

Parliaments and development

The icing on the cake?

What parliamentary capacity can mean for ACP-EC cooperation



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The Cotonou Agreement has abandoned the centralised approach adopted in previous cooperation agreements between the ACP¹ countries and the European Union (EU) and has opened up partnership to actors other than central governments. Among other things, it emphasises the need to strengthen the Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) as a democratic foundation for ACP-EC partnership, but it says little about the role of ACP national parliaments in this cooperation process. Yet parliaments are an expression of the principle of elective democracy and have a significant part to play when it comes to budgetary control, creation of a legal environment conducive to development and other aspects directly related to the implementation of cooperation. Moreover, the practical on-the-ground implications of their involvement are not always clear, especially to parliamentarians themselves.

What part can parliaments play in promoting development? How are they integrated into a system of governance that facilitates the fight against poverty? What constraints are they subject to? What kind of support do they have? And what opportunities does ACP-EC cooperation offer in this area?

The aim of this InBrief is not to give an exhaustive account of parliamentary involvement and capacity in the field of development², but to contribute to and encourage the debate on a relatively neglected issue whose importance is now increasingly acknowledged. The paper is also based on the empirical results of a series of training courses for parliamentarians on ACP-EC cooperation in ten African countries³.

In short, when it comes to good governance, is parliamentary capacity merely the icing on the cake – attractive, but essentially decorative?

What parliamentary capacity can mean

• The role of parliaments in development

First and foremost, national parliaments are the practical expression of the principle of 'elective democracy', and must therefore act as representatives of the people's will. By legislating, parliaments construct a frame of reference for the regulation and management of life in society. In their role as overseers of government, they are responsible for encouraging transparency in the management of affairs of state and for preventing potential abuses by government authorities. They are thus an essential feature of 'competent states', and parliamentarians are actors in support of good governance.

Legislation. Parliaments are collective decision-making institutions: as representatives of the people, they draw up and discuss policies together with the executive branch of government, and they vote on legislation. The constitutional formulation of this role varies and it is performed differently from country to country, but legislation is in any case the central function of parliaments. As the Senegalese Constitution clearly states, 'The National Assembly shall hold legislative power. It alone shall vote on legislation'⁴.

Oversight. The second role of parliaments is to oversee government policy in general, and the budgetary process in particular. This is a fundamental pillar of the rule of law, for it ensures separation of powers and counterbalances the power of the executive branch. This role is of vital importance, for it ensures that governments carry out national policies in an effective, democratic and fiscally responsible manner.

An arena for dialogue. Parliaments have an essential part to play in framing the debate on national development priorities. Reflecting as they do the various currents of opinion in society, they are the place where the debate must be conducted, differing views reconciled, compromises on government projects sought and implementation of national policies monitored. Since international cooperation agreements are an essential resource in drawing up and implementing national development plans, the allocation of this resource must be part of the debate. Moreover, parliaments may have a key part to play in cases where the functioning of the state is undermined by political instability. The examples of Rwanda and Burundi illustrate the impact parliaments can have on reconciliation during peace processes and the restoration of the rule of law in post-conflict settings.

Links with constituencies. This less conventional role is an interesting one, because (a) it often prompts parliamentarians to become initiators of development projects (by mobilising resources, supporting grass-roots initiatives, etc.) and (b) they are aware of grass-roots needs and are in direct dialogue with the people in their constituencies. In places that are not always reached by public services, parliamentarians may be induced to assume the less 'orthodox' role of providing social security for local people. They sometimes cover the day-to-day costs of schooling, funerals and so on. Thanks to these grass-roots links, which are a concrete expression of their constitutional role as representatives of the people, parliamentarians can speak on behalf of local people and bring their concerns into the political arena.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'Parliaments are now being called on to help increase people's awareness of grass-roots development problems.'
Burkina Faso

These powers are being exercised with varying degrees of success and, like the parliamentarians concerned, are becoming more relevant as the international situation and methods of cooperation change.

• A supportive environment

The wave of democratisation. One of the direct consequences of the global wave of democratisation that reached sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s has been the emergence of parliaments as one of the leading forces in the new institutional order. In 1974 there were only 39 democracies; by the mid-1990s there were 117⁵. Some 90% of today's sovereign states have a legislative body⁶. Today almost every one of Africa's 53 states has a national parliament. Furthermore, examination of the various African constitutions shows that parliaments are systematically granted powers of oversight (of budget implementation and national policy) as well as legislative powers⁷.

The participatory approach to drawing up development strategies. One of the basic features of the approach to poverty reduction which is promoted by the World Bank – and which is the basis for action by other donors – is 'ownership' of the strategy by the country concerned. This involves a participatory approach to drawing up poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), which serve as the frame of reference for all development programmes. There are extensive consultations with various stakeholders, and this means involving actors other than central government – including parliaments. They are also involved in the process of managing the national budget (oversight and approval of expenditure on poverty reduction initiatives, monitoring and evaluation of their impact, and legislative activities). Their influence increases to the extent that they can back government reforms that allow more effective management of public affairs. Similarly, one of the new features of the Cotonou Agreement is that various stakeholders are now involved in drawing up PRSPs and reviewing their implementation. The involvement of parliaments in these exercises helps them participate more effectively.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'All that members of parliament used to do was ratify the treaties submitted to them. Now we're becoming aware of the effectiveness of partnership and the need for constant monitoring.'
Mali

The increased importance of good governance. Although the exact meaning of 'good governance' is still a matter of debate⁸, the term is increasingly common in official speeches and papers on development policy. Good governance is a necessary factor in framing poverty reduction, and has become a fundamental element of ACP-EC cooperation⁹. At the same time, the European Community Development Policy Statement (November 2000) identifies 'institutional capacity building, particularly in the area of good governance' as one of the six priority areas in which the EC believes the support it can provide has added value. This is a matter of direct concern to parliaments. For instance, some of them (in Benin, Kenya and Uganda) have already played a direct part in national anti-corruption campaigns and are thereby helping to improve the management of public affairs. The EC Communication entitled 'Governance and Development' likewise recalls parliaments' potential role and their contribution to reform programmes¹⁰.

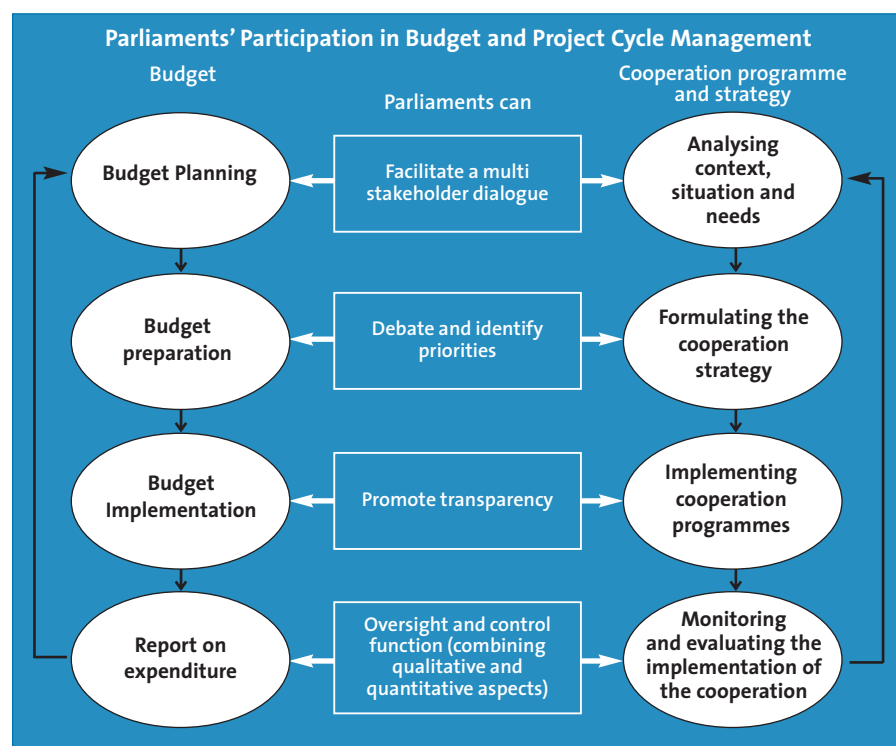


Comment by a parliamentarian
'The parliament could serve as a good floor for political dialogue.'
Ethiopia

