. Promoting participatory lawmaking

Participatory lawmaking is the process by which a parliament, parliamentary group, committee or individual member of parliament actively engages the public in the consideration and review of draft laws that are before the House for consideration.

Normally, a draft law within a parliament goes through many stages of review. These include several "readings" or debates within plenary sessions of the House. It is in the committee stage—before the parliament has developed and considered potential amendments to the draft law—that the public has a substantial opportunity to engage with parliament and to provide input in a timely manner.

The most common means of public engagement is through a public hearing. In a public hearing, a committee holds a formal meeting to which interested people, stakeholders, subject experts and civil society are invited to provide oral and/or written submissions on specific aspects or the entire

content of a draft law. These hearings usually include an opportunity for members of the committee to ask questions of presenters and for replies by presenters.

But beyond public hearings, it has been found that a parliamentary committee can be more effective if it leaves the precincts of the parliament and conducts hearings in different regions to give more groups and people the opportunity to provide input into draft laws. Of course, this requires resources and staff member commitment to organize such visits, but when this can be done, the committee may hear from a wider range of stakeholders than usual and can see firsthand how a draft law will impact those closer to the ground. Virtual meetings, enabled by technology, can also allow for wider remote participation.

### **Georgia: Agriculture committee engages farmers to improve cooperatives**

Having developed a multi-year action plan to improve its capacity (with support from UNDP), the Agriculture Committee of the Parliament of Georgia started to conduct field visits and public hearings outside of Parliament in 2014. By engaging local farmers and those involved in the agriculture industry, the Committee heard many suggestions for how it could address issues and concerns that were seemingly ignored by the government. At least 200 farmers attended each hearing held throughout the country. Many farmers raised concerns about cooperatives, a key form of agricultural development in Georgia. Based on the feedback received, the Committee initiated and adopted amendments to the Law on Cooperatives, to the benefit of the farmers.

Mid-term Review of the UNDP project Strengthening the System of Parliamentary Democracy in Georgia (January 2016).

In addition, a committee or parliament can be proactive in providing information to public regarding its work in reviewing draft laws. This can include the publication (e.g., via newspaper or online) of draft laws, scheduling meetings to review draft laws and calling for submissions from various individuals and groups.

### **Questions for reflection**

- Does your parliament publish draft laws to encourage public input, for example, by uploading draft laws on the parliament website or advertising their content in the media?
- Do your rules of procedure allow civil society and the public to make submissions on draft laws, whether in writing or in-person?
- How does your parliament advance the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups at risk of being excluded (based on sex, age, disability status, and membership of a particular population group) from engaging with parliament and what measures are in place to ensure their voices are heard by parliament and parliamentarians?
- As a matter of good practice, do parliamentarians engage with and consult public on the content of draft laws before they are considered in parliament?
- Does your parliamentary secretariat maintain a list of contacts for civil society organizations, academics and technical experts who can be asked to provide their views on SDG-related law reform issues when those issues come up in parliament or its committees?

## B. Facilitating participatory budgeting

Parliament can and should be engaging public in the drawing up of the annual state budget. Even though the drafting and presentation of the budget is traditionally a purview of the executive branch, the parliament in some countries does engage the public throughout the budget cycle, including in pre-budget consultations to hear people's perspectives prior to receiving the budget from the Minister of Finance. Such pre-budget consultations can be conducted through a budget or finance committee that will be the primary or main committee to review the draft budget prior to adoption by the House. But, it could also include broader consultations from all sectoral committees.

Given new technology, opportunities exist to engage people in "real time" as the budget is debated in the parliament. To date these tools have primarily been applied to local government budgets (see box below), but there is no reason such tools cannot be adapted to a national parliament to allow citizens to provide feedback on various aspects of a budget and how it impacts them.

### Ukraine: Citizen budgeting

Since 2014, Open North, along with partners the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and Social Boost, has been working with the city of Kiev's Smart City Office to provide new means of gathering citizen input into the preparation and adoption of the annual city budget. A custom-made internet portal was built that allows residents of Kiev to see drafts of the annual budget and gives them the opportunity to provide detailed feedback on specific line items and budget headings and sub-headings. This input is aggregated and provided to local elected officials as they make decisions on budget allocations.

