## **Workshop: Parliament and Development Assistance**

## **Briefing Note for GOPAC Members**

Parliamentary engagement in development assistance initiatives was discussed at the GOPAC Global Conference in Arusha in 2006. At that time a resolution on this matter identified the need for GOPAC to encourage development agencies to include provisions in their lending and grant agreements to:

- ensure parliaments are informed of their provisions;
- where practical, engage parliamentarians in the approval process; and
- require that all reports by recipients to the donors or to others pursuant to the lending or grant agreement be tabled in the recipient country parliament.

In addition, GOPAC was to encourage donors to consider funding complementary initiatives to strengthen oversight. The resolution also identified a need for GOPAC to review standards of parliamentary oversight of development funding and propose further steps GOPAC could propose to strengthen the involvement of parliamentarians.

Due to resource constraints, the anticipated task force to help deliver on these actions was not established, however the GOPAC Chair did encourage donor actions as described in the resolution. While positive steps have been taken by several donors, it is our impression from anecdotal information that parliamentary oversight of development assistance funding and activities remains weak in many recipient countries. Also development assistance funding for parliamentary capacity building remains focused more on support services and less on the capacity of the parliamentarians themselves. More information is needed and points to a potential research area for GOPAC to undertake.

Since 2006 there have been a number of other developments that now need to be factored in. In particular, there has been a follow-up conference to the Paris Declaration, creating the Accra Agenda for Action (September 2008) which calls for, among other things, parliamentary engagement in development assistance.

Another important development is the rapid increase in the number of ratifications of the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). This convention provides an engine for change to drive, among other things, governance improvements and the reduction of corruption in development assistance. Furthermore, the Conference of State Parties (CoSP) will be establishing a review mechanism to follow up on implementation of the UNCAC which will provide further momentum as an international institutional vehicle.

## **A GOPAC Perspective**

For the Kuwait 2008 workshop, this note suggests some potential actions for parliamentarians in recipient countries, i.e. parliamentarians could call for:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A background note (English only) is available on the Kuwait 2008 Conference web site for this workshop.

- **greater transparency**. Many GOPAC members from development assistance recipient countries note that the information they and their citizens receive on development assistance is incomplete or non-existent, including in cases of initiatives to strengthen parliamentary capacity. They recognize that some of their colleagues might use greater information and involvement for purposes other than development, but feel that the preferred access without disclosure that is available to the executive branch or a small number of officials within the executive branch is a greater risk;
- *improved parliamentary review*. Development assistance initiatives should align well with the preventive anti-corruption policies and programs under the UNCAC. Although development assistance can foster governance improvements and the prevention of corruption, without transparency it can also create opportunities for corruption;
- greater accountability. Donor agencies are encouraged to publish what they pay but recipient
  countries should also publish what they receive. Similar to the issues around public accounting for
  resource revenues, development assistance should be identified in a country's public accounts and
  subject to parliamentary oversight for expenditures and results. Furthermore parliaments should
  hold their governments to account for their commitments to the donor agencies; and
- governance improvements. Parliamentarians should make recommendations on what governance
  improvement initiatives would merit funding as part of development assistance. Ultimately the best
  value for the development assistance funding will be obtained when there is good governance and
  an absence of corruption in the country.

## **Discussion Points and Next Steps**

One aim would be to provide GOPAC members and interested international agencies with information on parliamentary engagement in development assistance, including current practices and potential opportunities. However there is a lack of information on this subject.

Should GOPAC therefore seek to survey parliamentarians in countries that receive development assistance on how they are currently informed and involved in:

- policies regarding development assistance generally, assistance related to governance, and assistance related to parliamentary capacity building; and
- the plans and/or strategies for implementation of the prevention provisions and any follow up mechanisms of the UNCAC (where the recipient country has ratified the UNCAC)?

Depending on members' interest, next steps could include opening up a dialogue with both donor agencies and other international organizations. Parliamentary organizations (such as the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank<sup>2</sup> which is an organisation of parliamentarians advocating transparency and accountability in international development) and other stakeholders that play a role in the implementation of UNCAC could also be included. Such a dialogue could be undertaken as part of the action plan for the UNCAC GTF and include inputs from the Global Task Force on Parliamentary Oversight.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> http://www.pnowb.org/