Development of budget support. Ways of granting and transferring aid are constantly changing, and the emphasis has now shifted towards budget support. Monitored so as to avoid encouraging corruption, budget support provides an additional incentive for donors to ensure effective oversight of budget implementation by parliaments. This is because budget support entails the use of national monitoring systems, leading donors to assess how effective parliaments are in this regard.

Globalisation and the international context. In an increasingly interdependent global environment, the debate on transversal issues and the challenges of increasing globalisation cannot take place without involving parliaments. Issues of security, environmental protection, migration and capital mobility all have implications for national policies and development, and are mobilising many political, academic and civil society actors. It is therefore important for parliaments to be fully involved. An interparliamentary debate at regional and global level will encourage in-depth reflection on the challenges and implications of globalisation. Links with civil society and its range of different world views could be encouraged in this context, illustrating the importance of parliament as an arena for political debate and the airing of citizens' concerns.

Effectiveness of development cooperation and social capital. The debate has shown that traditional recipes (input of funds, external solutions and technical assistance) are not enough to encourage development. To be effective, cooperation must take place in a sound national political environment and must actively promote various key principles such as local ownership, good governance and participatory development. Social capital is acknowledged to be of fundamental importance in encouraging the development process. Through their direct links with the executive branch, parliaments provide major added value in creating links of trust between the government and the people. Depending on the situation in the country, such links can be strengthened so that all the available energy can be put into development and the synergies resulting from public-private partnerships can be enhanced.





Comment by a parliamentarian
'It would do no harm to remind the government and all its lower echelons that the role of members of parliament, apart from legislating, is to monitor government action. They are then more likely to be listened to and involved in implementing grass-roots investment activities.'

Niger

In such an environment, however, it remains hard for parliaments to perform all these different roles. Their opportunities to exercise these powers are subject to numerous constraints.

• No lack of constraints and restrictions



Comment by a parliamentarian
'Members of parliament must be given facilities and funding to help them perform their monitoring and supervisory role.'

Niger

Lack of institutional capacity. This is the problem most frequently mentioned by parliamentarians, and is a serious obstacle to their work. The problem arises at several levels: staffing and equipment are inadequate, parliamentarians sometimes lack facilities and capacity, and their knowledge of technical issues is limited. The situation varies from country to country, but basic facilities are generally lacking and parliamentarians often have no access to specialised, independent expertise that would help them do their work properly.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'It is often difficult to exercise legislative power, because the executive branch does not provide sufficient information and data. The effectiveness of parliamentary work will depend on effective circulation of information between the government and parliament.'

Mali

Links with the executive branch. The quality of links between the executive and legislative branches of government has a direct influence on the power of parliament. To some extent it determines exactly what parliamentarians can do and what impact it will have. For example, if parliament becomes too critical of the way public affairs are managed, or of the government's performance, the resulting enmity sometimes leads to confrontations in which the opposition is vulnerable or may even be subject to arbitrary treatment. Above all, however, the quality of parliamentary work will be affected if the executive branch is unable to provide the facilities, funding and staff parliament needs in order to function properly. At the same time, a number of international organisations¹¹ have pointed out that, in their efforts to respond to the need for local ownership of development

strategies, governments have often failed to involve parliaments in national consultations.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'We are a young parliament and we need plenty of information.'

DRC

Access to information. Parliaments generally suffer from a serious lack of information, either because the executive branch or donors fail to provide it, or because of institutional shortcomings. In particular, the lack of access to technical data is a major obstacle to parliamentary work. Without timely access to the information they need, it is difficult for parliamentarians to create a legal environment conducive to development, to support strategies implemented by the executive branch, to oversee budget implementation and the impact of policy and to duly inform people in their constituencies.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'Members of parliament sometimes get the feeling that the government corners all the issues for its own purposes.'

Burkina Faso

An emerging parliamentary tradition. Building up a democratic political culture is a long-term process. Capacity develops only gradually. At the same time, depending on the national context, enmity between political groups within parliament may weaken its capacity for dialogue and make it hard to achieve consensus. Such a situation is damaging, and may seriously reduce the impact of parliamentary work on the key issues, as well as parliament's political credibility.

The role of parliaments in ACP-EC cooperation

The Cotonou Agreement has three main dimensions: in addition to aid, it covers cooperation on trade and political cooperation. This means that, even in ACP countries where the Agreement is not the main source and frame of reference for planning national development programmes, it remains one of the main elements of cooperation¹², particularly when it comes to trade. The importance of the political dimension also generates a dialogue which provides the basis for a broad web of diplomatic relations between the ACP countries and the EU. All this must be the subject of public debate and must be closely monitored by various national actors. Among the most important of these are parliaments. Although the ACP-EC cooperation agreement does not specify the role of parliaments in detail (apart from their involvement in the Joint Parliamentary Assembly), there are four main areas in which they can participate:

- encouraging national participation and dialogue on the Cotonou Agreement;
- supporting a legislative framework conducive to national development and cooperation priorities;
- monitoring the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement; and
- taking part in the international dialogue on the Agreement through the Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA).



Comment by a parliamentarian
'We too as parliamentarians do have an important role to play in the ACP-EU process.'

Uganda

• Encouraging participation and dialogue on the Cotonou Agreement

Facilitating an inclusive dialogue. As elected representatives of the people, parliaments have an institutional duty to organise the public debate on the country's political choices. The Cotonou Agreement offers plenty of ways of involving various state and non-state actors in its implementation (Articles 4-7). It is therefore important to make sure the dialogue between the various interest groups continues to be open, inclusive and well-managed. Although the official channel of contact between the country and the EC is the executive branch (through the National Authorising Officer, who is a government minister), members of parliament have close links with the people in their constituencies and are responsible for organising the dialogue with non-state actors.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'Because I am the representative of society, it is through me that people can get information and knowledge.'

Ethiopia

Debating the issues at the appropriate time. In the absence of an appropriate agenda, parliamentary work may have only a limited impact on the decisions taken by the executive branch. Under the Cotonou Agreement, dialogue and debate must get started as soon as the planning phase begins and continue throughout the implementation process. They must remain closely linked to other debates on planning and national development. Parliaments must take full advantage of the opportunity to take part in drawing up and regularly reviewing the national indicative plan (NIP) for cooperation¹³. National parliaments should ultimately create a framework that encourages debate and helps resolve disputes between parties or interest groups. The press may prove a valuable tool and a strategic ally in their efforts to promote dialogue.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'The members of parliament with the knowledge acquired on ACP-EU cooperation can sensitise their constituents about our relations with EU and more importantly can educate our business community to strive to storm these EU markets.'
Uganda

Providing links between the state and non-state actors. As bodies made up of elected representatives, parliaments also have a part to play in providing links between the state and non-state actors. In encouraging participation by civil society, the private sector and economic and social partners¹⁴, parliament must ensure effective interaction between (a) the National Authorising Officer and the government departments concerned with the Cotonou Agreement and (b) non-state actors. The public debate, interest groups, civil-society organisations and the media can also sustain the parliamentary debate by keeping parliamentarians informed, bringing examples to their attention, etc.