The portal was open for only two months prior to adoption of the annual budget, and was viewed by over 8,000 individuals, with over 1,000 comments submitted.

Though currently used only by local government, the tool could be adapted for use by parliamentary committees when they consider sectoral budgets. For example, a committee could upload the draft annual state budget under consideration and seek input from citizens and relevant civil society organizations prior to the committee's detailed deliberations and before making official recommendations.

Finally, once the budget has been adopted, the committees responsible for monitoring budget implementation, such as the public accounts or budget and finance committee, should consult the public, stakeholders and civil society as they seek input into whether and how various budget line items are expended. Since it is these individuals and groups that will see the impact of any budget expenditures, they are best situated to inform the committee(s) and parliament if the budget is being properly implemented.

### Questions for reflection

- Does your parliament have a process by which public input is collected prior to the delivery of the budget in parliament?
- Is your parliament equipped, technologically, to use innovative tools to seek public feedback and ideas as the budget is being debated in parliament?
- How does your parliament's budget oversight committee engage the public as it monitors expenditures?



## C. Public input into monitoring implementation of laws and policies

As with budgets and lawmaking, a parliament has a key role to play in monitoring implementation of the laws it passes to ensure the executive branch implements them in accordance with the intent of the parliament. And as with the other functions of a parliament, a number of tools can be utilized to engage the public and civil society in this process. As mentioned at the start of this section, public forums, SMS messaging, partnerships with local organizations, surveys and other tools should be used to gain insight on the impact or challenges found in a law that has been passed by parliament and is now being carried out.

In addition to forms of public consultation, individual parliamentarians are engaging people, constituents and voters daily as they seek support and advocacy for their interactions with the government. Helping people with their application for social assistance or a scholarship, for example, gives a parliamentarian an opportunity to observe challenges that may be arising with the current laws in place and how their implementation is affecting those that work within a law on a regular basis. This allows a parliamentarian to see how a law is working de facto.

### Jordan: Women members of parliament engage constituents

Women represent only a small percentage of the parliamentarians elected to the Parliament of Jordan in 2014 with a mandate to allow women Members of Parliament from all parties and groups to work together to promote issues affecting women and girls. The group received support to encourage a more robust interaction between the members and voters in Jordan. This included a series of public forums held throughout the country. Each woman parliamentarian, supported by others, was assigned one region and conducted a series of public forums in the region to hear from the citizens in that area. Women were specifically engaged to ensure their perspective and concerns were collected and used by the Women's Caucus to promote key issues in parliament.

Source: DFID, Final Evaluation Report of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy Programme, 2015, p. 36.

The parliament, its committees and individual members must build routine feedback loops that will ensure public feedback and input views are solicited on a regular basis. There are different means of achieving this goal. For example, some parliamentary committees have developed specific strategic (or action) plans that identify the key tools and methods of engagement and then work towards implementing and maintaining such systems.<sup>10</sup> More established parliaments may have annual work plans or legislative calendars<sup>11</sup> that spell out how the parliament and its committees will use such tools for each draft law reviewed or inquiry conducted. Others have established parliamentary information centres that facilitate voter feedback on the work of the parliament.<sup>12</sup>

10 See: Georgia Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee Actions Plan at <http://www.parliament.ge/en/saparlamento-saqmianoba/komitetebi/adamianis-uflebata-dacvisa-da-samoqalaqo-integraciis-komiteti/komitetis-samoqmedo-gegma>.

11 See: British Columbia Legislative Assembly (Canada) at <https://www.leg.bc.ca/parliamentary-business/committees-calendar>.

12 See: Latvian Parliamentary Information Centre at <http://www.saeima.lv/en/public-participation/receiving-visitors-and-arranging-guided-tours-1/saeima-visitor-and-information-centre>.

Members of a parliament will discover what works best in the context of their circumstances. Depending on the size of the parliamentarian's constituency (ranging from small local groups to a national constituency), the tools used will vary from personal contact and small gatherings to public opinion polling and online surveys. What is important is for a parliamentarian to create and carry out a plan that makes constituent consultation routine and impactful, so voters have a concrete opportunity to provide input into their parliamentarian's work.

