



# Lessons Learned and Knowledge Gaps on Parliamentary Strengthening

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# Overview of Presentation

**“Next  
Generation”  
Democracy  
Programming**

**Lessons  
Learned in  
Parliamentary  
Development**

**Selected  
Knowledge  
Gaps**



# Democracy Assistance and Foreign Aid: Importance of Political Economy Approaches

## Current Learning

- Recognition of the need to include political economy analysis in designing assistance
- Socio-economic development actors also now recognize that “politics matter.”
- Need to explore “convergence” between democracy support and socio-economic development

## Realities on the Ground

- Majority of development assistance continues to go to “less political” approaches.
- The recognition that “politics matters” by socio-economic development actors often is limited to getting political buy-in for specific projects.
- Political economy approaches rarely extend beyond assessment or evaluation to implementation.



## **Toward a “Next Generation” Approach**

- Donors need to maintain “political economy” approach in implementation, including:
  - ✓ Support for more overtly political actors;
  - ✓ “Ends-based” programming with greater flexibility to allow for interventions to take advantage of political cycle; and
  - ✓ Aligning development assistance architecture with desire for more political approaches.
- Democracy community needs to emphasize “political governance” as well as mechanisms of “political competition.”
- Stand-alone democracy programming to address “systems” issues should be complemented by mainstreaming democracy issues across socio-economic development programs.



# **Democracy Assistance and Foreign Aid: Need for Greater Country Ownership**

## **Current Learning**

- Recognition that country ownership is more than “state” ownership, but needs to include consultation with civil society actors.
- Ownership requires buy-in from parliamentary leadership.

## **Realities on the Ground**

- No real satisfactory answer to the question: Who speaks for the country under a non-democratic system?
- Emphasis on institutional ownership can contribute to capture of programs by leadership.



## **Toward a “Next Generation” Approach**

**May be impossible for a single set of actors to reflect country ownership**

**Move toward a focus not on country “ownership” but on building broad-based buy-in or acceptance by a reform-oriented majority coalition.**

**Look beyond “country ownership” to strengthen legitimacy of democracy assistance (greater role for international and regional norms and organizations)**



# **Democracy Assistance and Foreign Aid: Need for Greater Donor Coordination**

## **Current Learning**

- Too many development actors burden weak country systems, particularly in fragile states.
- In an era of fiscal austerity during which many donors are retrenching, there is a need to avoid duplication of programs.

## **Realities on the Ground**

- Over-coordination restricts choices by the beneficiaries of assistance.
- Difficult to encourage democratic pluralism through a single coordinated approach.



## **Toward a “Next Generation” Approach**

Democratic reform often requires “working” on an issue from multiple angles

Multiple, smaller interventions may increase the chances of success (through greater experimentation and competition) and can empower development partners to choose what is most useful to them.

Need for greater donor tolerance for the “messiness” of democracy (and, therefore, of democracy assistance).





# Lessons Learned in Parliamentary Development



## **Understanding the Politics of Parliamentary Reform**

- Parliamentary reform in developed democracies often occurs in an unplanned and highly contentious manner in response to a scandal, after which multiple types of actors opportunistically and temporarily align against the status quo.
- Development actors too often expect parliamentary reform to happen “by logframe.”
- Resource: “Politics of Parliamentary Strengthening”, by Greg Power [http://global-partners.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/WFD\\_PPS\\_082011\\_vi.pdf](http://global-partners.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/WFD_PPS_082011_vi.pdf)



## **Treat Parliament as Part of the Larger Political System**

- How parliament relates with the executive, media, political parties, accountability institutions, citizens, etc. , is often as important as how it functions internally.
- Often donors support capacity development within parliament, only to undercut its role in the larger political system or in its diplomacy more generally.
- Need to recognize the growing importance of civil society groups that monitor parliament or support parliamentary development.



## **Focus on Political Culture and Power Relationships**

- Formal rules and institutions matter, but mostly for how they redistribute power and impact political culture.
- Changing power relationships and political culture is ultimately more important than rules (which can go unapplied) or institutions (which can be subverted)
- More focus on the “games within the rules;” less on the “rules of the game.”
- Need to complement the existing focus on parliamentary “hardware” with greater attention to parliamentary “software”



## **Support the Practice of Parliamentary Democracy on Development Issues People Care About**

- Engage parliamentarians, citizens and other actors in the “practice” of democracy on issues they care about
- Provide an opportunity for closer linkages between socioeconomic issues and democracy assistance
- Contribute to improved development outcomes and a more democratic political culture



# Selected Knowledge Gaps



## **Selected Knowledge Gaps**

- Models for Addressing Issues of Political Finance: What options exist for legitimate sources of political finance in low income countries?
- Understanding Constraints on Donors in Adopting Existing Learning on Parliamentary Programming: How can donor agencies adapt their infrastructure to overcome impediments in adopting lessons learned?



## **Selected Knowledge Gaps**

- Stimulating Parliamentary Innovation: How can innovation continued to supported/ stimulated in the South and how can these innovative practices be disseminated?
- “Applied” Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks. The focus on results and evidence-based programming often creates pressures to gather only certain types of (mostly quantitative) data and creates pressures for certain types of experimental design evaluations, which may not be appropriate.