• Supporting a legislative framework conducive to national development

A legal environment conducive to sectoral cooperation priorities. An appropriate legal framework may optimise the impact of national development programmes, including those supported by cooperation with the EC. The legal environment is part of any parliament's normal field of activity, but work on this must be timed to match the implementation of support programmes so that the country can develop smoothly. This is one of the factors on which the success of the Cotonou Agreement will depend. Parliaments must therefore work closely with governments and ensure a suitable environment for the implementation of the Agreement. To do so, they must debate and approve certain key elements:

- the national budget and, where necessary, budgets for specific programmes;
- any legislation pertaining to the implementation of specific programmes, taking account of the sectoral priorities set in connection with cooperation.

Respect for essential and fundamental principles. The Cotonou Agreement is based on essential and fundamental principles¹⁵ (human rights, democracy, the rule of law and sound management of public affairs) which help to create an environment conducive to its success. If any of the parties feels that these principles are not being respected, cooperation – and the funding for it – may be reconsidered. It is therefore important for parliaments in ACP countries, as well as governments, to feel responsible for maintaining this framework.

• Monitoring implementation of the Cotonou Agreement

Monitoring and evaluation of implementation. The implementation of the Cotonou Agreement must also be closely monitored. This is not just a matter of concern for the EU, but is also the subject of public debate in every ACP country, since development resources are limited and must be well used. Parliaments' institutional powers to monitor budget and policy implementation extend to programmes funded through EC cooperation.

Budget support. Now that the EU is increasingly focusing on budget support which is paid directly into the National Treasury, national auditing and financial control agencies (overseen by the national parliament) will have an increasingly important part to play in maintaining donor confidence and encouraging harmonious partnerships.

Performance. More than in the past¹⁶, the Cotonou Agreement is founded on a notion of partnership based on performance and rolling programming, with far more emphasis on performance monitoring and with potential implications for the allocation of funds. It is therefore in the national interest for parliaments to monitor performance closely. Such monitoring should mainly focus on the implementation of the NIP¹⁷ and on the quality, quantity, incidence and coherence of the programmes involved. Parliamentarians' close links with the people in their constituencies provide an opportunity to discuss the grass-roots impact of projects and how they really affect people's quality of life.

Making best use of the available tools. Reports on the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement and the allocation of EDF envelopes¹⁸ are an effective monitoring tool. The Agreement (Annexe IV - Article 5) stipulates that the National Authorising Officer and the head of the EU delegation are to conduct an annual operational review of the

NIP. This is submitted to the Joint ACP-EU Committee on Development Finance Cooperation, and could therefore also be forwarded to national parliaments. Parliaments usually delegate their monitoring tasks to parliamentary committees. Some parliaments in ACP countries (such as Burkina Faso and Senegal) have committees or groups that are specifically responsible for monitoring the Agreement. Most, however, do not, and in the absence of such committees this can always be dealt with by other committees (in such areas as national development/budget/public spending or national auditing, health/education/social services, trade or foreign affairs).

• Taking part in the international dialogue on the agreement through the Joint Parliamentary Assembly

Provisions of the Agreement. The Cotonou Agreement provides for a specific parliamentary institution, the Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA), which is unique of its kind. It consists of one member of parliament from each ACP country and an equal number of Members of the European Parliament. Article 17 of the Agreement lays down details of the legal basis of the JPA, its role and the way it is supposed to operate. Furthermore, Declaration III of the Final Act of the Agreement stresses the importance that is attached to the JPA's role 'in promoting and defending democratic processes through dialogue between members of parliament.'

Aims of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. The JPA has a monitoring and supervisory role which is crucial to the smooth functioning of the Agreement. In other words, the very purpose of the JPA is to ensure that the goals of the Agreement are attained. Since it is made up of representatives of ACP parliaments and the European Parliament, the JPA can only fulfil this role effectively if its debates are based on similar debates in each of its members' parliaments. Although the Agreement does not say this in so many words, it therefore seems clear that the JPA

Article 17 – The Joint Parliamentary Assembly

Article 17 of the CPA provides the legal base for the JPA, specifies its role and some basic provisions for the way it is expected to work. Among other provisions, Article 17 stipulates that the JPA shall:

- Promote democratic processes through dialogue and consultation;
- Facilitate greater understanding between the peoples of the EU and the ACP
- Raise public awareness of development issues;
- Discuss issues pertaining to development and ACP-EU partnership;
- Adopt resolutions and make recommendations to the Council of Ministers with a view to achieving the objectives of the Agreement;
- Foster cooperation between national parliaments;
- Organise contacts with economic and social partners and civil society again with a view to achieving the objectives of the Agreement.

Source: ACP-EC Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000.

can only be meaningful, and can only operate effectively, if the European Parliament and each ACP parliament are willing to fulfil their monitoring and supervisory role under the Cotonou Agreement. The international dialogue within the JPA is likewise meant to boost regional integration and encourage cooperation between national parliaments¹⁹.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'ACP-UE collaboration in the Joint Parliamentary Assembly has also developed and increased, and our influence over all areas of policy reflected in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement is better understood and valued than ever before.'
European Parliament, 2003²⁰.

How the Joint Parliamentary Assembly operates. The frequency of JPA meetings (one five-day session every six months) and its composition (one member from each ACP parliament) do not make for an effective group on the ACP side. Things are easier for European parliamentarians, since they all come from the same parliament and work together regularly. Three specialised standing committees²¹ have been set up to help prepare the work of the JPA, but extra efforts are needed to help ACP parliamentarians. National parliaments must realise this and do everything in their power to provide such support and ensure that their delegates are in a position to defend their positions effectively at the JPA. Finally, the European Commission is also required to submit a report to the European Parliament accounting for the use of EDF envelopes, and the JPA could provide another forum for discussing this through interaction between opposite numbers in European and ACP countries.

Support modalities

Donors have a long tradition of working with governments, but cooperation with parliaments, which is more recent and less developed, is still a new challenge to some of them. Nevertheless, they are increasingly aware of the importance of providing appropriate support for parliaments, which are key institutions in countries' systems of governance.

• The donor community

Since the 1990s there has been increasing focus on the role of parliaments in development cooperation, particularly in the context of the debate on good governance and poverty reduction, but only limited efforts have been made to support them²². However, this has led to major support programmes being set up by multilateral donors such as the World Bank and UNDP or bilateral donors such as USAID. These are briefly reviewed below.

Over the last decade the international community has changed its approach to poverty reduction. Instead of programmes being drawn up for implementation by beneficiary countries, the latter are now responsible for devising their own strategies. This approach is reflected in the launch of the Comprehensive Development Framework, in which the focus is on interaction between various components (social, structural, cultural, etc.) and the importance of the various countries 'owning' their own agendas. Poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) are the concrete expression of this approach. Parliaments can contribute to this process in four main ways:

- ensuring that citizens are involved in diagnosing and analysing poverty;
- checking that what is carried out meets grass-roots needs;
- reviewing the budget to check that it is correctly allocated;
- monitoring the impact of programmes.