### Questions for reflection

- Does your parliament have a process by which public feedback is routinely provided to the parliament on the implementation of laws?
- What methods are used by parliamentarians, individually, to regularly engage people and constituents to hear their concerns and ideas regarding the implementation of laws?
- How do your parliament's committees engage the public as they monitor the implementation of laws?

## D. Facilitating participatory Sustainable Development Goal implementation at the local level

Implementation of the SDGs is not something to be imposed on people by national institutions, but should be an opportunity to create a local response that reflects the context of local communities. Therefore, the primary objective is to establish a dialogue about the SDGs with local authorities and people that allows them to express how they want to see the SDGs implemented in their community. Such a dialogue should be a natural part of the interaction between the government, the parliament, parliamentarians and public.

Some parliamentarians receive constituency development funds with either complete or partial discretion as to how they are expended in their constituency. These funds are controversial, because they give rise to concerns about their oversight, and because they may undermine elected local government. However, they have proliferated in the past ten years as parliamentarians are recognized as a source of knowledge regarding where development should occur in their districts.

Whether a member has a constituency development fund or not, there is value in working with representatives of local government and communities, from all political affiliations, to build a local development plan. In many cases, the local authority or government will take the lead in preparation of the plan, but in others the parliament may need to play a more active role in promoting its production. This will include a series of inclusive and participatory meetings and the identification of the needs and wants of people and civil society that will lead to the identification of key objectives, a strategy/roadmap and a timeframe for achieving each. This can be done annually or, if spread over multiple years, should include annual plans for delivery of milestones on the road to the ultimate objectives.

If the member has a constituency development fund, funding can be allocated to cover all or part of the plan. If there is no fund, the plan becomes a roadmap for seeking government and other funding to address the priority needs of the constituency and its communities.

In countries with functioning local governments (and elected local government organs), the local development plan is normally formulated under the local government's leadership. Parliamentarians can nevertheless use their powers and resources (including Constituency Development Funds) to contribute to local plans. Parliamentarians can also seek to verify that there is coherence between national and local development plans and the SDGs are fully mainstreamed in both.

Either way, the key role of a parliamentarian is to pass legislation (including the budget law) and monitor its implementation by way of government service delivery. Development plans need to be based on engagement with the public and the government, to build buy-in of all parties, both on to the plan and its long-term goals.

### **Questions for reflection**

- Does your parliament provide Constituency Development Funds to members? If so, is there a requirement that the funds be spent in accordance with a development plan?
- What tools and resources would you require as a parliamentarian to allow you to prepare (or contribute to) a constituency development plan?
- Which communities, groups and individuals should be consulted to produce a constituency development plan in your district?

## VIII. Parliament's role in localization of SDGs

MDG implementation experience indicates greater success when implementation was localized via appropriately-mandated and capacitated sub-national and local governments, and when these local institutions were engaged from the early stages of the process.

Under the MDGs, there were experiences in which accountability was not well developed and the MDGs were 'hyper-centralized.' This resulted in a lack of inclusiveness and permitted the continuation of persistent social and regional disparities within a country. A clear link between accountability and representation (at national and local levels) can create an important leverage effect that fosters a fairer distribution of public resources and greater inclusiveness of women, youth and marginalized and vulnerable groups. Therefore, a mechanism that can foster two-way communication between the national parliament and local authorities – and one that links with civil society and people – is important and should be built into the framework of SDG implementation plans for a country.

Therefore, a parliament should seek to ensure that SDG implementation, from the early formulation of national development plans to the regular monitoring of its implementation, directly involves provincial and local governments and councils. The parliament should also be satisfied that mechanisms are in place to receive ongoing input from community-based and civil society organizations so that their valued perspectives are reflected in how the various SDGs are delivered in their areas and so that local ownership of the process is cultivated.

Below are some ways that a parliament can take specific action to ensure SDG implementation is done in coordination with sub-national and local governments and with the input of people throughout the country.



**UNDP Pakistan**  
Meeting of female community organization "Shamatanzeem" village "Padhana", and union council "Dheenda" of district Haripur. Discussing general issues.

- When considering the national development plan, actively seek and consider inputs from people and local governments throughout the country.
- In legislation that governs local authorities, make it a requirement that local authorities and governing bodies engage in routine public consultations in their decision-making processes.
- Review the annual state budget to verify that it includes adequate funding for local public engagement activities and civic education on the SDGs.
- When national authorities implement programmes at the local level, monitor the process of programme delivery to ascertain whether the local context is being considered and people are engaged at the local level.
- Provide resources to enable parliamentary committees to hold public hearings and consultations outside of the confines of the parliament, including field visits and local public forums. Alternatively, or additionally, invest in technology that allows for virtual, remote participation in committee business.

### Questions for reflection

- Do sub-national and local governments in your country play a clear role during the formulation of national development plans?
- What methods of dialogue exist between the parliament and provincial and local assemblies to guarantee a regular and open dialogue on key issues that affect development, and in particular that relate to the issues addressed under the SDGs?
- Does the national development plan ensure that local, specific contexts will be sufficiently reflected during implementation? If not, what mechanisms can be added that would guarantee this?

## IX. Role of parliamentary staff members

By the nature of their job, parliamentarians must be generalists. The variety and complexity of the issues a member faces on a daily basis—from addressing constituent concerns to reviewing draft laws—requires them to quickly gain knowledge on disparate topics. No matter their professional or other experience and expertise, they will face many issues that are beyond their comfort zones. Thus, parliamentarians rely on parliamentary staff members to deliver support and analysis that is required to do the detailed work of a legislator.

Almost all parliaments and their members face the challenge of having to engage with an executive branch that has more resources and expertise than they do. They must work within these constraints to play a constructive role in adopting and monitoring legislation and budgets, and, of course, they will face the same constraints in working for SDG implementation. This means that parliament will need well-capacitated staff members who have access to clear and strong information, data and evidence to be able to provide critical and timely advice to individual parliamentarians and to committees. Without a strong staff member contingent, a parliament will not be able to fulfill its role in the implementation of the Goals.

Specific ways that staff members help parliamentarians obtain the knowledge, information and data required to substantively assess any given issue include briefings, hearings, identification of stakeholders, research and general support for the preparation of amendments and reports from committees. Staff members provide support to parliament, its committees and members in the scrutiny of relevant legislation, the annual state budget and the monitoring of initiatives.

In addition to the general staff of the parliamentary secretariat, below are the three main structures under which staff members are often organized within a parliament.

- **Committee support staff:** Each committee is assigned a cadre of dedicated professional staff members, including legal, sector and procedural support staff members to provide direct assistance to the chairperson and members of the committee as they conduct meetings, hearings and deliberations.
- **Dedicated professional units:** In some parliaments, professional staff members are organized into units based on area of expertise. This may include a Legal Affairs Unit, a Research Unit, a Procedural Advice Division and a Public Outreach/Communications Unit. These units would be responsible for providing advice and support to all committees and members, primarily on a demand-driven basis.
- **Specialized units:** There is a growing trend toward establish units within a parliament that are well-resourced and have a specific role related to a core function of the institution. The most common of these is the Parliamentary Budget Office, staffed with highly-skilled professionals, that provides independent analysis to relevant committees regarding adoption and monitoring of the annual state budget. Some parliaments have also established Parliamentary Institutes, a sort of in-house think tank that provides detailed and scientific research and analysis for the parliament.

Notwithstanding the method by which staffing is organized, such staff members should not only be aware of the SDGs, but how they are being implemented and recognize the key actors for implementation. The SDGs should be “top of mind” as the staff members work on a daily basis in the sector in which the committee has jurisdiction.



One consideration is that the resources provided to parliaments to engage professional staff members are often limited. As the SDGs cover almost all aspects of development in any given country, it will be a challenge to upgrade staff member capacity so that they understand, appreciate and become fully conversant on the SDGs and their objectives. Capacitated and knowledgeable staff and parliamentarians are essential for SDG implementation. This will likely require that a parliament conduct an audit or assessment of its staffing to understand whether or not it has the capacity and resources to meet the needs of SDG fulfillment. Such an assessment will enable the leadership of the institution to identify gaps that call for an investment to ensure that parliament has sufficient capacity to provide the background materials and analysis so that it can effectively be a full actor in national SDG implementation.

### **Tanzania: Budget oversight**

Tanzania has been a multi-party democracy since 1995. The National Assembly of Tanzania originally had a Finance Committee that reviewed the annual state budget submitted by the government. However, the authority of the Finance Committee to make adjustments or to reject specific sectoral budgets was limited.