However, initial assessments of this approach have revealed that parliamentary involvement was rather marginal²³. Since then, there have been a number of initiatives to try and correct the situation. For example, the World Bank and UNDP are financing a programme entitled 'Parliament, governance and poverty reduction', which is made up of three pillars: strengthening of parliaments' monitoring function (capacity of specialised committees), networking, and parliaments' role in reducing poverty. For instance, the World Bank's Parliamentary Network offers training courses and inter-parliamentary consultations. UNDP is developing training courses together with the

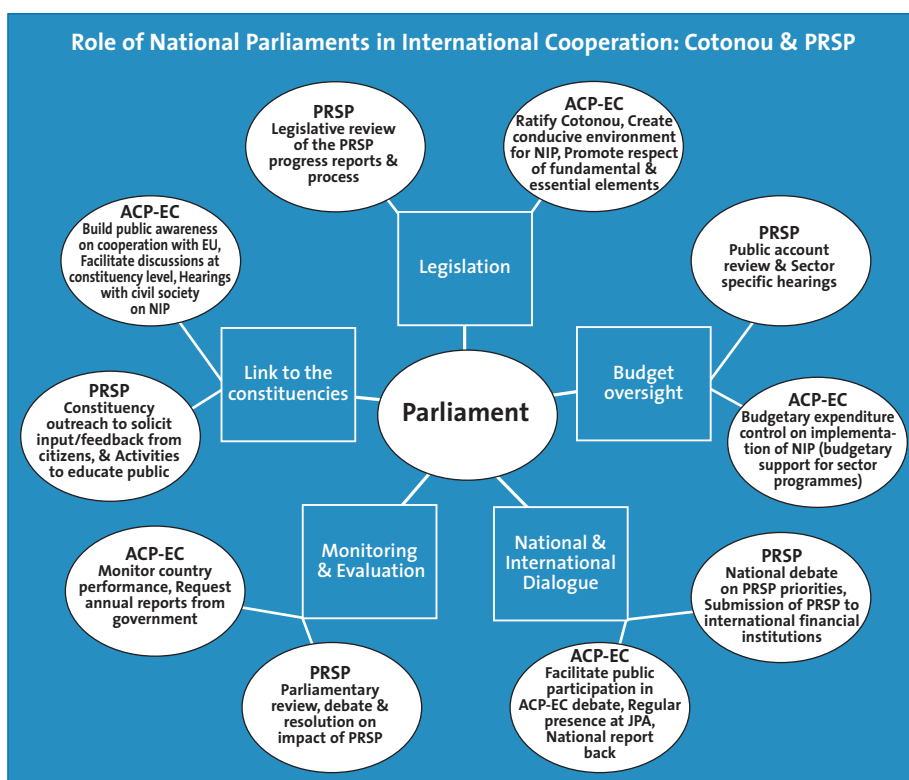
IPU²⁴ and, on a smaller scale, is supporting processes for the reform of the legislative branch. With funding from the Belgian government, the UN body has also launched a Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening, which funds regional initiatives and research activities. USAID's Building Democracy in Africa programme also provides support for parliamentary capacity building to assist poverty reduction strategies.

Beside donors, other more minor initiatives support parliamentary capacity building efforts, such as the NDI's²⁵ pilot project for parliamentary committees, the FES's²⁶ training activities or the work of AWEPA²⁷. Finally, several projects have been carried as part of bilateral cooperation (Finland, DFID, Netherlands, Belgium, etc.).

• ACP-EC

The partnership framework provided by the Lomé Conventions (1975-2000) suffered from a 'democratic deficit', since cooperation between the ACP countries and the EU was organised in a highly centralised fashion. The Cotonou Agreement has done away with this approach, adopting the principle of participatory democracy and focusing on the need to strengthen the JPA as the democratic foundation for ACP-EU partnership. These changes have improved the prospects for greater parliamentary involvement.

What the new partnership arrangements mean for parliaments. Some of the main new



arrangements offer space for parliaments to act. Article 8, on political dialogue, opens up the possibility of more systematic involvement of parliaments (and other actors) in debates on development issues at national, regional and global level. The importance of the ACP-EU trade negotiations that opened in September 2002, and their impact on economies, are a serious topic for national parliamentary debate. The shift away from classic 'project support' aid towards budget support and the sectoral approach increases the importance of legislatures' role in monitoring budget implementation and the impact of national policies. Systematic review of countries' performance gives the legislative branch, as the people's representative, an opportunity to develop mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of cooperation and to take part in a debate on the effectiveness of the partnership. Finally, the promotion of good governance as a fundamental element of the Agreement often provides an opportunity to programme funding for parliamentary capacity building.

A specific institution. Unique in the world, and financed by the European Development Fund (EDF), the Joint Parliamentary Assembly is the first-ever assembly to bring together representatives of 92 countries from four different continents. Its role is developing, and new responsibilities are being assigned to it (see page 4). The JPA, and the funding it receives, provide unparalleled support for the interparliamentary debate. In between its six-monthly plenary sessions, the JPA ensures that that efforts continue, and prepares topics for discussion by EU and ACP partners. The three standing committees²⁸ facilitate the exchange of views between the parties before decisions are reached in plenary session, and are in themselves a valuable source of technical information. For example, they give ACP representatives from each region a potential opportunity to meet members of the JPA at regular intervals. Together with contacts with representatives of civil society and economic actors, such meetings can encourage specific dialogue at regional level and provide an opportunity to take fuller account of national considerations when decisions are taken at global ACP-EC level²⁹. The work of the JPA may also prove valuable in emphasising the importance of, and advocating, parliamentary capacity. For example, the draft resolution on political dialogue (Article 8)³⁰ stresses the importance of direct, systematic collaboration with national parliaments.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'The Joint Parliamentary Assembly will be pivotal in developing ACP-EU relations (...). We can be a conduit for new thinking on Cotonou, based on parliamentary experience and understanding.'
ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, 2003.

Access to funding. The ACP-EC cooperation agreement is thus opening numerous doors to parliamentary involvement. In this connection there are three main sources of funding at national, regional and global level. Part of the EDF, the JPA financing agreement is an initial contribution, and provides for the holding of regional meetings³¹. Another financial instrument, the Technical Cooperation Facility, can be used to cover the costs of national, regional or ACP-wide seminars. It is a potential source of funding for meetings held to develop consciousness-raising initiatives or encourage interparliamentary debate. Finally, the EDF envelope for implementation of NIPs is certainly the most relevant source, as it is part of a (national or regional) multiannual development strategy that has been developed together with governments³². Parliamentary capacity building programmes are generally part of broader support for good governance. Ten EDF-funded good governance projects are currently being carried out as part of NIPs³³, costing approximately 35 million euros. Among the beneficiary countries are Angola, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Equatorial Guinea and Madagascar. Parliamentary capacity building programmes may seem marginal in comparison with the total envelope for support for good governance (640 million euros³⁴). Nevertheless, this is a huge sector³⁵: it covers the issues of respect for democratic principles and the rule of law, and concerns such varied actors as the police, human rights organisations and so on. The present commitment to parliaments thus shows that the question of their capacity has been taken into consideration. Moreover, the programmes financed by the 9th EDF – i.e. the first programmes under the new partnership framework set out in the Cotonou Agreement – are being identified. It is thus quite clear that other programmes of this kind will be set up in the next few years.