In 2012, with support from UNDP and the local chapter of the African Parliamentarian Network Against Corruption (a regional branch of GOPAC), the Speaker of the National Assembly identified the need for a new budget process. This started with the replacement of the Finance Committee with a Budget Committee in 2013.

The following year, the National Assembly created and funded a Budget Department with 20 professional staff members who had specific skills related to economic and financial analysis. The mandate of the department is to support the work of the Budget Committee to review the annual state budget prior to adoption by the Assembly. It is also to provide analytical papers and research based on demand from parliamentarians and other committees.

In 2015, as a last part of the reform, the National Assembly adopted the Budget Law. This new law provided enhanced powers and authority for the Budget Committee to reject portions or the entire annual state budget.

Going a step further, many parliaments have formulated and adopted multi-year corporate strategic plans that are based on an assessment of needs and that identify a roadmap for the reforms and resources required to increase capacity and to fulfil its core functions. Such a plan is a good basis for providing the evidence required to advocate for resource allocations from the annual state budget and from donors that will support the parliament in its efforts to be capacitated for SDG implementation.

### **Questions for reflection**

- Does your parliament have professional staff members who are tasked with providing budget and draft law analysis to the relevant committees as they review SDG-related initiatives?
- Has your parliament conducted a needs assessment to determine what support and resources are required so that staff members have the capacity to provide analysis to committees and individual parliamentarians?
- Has your parliament developed and adopted a strategic development plan to identify where and how it will increase its capacity to pass legislation and monitor expenditures and enforcement consistently with the SDGs?

## X. Role of parliamentary political party groups

One cannot speak of the work of parliamentarians without acknowledging that the majority of parliamentarians are members and representatives of a political party. Working with and through this party affiliation is an important aspect of parliamentary work and allows for the promotion and advocacy of party positions and ideas within the parliament.

Debates and discussions are a central facet of parliamentary life. Each party will have its priorities for policies, legislation and budget allocations to address the needs of their constituents. But while parties may even differ on how to ultimately achieve the SDGs, no matter the party or the possible change in government, the country will have to report as to whether or not it achieved the Goals. Thus, at some point all political parties need to determine how they want to deliver on the Goals and to present such a plan to the public at each election.

### A. Party groups

In almost all parliaments in the world, members who are elected on behalf of a political party sit as a party group.<sup>13</sup> These groups meet regularly to agree upon legislative strategies and positions on draft laws, amendments to draft laws and other major decisions to be taken in parliament. Parliamentary party groups also play a role in political debate outside of parliament, through their respective political parties.

If a party group is the majority in parliament (depending on the parliamentary system), it is well positioned to organize in support of ministers and the executive branch who will be responsible for ensuring that SDGs are implemented in the country and for reporting internationally on the commitments made. One way of doing this is to establish a SDG Working Group. The primary objective of the working group would be to work with the various ministers and ministries that will oversee SDG implementation to ensure the perspectives of party members and constituents are reflected in draft legislation and the budget prior to introduction into the House. Through the working group, the party has a chance to discuss issues that are likely to be raised by the opposition and minority party groups and to fine tune their position before the draft law or budget is introduced. It can also be a venue for discussing potential amendments to such documents once the public has provided its input through parliamentary procedures, such as public hearings at committee.

For opposition parliamentarians, it is similarly important that the SDGs are integrated into the work of their party. In some parliamentary systems, there is a Shadow Cabinet—a form of alternative government that is composed of parliamentarians from the opposition or minority parties who serve as party spokespersons or focal points for the line ministries within government. Each of these shadow ministers should be well-equipped, with knowledge and data, so that the SDGs are front and centre in their analysis of the work being produced by the ministries that fall under their jurisdiction. In other types of parliamentary set-ups, the division of labour may be based on geography or other factors. No matter the means of organization, an opposition should have a clear understanding of the SDGs and a strong idea of how they think they can best be implemented to ensure they are best able to monitor the government's SDG-related actions.

It is also important to note that over the lifespan of SDG implementation (2015-2030), party groups may very well move from opposition to government (and vice versa). Each party group should be well informed on the SDGs and committed to their implementation, to ensure that a change in government does not result in unnecessary delays in implementation.