Training seminars

Experiments with providing support for parliaments are still a relatively marginal feature of cooperation strategies. This is equally true of ACP-EC cooperation, whose management requirements and pressure to disburse make those involved more inclined to implement classic programmes, such as infrastructural development. However, an interesting initiative was launched during the Belgian EU Presidency. Out of contacts between Belgium and parliamentary delegations during the JPA meeting in Libreville, Gabon, in March 2001 there emerged the idea of holding national seminars for parliamentarians on the Cotonou Agreement, and more specifically on their involvement in the new cooperation framework. This innovative project, which is funded by Belgium, has since been

carried out in ten countries, with some useful results.

• Goals and method

Goals. The aim of the seminars is to inform parliamentarians about the new issues in the Cotonou Agreement and to make clear what part they can play in managing, monitoring, reviewing and supervising national cooperation programmes under the Agreement. The seminars have been held in several ACP countries with which Belgium has cooperation links: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, South Africa (for the SADC), Senegal, Benin, the DRC and Uganda³⁶. The idea is to develop parliamentarians' knowledge of the ACP-EC partnership agreement and at the same time make them more aware of the part they can play in implementing it. In the interests of 'ownership', additional efforts have been made to identify certain priority actions that will enable parliamentarians to play a more effective part in implementing the Agreement. Several main areas of activity have been identified in this connection:

- informing parliamentarians about the main features of the Cotonou Agreement and the major changes it introduces as compared with the previous Lomé Conventions, especially regarding the involvement of civil society in the implementation of ACP-EU cooperation;
- exploring the practical implications of these changes for the ACP countries;
- making clear what part national parliaments can play in evaluating, monitoring and supervising country cooperation programmes implemented under the Cotonou Agreement;
- encouraging constructive dialogue between parliamentarians and state and non-state actors on national priorities;
- examining ways of building parliamentary capacity in this area and strengthening links between national parliaments and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

Seminar methodology. This is based on the following principles: accurate but popularised information in accessible formats, dissemination of publications on key issues, a participatory approach with practice-oriented presentations and interactive dialogue, the pursuit of complementarity in association with local initiatives, and systematic use of local expertise. On the basis of these guidelines, a two-day programme is drawn up in cooperation with parliament; this can be an item on the agenda of a plenary session, at the Assembly's convenience and depending on the rest of its work agenda. Such arrangements make for effective ownership of the initiative by the institution and effective participation while it is being carried out³⁷. The seminars are held over a period of one or two days during an ordinary parliamentary session. So far, the number of participants per seminar has never been more than 200, inclu-

ding members of national parliaments and civil servants, as well as non-state observers, in order that they can avail themselves of the information and contribute to the debate. The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), an independent institution that specialises in capacity building under the ACP-EC partnership, was asked to organise the seminars. The ECDPM developed the methodology, drew up training modules and facilitated the work sessions during the seminars.

• Lessons learned

The first lessons learned from this experience are that national parliaments do indeed have a useful part to play under the Cotonou Agreement (holding debates on overall aid strategies, encouraging dialogue with non-state actors, and monitoring and maintaining budgetary control of project implementation), but that they can only be meaningfully involved in the ACP-EC cooperation process if they are given capacity-building support.

Participation in national dialogue. Although the Agreement was ratified by all the ACP parliaments before taking effect in 2002, parliamentarians' knowledge of it varies considerably but in general still seems to be very limited; some said they did not even know the name of the Agreement³⁸. There seldom appears to have been any specific dialogue when it was ratified by national parliaments, which seem to have done little more than register it. Similarly, there is relatively little knowledge of the sectoral priorities adopted under the Agreement. Accordingly, there has been little incentive for consultation on development programmes with non-state actors (private sector, trade unions, civil society), since there has been little in the way of debate on the subject by parliamentary committees³⁹. This means that efforts to disseminate information on the Cotonou Agreement still need to be stepped up at both national and local level, especially in parliamentary constituencies, local and municipal assemblies, civil society and trade unions, and parliament in general. Setting up a study and information group to monitor ACP-EU cooperation (consisting of parliamentarians, government officials and representatives of non-state actors and the EC delegation) would certainly help to facilitate parliamentary work, as would establishing direct links between parliament and the EC delegation (for example by holding an 'open day'). Parliaments must make sure they take every opportunity to be involved in the dialogue on the programming and implementation of the NIP, for example by holding periodic, regular debates on how implementation of the NIP is progressing and how EDF funds are being used.

Monitoring, supervision and legislative tasks. It is parliaments' task to provide, as far as possible, an overview of government performance in implementing the Cotonou Agreement. Parliamentarians must arrange to regularly evaluate the implementation of the NIP and, in particular, to check whether budgets are adequate for the priorities identified in national development projects and in NIPs. Efforts must still be made to ensure that annual or mid-term reports produced by National Authorising Officers and EC delegations are systematically reviewed. This should make it much easier for parliamentarians to establish a basic legislative framework for effective implementation of development programmes and also, at a more mundane level, to create a legislative environment that ensures competition and transparency when awarding contracts for work connected with EDF-funded programmes.

International dialogue. Many questions were asked about this, emphasising the need for closer links between the national, regional and global levels. Upstream, national parliaments must ensure that JPA topics are regularly prepared by the appropriate committee, or even set up separate committees to deal with this. Downstream, reports on JPA discussions or other relevant international meetings must be more effectively disseminated at plenary sessions. Parliaments also want to see more interparliamentary dialogue as well as dialogue with the JPA and existing regional parliamentary assemblies (such as ECOWAS or the SADC Parliamentary Forum⁴⁰) on the main issues arising from ACP-EC cooperation. During the seminars, parliamentarians also called for increased interparliamentary debate between ACP countries, in order to ensure that EU and ACP parliamentarians were more equally prepared for the JPA.



Comment by a parliamentarian
"ACP-UE collaboration in the Joint Parliamentary Assembly has also developed and increased, and our influence over all areas of policy reflected in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement is better understood and valued than ever before."
European Parliament, 2003.

Parliamentary capacity building. The capacity of both parliaments and their members is an issue that is very dear to parliamentarians and was the subject of much discussion. The debate suggested a number of avenues, including increasing parliamentarians' awareness of certain issues raised by the Cotonou Agreement (open days, debates, etc.) or discussion with the National Authorising Office about whether EDF funds can be used to build parliamentary capacity (for example, as part of good governance support programmes). Recurring themes included the need to improve overall working conditions, services and support for parliamentarians, as well as the idea of developing specific capacity for

more effective monitoring of ACP-EC cooperation⁴¹. The possibility of setting up a permanent structure within each parliament to encourage discussion of the use of funding from the 9th EDF was regularly mentioned in this connection. The most frequent suggestion here was to set up a special committee or working group with members representing several political parties and various disciplines within the national parliament.

• Main conclusions from the experiment

The importance of involving national parliaments. The series of seminars has made increasingly clear how essential it is to involve national parliaments in the debate on the Cotonou Agreement, particularly in countries where ACP-EC cooperation accounts for a substantial proportion of the aid provided. Despite the existence of the JPA, parliamentarians play only a marginal part in development programmes. Paradoxically, there is considerable emphasis on non-state actors, especially NGOs⁴², whereas elected representatives are only rarely involved in development programmes. This is a serious failing at a time when the importance of good governance is increasingly acknowledged. Moreover, now that the focus of EU support is shifting towards budget support, it is vital to ensure that accountability and monitoring mechanisms operate smoothly and effectively. Good governance requires a well-balanced dialogue between the legislative and executive branches, and it is important to ensure that parliaments have the resources and knowledge they need in order to play their part correctly. The inadequacy of the resources available to many ACP parliaments is therefore an issue that must be examined closely as part of ACP-EC cooperation.

The initiative has already generated other requests for aid. The seminars have also revealed that consciousness-raising initiatives are merely the first step in a lengthy process. In many ACP countries there is a clear need for assistance in carrying out monitoring activities and for parliamentary capacity building. The need to extend the initiative to a larger group of ACP parliaments has already been mentioned⁴³. Other ACP countries and parliaments have shown interest in the initiative and in assistance with interparliamentary dialogue at regional level. In fact, a similar seminar for the Pacific region has already been held in Fiji. Organised with the assistance of the ACP Secretariat⁴⁴, it brought together representatives of parliaments in the region for a two-day meeting, on the same pattern as the national seminars.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'Such training should really be institutionalised.'
Mali

Considerable interest. The organisers were struck by the interest shown in the seminars in very different quarters. The evaluation forms handed out to participants generally yielded a positive response. In most countries the initiative received extensive media coverage. Ministerial officials and non-state actors were generally positive about the exchange of information and direct interaction with elected representatives. Parliamentarians were also able – in some cases for the first time – to have a truly open dialogue with government officials on the issues raised. At the same time, the initiative sometimes helped to reduce potential distrust between government and parliament, and emphasised the need to continue the debate. It was also a first-time experience for some of the non-state actors attending the seminars. Although some already had experience of dialogue with parliamentarians, they stressed the importance of multi-actor dialogue in the presence of the legislative branch, the executive branch and the donor. Finally, after hesitating in a number of cases⁴⁵, all the EC delegations indicated that they welcomed opportunities for dialogue with parliaments.

Facing the future. Contacts within the ACP group, the European Parliament and the Commission have been informed about this initiative and have shown interest in extending it to other ACP countries. It would also be worth while broadening its scope and looking at the wider needs of ACP parliaments and ways of supporting them. This first initiative was funded by an EU Member State (Belgium), but it is clear that more extensive work in this area will require more funding. An obvious source is the EDF. Using it for this purpose (in national, regional or ACP-wide programmes) would be a practical demonstration of the importance the Cotonou Agreement attaches to governance issues. The EC has said it considers this a very important matter, and it plans to disseminate the results of the seminars to its own delegations and officially request them to give this issue full emphasis (JPA Standing Committee on Political Affairs, September 2004).



Comment by a parliamentarian
'I think such seminars will make parliamentary work more effective. Other sessions like this should be organised.'
Mali

Prospects

• Appeal for parliamentary capacity building

Having strong parliaments, actors that support development strategies and good governance still depends on capacity-building efforts. Parliamentarians must also have the facilities they need to deal with the issues for which they are responsible.

Converging perceptions... As stated in the introduction, this paper is not based on the results of extensive research⁴⁶. However, the comments that follow are based on direct contact with a dozen parliaments over the past two years. Joint efforts to prepare consciousness-raising seminars⁴⁷, the content of the debates that eventually took place and all the contacts maintained since then have been a fundamental source of inspiration. Other valuable sources of information have been the monitoring of European discussions on the subject, as well as systematic participation in JPA meetings and the preparations for them. These experiences and exchanges with practitioners, especially political decision-makers and parliamentary actors, have brought certain ideas to the fore and revealed a number of avenues.

... but no miracle recipes. Whether as regards the facilities available to parliaments, the way in which elected representatives perceive and perform their role as parliamentarians or any other variable that directly affects parliamentary work, the situation varies from country to country. Producing models for parliamentary capacity building therefore requires caution. Yet one thing is certain: any initiative in support of parliaments and their members must be based on an approach that is tailored to the environment concerned.

The actor approach. Building parliamentary capacity involves giving support to one specific actor within a system of governance. All actor approaches to cooperation share one basic feature: unless cooperation initiatives are seen as partnerships, they are unlikely to succeed. Support from the donor community must therefore be seen as support for local actors in carrying out their own projects. This is equally true of support for the legislative branch of government, and any parliamentary capacity building programme must allow for ownership by the beneficiaries, who will thereby become actors in support of their own development.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'Capacity must be built to identify and select trainable members of parliament with capacity and ability to cause change.'
Uganda

The dilemmas of a dual role. Parliamentarians must reconcile a number of dilemmas: they must reflect the differing concerns of those they represent while pursuing their own convictions, and they must serve their electors while defending their country's interests. Links between parliamentarians and their electors must not be allowed to degenerate into attempts or temptations to micromanage local situations, at the expense of parliamentarians' national role. All members of parliament are links in an institutional chain – the collective decision-making body – which keeps government powers in equilibrium, and they must therefore be well aware of their dual role. It is difficult for parliamentarians to resolve such dilemmas and make the right choices in paradoxical situations⁴⁸. Ease of access to the resources they need will enable them to make well-informed choices that they can then justify to those they represent. This is a key element of parliamentary capacity building. At the same time, the relevance of their local experience and their dialogue with people in their constituencies are elements that enhance the national debate and strategic development choices. This is precisely the added value that they can provide, and support programmes could usefully include a consciousness-raising component for this purpose.

Organisational funding. It is difficult for donors to provide logistic support that is only used to fund equipment or operating costs. Such support has only a limited impact, and is sometimes prevented by the prevailing procedures. Nevertheless, parliamentarians must have the facilities they need to do their jobs properly. To take just one very practical example, it is hard to hold a meeting if there is no electricity⁴⁹.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'If the proposals for parliamentary capacity building, particularly those concerning the offices of the Finance Committee and the Accounts Committee, can be put into practice, parliament will be in a better position to perform its monitoring role.'
Senegal

As indicated earlier, and at greater length in the specialised literature, the performance of each of these parliamentary functions has its own specific requirements⁵⁰. These will depend on the institution's own capacities (operationality and political bearing), the involvement of parliamentarians and the particular environment. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a number of basic principles and operational avenues which may contribute to the debate on parliamentary capacity building.

• How to improve parliamentary capacity?

Reviewing links with local partners. The renewed interest in parliaments as actors for development must be followed up. However, like financial support, parliamentary capacity building calls on donors to anchor their contributions in a specific environment in which political culture, social capital and dynamics of change must also be taken into account.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'Disseminating information on social dialogue issues may bring about changes in the behaviour of partners who were not previously used to positive communication.'
Mali

Operational implications for donors. This kind of support may prove a more arduous exercise than a classic project approach, for the way in which the issue of good governance is tackled will partly depend on parliamentary capacity building. It is therefore part of an extremely sensitive, complex field of action. At the same time, although country strategy papers refer frequently to the difficulties of achieving better governance, this is often a second-rank concern in cooperation programmes. Governance is seldom a coherent part of specific programmes, and the same is even more true of support programmes for parliaments.

A holistic approach. It is important to recognise the multi-dimensional nature of the concept of capacity building, which is not just a matter of training or facilities. Human, institutional, technical and operational capacity must be developed on the basis of a sound strategic approach. In addition, the various levels of intervention must be integrated for optimum impact: 'micro' (e.g. training on a specific topic) and 'macro' (e.g. the governance framework), or 'upstream' (e.g. electoral reform) and 'downstream' (e.g. professionalisation of parliamentary work).