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<sup>13</sup> In different countries, these groups are known by different names, including parliamentary group, caucus or parliamentary party.

## B. Cross-party groups

Over the past fifteen years, there has been a proliferation of groups of like-minded parliamentarians within a parliament from different party groups. These cross-party groups provide an opportunity for members with common interests to discuss the promotion of legislation and policies that reflect those interests. These groups allow for the breakdown of party barriers and promote a dialogue among members that can then be used to forge a consensus that then can be advocated within the various party groups and in parliament in general.

Some common cross-party groups include women's caucuses, bilateral parliamentary cooperation groups and groups affiliated with regional and global networks of parliamentarians (as noted in Part D of Section III).

Given that the SDGs cover almost all areas of development, it is likely that groups will be established that will advocate for specific issues of concern among members. For example, a women's caucus will advocate for SDG 5 (gender equality), a GOPAC chapter will advocate for SDG 16 (accountability) and a Climate Parliament chapter will advocate for SDG 7 (clean energy).

But there is also room for general cross-party work on the SDGs. Some parliaments established working groups under the MDGs (and a few have already done so for the SDGs). Such a group can become a venue for education, promotion and advocacy for the SDGs in general. It can also be a key group in the promotion of the institutionalization of the systems required (and noted throughout this handbook) for a parliament to be an active and key participant in implementing the Goals.

### Pakistan: Sustainable Development Goals working group

With the adoption of the SDGs in September 2015, the Pakistan National Assembly established a cross-party working group of parliamentarians from all major party groups. The objective of the working group is two-fold: (i) to provide information about the SDGs and the role of the parliament in their implementation; and (ii) to create a venue through which parliamentarians, their parties and the parliament can coordinate its work in SDG implementation.

See: "National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Inaugurates SDG Secretariat," 16 February 2016, <http://www.na.gov.pk/en/pressrelease.php?content=101>.

An all-party group can also be a venue for political consensus and advocacy within the various political parties represented in the parliament. The group should ensure that not only the parliamentarians that are members of the group are informed and engaged on the SDGs, but that they liaise with their respective parties to share SDG-related knowledge so that those parties are also informed and engaged with the Goals.

### Questions for reflection

- Have the party groups within your parliament organized their work in a manner that generally promotes the SDGs, and are specific goals considered during the organization of their work?
- Does your parliament have an SDG working group? If so, what is its mandate? If not, what mandate would you foresee for such a group?
- What cross-party groups could be established in your parliament to promote specific SDGs? Do these align with the development priorities of your government's national development planning?
- What mechanisms does your party have to learn more about the SDGs via their parliamentarians?

## XI. Building the capacity of parliamentarians and staff members on Sustainable Development Goals

Implementing the SDGs will be a generational challenge. As a parliamentarian, you may or may not still hold office in 2030 when there will be assessment of whether or not your country has fully or partially achieved the Goals. But, you should be thinking about your role, and that of the entire parliament, in putting in place the systems and practices that will give your country the greatest chance of success. For this is not just about measuring abstract data and numbers, but, in the end, an opportunity to use the SDGs to develop your country and to remove the barriers that have prevented people and countries from liberating themselves from poverty and achieving sustainable development.

To get from here to there, as mentioned earlier, all parliaments will need to build new capacities. Even if your parliament is actively engaging public and seeking their feedback through the work of members and committees; even if your parliament has the capacity to conduct in-depth research and has in place systems that allow people's voices to be actively expressed through parliamentarians; there will still be a need to reflect on how your systems must be retooled to ensure they will advance the 17 SDGs.



**UNDP Moldova**  
Parliament Secretariat pledges to promote a gender-responsive human resources management on 23rd November 2016.

Most parliaments do not meet the standards required for full SDG attainment. All parliaments will need to further educate parliamentarians and staff members on the SDGs and how to integrate the Goals into their everyday work. This document should be a starting point for a discussion on how your parliament engages in implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs in your country. The questions at the end of each section have been meant as an opportunity to self-examine the work currently being done in your House and what you may be able to do to make the institution more effective.

Some parliaments have understood the importance of the SDGs (and their predecessor, the MDGs) for some time. They have already developed knowledge products and guides that parliamentarians can use to help them consider the Goals as they go about their constant interaction with public and the government.