Appropriate institutional analysis. Provided parliaments are involved, such analysis should result in a realistic support strategy. The way in which the process takes place may in itself be a capacity-building experience. It should encourage parliament to think about what it does, the environment it operates in (e.g. the political climate, the administrative capacities and the cultural identity of parliamentarian status) or even the level of parliamentarians' commitment to and ownership of their role. Aimed at bodies which have only recently entered the political arena, such analysis should also provide for the gradual development of an institutional memory that is not dependent on – and hence threatened by – changes in the composition of the legislature.

The scale, implementation and nature of support programmes. Sustainable development depends on strengthening countries' social capital by investing in parliamentary capacity. However, such support is still fairly novel, and it is therefore advisable to start with pilot projects in areas of shared interest, and build up gradually from there. A gradual approach in a concerted framework (inter-donor coordination), with parliamentarians directly involved in identifying their own needs, is an additional guarantee of effective ownership of the support mechanism by beneficiaries, and of real impact. Such an approach also allows links of trust to be built up with donors.

• Some operational avenues

Capacity management and planning. It is important, in collaboration with parliaments, to identify priority needs and opportunities for support and to draw up a proper 'strategy' for sustainable action. This should be done in coordination with an institutional capacity planning and management unit at parliamentary level (if necessary, such a unit should be set up or strengthened).

Development of indicators. Steps should be taken, if possible in partnership with civil society, to facilitate the development of specific indicators for monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies and public services. Such indicators should, in addition, allow any problems that have arisen to be correctly identified.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'In future it is important for parliamentarians to be involved in negotiations, since they are in permanent contact with the people and know their real needs.'
DRC

Monitoring of international agreements. Ratification of international aid agreements and agreements on trade negotiations should be preceded by proper information and debate within parliaments. It therefore seems advisable to set up or strengthen specialised committees (in areas such as foreign affairs, budgets and trade) that can systematically monitor the international agreements to which countries commit themselves – primarily cooperation agreements, but also ones on other transverse (commercial, political and cultural) issues. To ensure that full account is taken of national partnership dynamics, there must be an effective mechanism for coordinating the various tasks and specific arrangements must be made to preserve the institutional memory of this monitoring.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'If there is strong coordination between development partners and our parliament, which is a policymaker, often the huge problems hitting on the economy and development can be jointly handled.'
Uganda

Creation of specialised units. There are recurrent requests for the development of parliamentary research or service capacity for institutional tasks. One conceivable response is to set up research offices with suitably qualified (and adequately paid) staff, as well as 'watchdog' committees that can monitor the implementation of national policies and budgets. Such units can also liaise with civil-society organisations and, where appropriate, ministerial experts. Besides providing an effective information service for parliamentarians, such arrangements may increase citizens' trust and political acceptance of parliament by encouraging multi-actor dialogue.

Development of local partnership links. Steps to encourage cooperation with civil-society organisations, independent sources of expertise and local authorities will increase parliamentarians' knowledge and enhance the political credibility of parliament among citizens.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'Parliamentarians must be able to explain development themes to target populations in popularised terms, so that more acceptable projects can be drawn up.'
DRC

Steps to promote exchange of information between the legislative and executive branches. Institutionalised, regular exchange of information with sufficiently substantial content is needed in order to enhance and sustain parliamentary work, as well as the work of the executive branch. Such exchange must be based on two main principles:

- ensuring a continuous information flow with sufficiently substantial content to facilitate parliamentary work (so that parliamentarians can make well-informed decisions);
- communicating this technical information in good time to enhance the quality of the debate (e.g. annual reports on implementation of the Cotonou Agreement in preparation for reviews).



Comment by a parliamentarian
'Discussion between government and parliament is broad-based and can guide government when negotiating.'
Uganda

Steps to facilitate interparliamentary debate.

As countries become increasingly interdependent, legislators must develop their understanding of multilateral issues. They are also being called upon to ratify a growing number of international treaties, and the validation of national commitments has implications that extend well beyond national borders (e.g. commercial choices). Regional and global networking by parliamentarians is a useful response to this challenge, for it allows extensive exchange of information and gets away from the political infighting that can take up so much of the national debate.



Comment by a parliamentarian
'Parliamentarians are representatives of the people, and exchanging ideas with other parliamentarians around the world will help them acquire the knowledge they need to defend the people's interests more effectively.'
 DRC

Conclusion

The potential contribution parliaments can make to development is now widely acknowledged. Their involvement in drawing up, implementing and monitoring cooperation programmes is not misplaced interference, but derives from the legiti-

macy and relevance of their function. In addition to their legislative and supervisory powers, national sovereignty gives parliaments ample scope to influence policies that entail strategic and political choices. As an arena for institutional dialogue, and thanks to their members' links with the people in their constituencies, parliaments provide essential added value when it comes to national development. Their capacity to perform these roles in practice should not be overestimated; however, despite the existing constraints, they can already plan their own capacity-building strategies in the knowledge that there is increasing international support for this and that more funds will gradually become available to meet their needs. It is important that they should mobilise and use the available resources to advocate their cause.

In this connection, the current mid-term review of the implementation of the EDF and the six-monthly sessions of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly provide an opportunity to reflect and take action as part of ACP-EC cooperation. Parliaments must take fuller advantage of this, for their visibility as development actors, though acknowledged, remains limited. For example, perusal of issues of the ACP-EU Courier, a specialised publication on the Cotonou Agreement, shows that only two articles have been devoted to parliamentarians since the Agreement was signed in June 2000⁵¹. For

comparison, there has been an article on non-state actors – who are likewise beneficiaries of the new opportunities for partnership – in every single issue of the Courier since then. Anecdotal information confirms their position in the political and civic environment: the executive branch, donors and electors must now all take systematic account of them, and parliaments must be in a position to assert their own claims.

Parliamentary capacity is not a superficial issue: far from being the mere icing on the cake, it is an essential ingredient in any recipe for good governance in support of development.