### **Indonesia: Parliamentarians guide to the Millennium Development Goals**

In 2003, the Indonesia House of Representatives established a Parliamentary Task Force on the MDGs. This Task Force produced a guide for parliamentarians on the MDGs. The guide offered a series of key questions related to the MDGs for consideration by all parliamentarians as they drafted laws and monitored government activities. The Guide included a template for citizen engagement and stressed what parliamentarians, both at national and sub-national levels, should observe and bear in mind as they conducted field visits and engaged with communities.

Some parliaments may recognize there are limits to what they can do themselves, due to shortages of staff members or of members of parliament themselves, for instance. To overcome limitations, at times, parliaments establish projects and programmes with organizations, such as UNDP, to assist them with capacity building, preparation of legal frameworks and the creation of tools and mechanisms to foster the achievement of the SDGs. Tools to do this might include workshops, seminars, attachments and peer-to-peer coaching for staff members and parliamentarians. When integrated with the long-term planning noted elsewhere in this document, such day-to-day and special project support can have a significant impact on a parliament's capacity, as it continues to work towards being a full and active partner in SDG implementation.

### **Samoa: Induction for new parliamentarians on the Sustainable Development Goals**

Following the March 2016 general election in Samoa, various United Nations agencies, including the International Labour Organization and UNDP, in cooperation with the Office of the Clerk and Legislative Assembly and government ministries, organized an induction programme on the SDGs for newly-elected parliamentarians. The programme was part of a broader orientation for new members. It gave the parliamentarians an opportunity to better understand their role in SDG implementation and what type of support they can receive from the United Nations and other organizations as they move forward.

Source: [www.samoobserver.ws/en/18\\_03\\_2016/local/3791/Making-global-goals-Samoa%E2%80%99s-own.htm](http://www.samoobserver.ws/en/18_03_2016/local/3791/Making-global-goals-Samoa%E2%80%99s-own.htm).

Parliaments that want to be active in SDG implementation in their country should build a case for requesting support from international and regional organizations that provide funding, technical advice and other resources to support parliament capacity building and engagement in the delivery of the various Goals.

In addition to the supportive organizations already noted, a parliament can seek funding from international financial institutions, such as the Islamic Development Bank<sup>14</sup> and other regional development banks. These institutions were established to, among other things, build state institutions to guarantee that member countries meet their long-term development objectives, including the SDGs.

The key for a parliament that is willing to engage on the SDGs is to build on the content of this handbook. Based on the information laid out in this document, the examples provided from different countries and the answers to the reflective questions, a parliament can produce an evidence-based feasibility study or needs assessment that can be the basis of a request for support and resources to deliver the changes required to have a parliament as an active partner in the achievement of the SDGs.

## Questions for reflection

- What plan does your parliament have for building the capacity of its staff members and parliamentarians?
- What plans does your parliament have for creating and disseminating SDG knowledge products specific to your country?
- Is an adequate internal budget available for staff member and parliamentarian training and knowledge product development?
- What support is available from external organizations to help build the capacity of staff members and parliamentarians in your parliament?
- Which international financial institutions are prepared to make resources to help with parliamentary capacity building and training?

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<sup>14</sup> World Bank - International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) - European Investment Bank (EIB) - Asian Development Bank (ADB) - European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) - CAF - Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) - Inter-American Development Bank Group (IDB, IADB) - African Development Bank (AfDB) - Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) - Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) - Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) - East African Development Bank (EADB) - West African Development Bank (BOAD) - Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) - Economic Cooperation Organization Trade and Development Bank (ETDB) - Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) - New Development Bank (NDB) (formerly BRICS Development Bank)







# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

<b>1</b> NO POVERTY 	<b>2</b> ZERO HUNGER 	<b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	<b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION 
<b>5</b> GENDER EQUALITY 	<b>6</b> CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 	<b>7</b> AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	<b>8</b> DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 
<b>9</b> INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	<b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	<b>11</b> SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	<b>12</b> RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 
<b>13</b> CLIMATE ACTION 	<b>14</b> LIFE BELOW WATER 	<b>15</b> LIFE ON LAND 	<b>16</b> PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 
<b>17</b> PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 			



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 المنظمة العالمية للبرلمانيين للتصديقات



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