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Notes

- 1 Africa, Caribbean, Pacific.
- 2 A brief search of development literature and papers by practitioners shows, moreover, that there are relatively few publications and findings on the importance and role of parliaments in developing countries. In particular, it is hard to find statistics on their participation or on programmes that provide support for them.
- 3 A Belgian-financed project comprising a series of national seminars for African parliamentarians on the subject of ACP-EC cooperation. The project was launched in 2001 and is still going on. The ECDPM, which is responsible for carrying out the project, has already conducted ten seminars. See page 6.
- 4 Article 67 of the Senegalese Constitution.
- 5 Manning, Nick and Stapenhurst, Rick, 2002. *Strengthening oversight by legislatures*, PREM notes – Public sector, Number 74, World Bank.
- 6 Idem.
- 7 Chungong, Martin, in *Assisting Good Governance and Democracy: the Changing Roles of the African Parliaments*, Berlin, May 2002.
- 8 Although it usually refers to the notion of good management of public affairs, the meaning of the term varies considerably from donor to donor.
- 9 Title II, Article 9, 'Essential elements and fundamental elements', paragraph 3.
- 10 Not only Parliaments [...] and other in-country stakeholders [...] play an important role in this [in-country] dialogue [on governance]. Each of these actors has the potential to provide valuable input and contribute to country-led assessments on pro-poor governance reform programmes [...]. (COM(2003) 615 final, Brussels, 20 October 2003, page 6, paragraph 15).
- 11 Frannie A. Léautier, Vice-President of the World Bank Institute, in *Parliaments and poverty – Building the capacity to tackle the problems*, The Parliamentarian 2002, Issue Two.
- 12 Poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) have been drawn up and signed by most ACP countries. They are the framework for action by the donor community, and a reference grid for cooperation with the countries concerned.
- 13 The NIP is implemented on the basis of the five-year cycle of cooperation funding from the European Development Fund (EDF). The NIP is reviewed annually (in coordination between the National Authorising Officer and the European Community delegation) and may be subject to mid-term review. The first mid-term review of the 9th EDF is now taking place: in 2004 for national programmes, and in 2005 for regional programmes.
- 14 One of the new features of the Cotonou Agreement is that it opens up partnership to non-state actors. This is now a fundamental principle of cooperation, and one that extends beyond implementation: non-state actors can now be involved in strategic discussions and monitoring and even evaluation of implementation, depending on the specific added value they can provide.
- 15 See Title II, Article 9.
- 16 Specifically the Lomé Conventions, the last of which (Lomé IV bis) expired in 2000.
- 17 National indicative programme. This is the frame of reference for cooperation, its sectoral priorities and its funding.
- 18 See note 9.
- 19 There is in fact already something of a trend in this direction, with the establishment of various regional assemblies and the role that some of these are already playing (such as ECOWAS or the SADC parliamentary forum: <http://www.sadcpf.org>), as well as the establishment of the Pan-African Parliament. It is not the aim of this InBrief to discuss these matters in detail, but the question of the rationalisation of interparliamentary debate needs to be mentioned in this connection.
- 20 Glenys Kinnock, Member of the European Parliament and Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. Excerpt from the interview entitled 'How effective are European parliamentarians in defending ACP interests?', InfoCotonou No. 5, ECDPM, 2004.
- 21 The Standing Committees on (1) Political Affairs, (2) Economic Development, Finance and Trade and (3) Social Affairs and the Environment.
- 22 A joint study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNDP indicates that 24 parliaments received support between 1991 and 2000, although in most cases only one project was involved. GTZ 2003.
- 23 In particular, this concern has been voiced by bilateral donors (the Utstein Group). Hubly 2004.
- 24 Inter-Parliamentary Union (www.ipu.org).
- 25 National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (www.ndi.org).
- 26 Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (www.fes.de).
- 27 AWEPA, European Parliamentarians for Africa (www.awepa.org).
- 28 See earlier note.
- 29 No such meetings have taken place so far, but the current (2004) JPA financing agreement makes provision for them and they can therefore be held once the necessary practical arrangements have been made.
- 30 Especially item R and item 7 of the draft presented at the recent meeting of the JPA Standing Committee on Political Affairs at the ACP Secretariat in Brussels on 22 September 2004. This will be submitted to a vote in The Hague in November 2004, during the 8th session of the JPA.
- 31 See Kenneth Karl's article *ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly launched*, in ACP-EU Courier No. 184, January-February 2001.
- 32 The programmes are usually implemented over a period of several years and ensure continuous funding once disbursement has begun. NIPs are drawn up for five years and are regularly reviewed.
- 33 Figures supplied by the Commission (4 October 2004), based on an assessment of ongoing projects under the 7th, 8th and 9th EDF. Two parliamentary support programmes, carrying a total of 26 million euros, are also being carried out in South Africa. These are funded from the Community budget (South Africa is an ACP country but is not an EDF beneficiary).
- 34 Based on the same calculations as the figures for capacity building programmes: see note 33.
- 35 Title II, Article 9, paragraph 3 of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement.
- 36 They are also planned for Mozambique and Burundi once the situation there so permits. For various reasons, the two seminars originally planned for Côte d'Ivoire and Tanzania have been cancelled.
- 37 One interesting detail should be noted in this connection: no per diems were paid in the course of the experiment. All the costs incurred are covered by Belgium, but the parliaments are responsible for placing the seminars on their members' work agendas. In other words, parliamentarians do not receive any specific payment for taking part in this consciousness-raising initiative.
- 38 This was one very clear finding that emerged from the seminars. Information exchanged at the various sessions of the JPA in recent years confirms that the situation in other ACP parliaments is much the same.
- 39 The same is also largely true of the debate launched in September 2002 on ACP-EU trade negotiations and changes to the generalised system of preferences that prevailed under the Lomé Conventions.
- 40 See note 18.
- 41 The situation differs from country to country, and some assemblies have better facilities than others, but needs in this area were systematically mentioned.
- 42 Non-governmental organisations.
- 43 To take just one example, this was explicitly requested during the deliberations of the JPA Standing Committee on Political Affairs in July 2003.
- 44 The ACP Secretariat supports the activities of the ACP Group institutions (Council of Ministers, Committee of Ambassadors, Joint Assembly). It follows up the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement and coordinates the work of the above-mentioned institutions.
- 45 Since official channel of contact for EC delegations in this area is still the National Authorising Officer (who is a government minister), some European representatives wanted to avoid creating confusion among parliamentarians or raising excessive hopes about the delegations' ability to be in constant dialogue with the legislative branch or indeed to provide funding on request.
- 46 Some bibliographical references are provided in the text; additional information and resources are listed on the last page.
- 47 See page 6.
- 48 For instance, by approving the budget for a road infrastructure programme, whereas the people in their constituencies feel that the main priority for improving their daily lives is access to health care and education.
- 49 The consciousness-raising seminar held in Niamey in May 2002 was a case in point. It was the middle of the hot season and there was no working generator. As a result, there were no facilities for interpretation into local languages, there were no microphones for the speakers and the temperature in the meeting room soon reached 48°. It is not hard to imagine the effect such conditions can have on the quality of parliamentary work.
- 50 For the budgetary function, see for example Joachim Wehner's article 'Back from the Sidelines? Redefining the Contribution of Legislatures to the Budget Cycle', WBI Working Papers, Series on Contemporary Issues in Parliamentary Development, World Bank, 2004. The author reflects on the current challenge of identifying support mechanisms that are tailored to the various national contexts and can reconcile legislative activism with fiscal prudence.
- 51 Apart from the articles on the Joint Parliamentary Assembly, which are presented at the end of each official session of the JPA (http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/publications/publications_courier_en.htm).

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Further Information

- UNDP - Democratic governance, category 'Parliamentary development'
<http://www.undp.org/governance/parldev.htm>
- Parliamentary Centre (Canada) with WBI - *Handbook on parliamentarians and policies to reduce poverty*
<http://www.parlcent.ca/publications/pdf/handbook.pdf>
- World Bank Institute - *Parliamentary Strengthening Program*
<http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/parliament/index.html>
- African Union and Pan-African Parliament
<http://www.africa-union.org/>
Click on Organs, then the Pan-African Parliament
- The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly
http://www.europarl.eu.int/intcoop/acp/10_01/default_en.htm
- Belgium development cooperation
<http://www.dgic.be/>
- ACP secretariat
<http://www.acpsec.org>
- DG Development, European Commission
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/development>

Several other references are mentioned throughout the text in the footnotes

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'InBrief' provides summarised background information on the main policy debates and activities in ACP-EU cooperation. These complementary summaries are drawn from consultative processes in which the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) engages with numerous state and non-state actors in the ACP and EC countries. The Centre is a non-partisan organisation that seeks to facilitate international cooperation between the ACP and the EC. Information may be reproduced as long as the source is quoted.

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