SUNY Center for International Development
Governance Information Bulletin 4

Governance and Democratic Strengthening

[Parliamentary Strengthening in Developing Countries](#) Hudson, A. and C. Wren, Overseas Development Institute, 2007

How can parliaments perform more effectively? While governance programs focus primarily on the executive and civil society, the potential of parliaments to foster capable, accountable and responsive governance is increasingly recognized. This report from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) aims to help the Department for International Development (DFID) make informed decisions about contributing to parliamentary strengthening in developing countries. Parliamentary strengthening work should be more long-term and demand-driven. It should address the causes of poor performance, be context-aware, involve recipients and include systematic evaluation.

[Strengthening Legislatures for Conflict Management in Fragile States](#) Dutta, Nikhil, Et. Al. Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

The "Strengthening Legislatures in Fragile States Workshop" of Princeton University's Woodrow
Wilson School, in partnership with UNDP and USAID, conducted the following study on strengthening the role of the legislature for conflict management in fragile states. In addition to reviewing the academic literature and the literature of donor organizations working on strengthening legislatures, the workshop conducted field research in Uganda, Bolivia and Bosnia over a nine-day period. Interviews with legislators, representatives of civil society organizations, journalists, local donor agency staff, and local government officials were arranged with the help of local partner agency staff to inform this report.

[Equality in Politics: A Survey of Men and Women in Parliaments](#) Ballington, Julie**.** Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008.

While it is important to increase the number of women in parliaments around the world, it is also necessary for women, once in parliament, to use their positions of influence to make a difference in decision making processes. Women parliamentarians are changing politics and redefining political priorities to include women's views and concerns. The report highlights some of the ways in which women are also working to mainstream a gender perspective in parliamentary work, such as through parliamentary committees and women's parliamentary caucuses.

[Approaches to Improving the Delivery of Social Services in Difficult Environments](#)
Berry, Chris, Et. Al. PRDE Working Paper, UK Department for International Development, 2004.

What are the challenges faced by external actors in supporting service delivery in difficult environments? This working paper from the UK Department of International Development asks what type of approaches, and under what conditions, improve human development outcomes and build pro-poor government-led systems in fragile states. It argues that the international community should emphasize service delivery as a key entry point to further development in difficult environments.

Short Technical Papers on Parliamentary Functioning, UNDP

The UNDP's Democratic Governance site provides a series of technical notes on the basics of parliamentary functioning that could be useful for practitioners working with new legislators and legislators in new parliaments. Each note includes a list of resources and institutions to contact for further assistance. Over the next few months we will highlight one of these technical papers in each issue.
- The Impact of Electoral Design on the Legislature

Congressman Howard L. Berman Introduces Bipartisan Legislation Requiring U.S. Foreign Assistance Strategy

Congressman Howard L. Berman (D-CA), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has recently introduced legislation requiring a comprehensive strategy for U.S. efforts to reduce global poverty and promote broad-based economic growth in developing countries. The introduction of this legislation has prompted an energetic reaction in the development world.   Provided above is a link to Berman's statement of introduction for the Initiating Foreign Assistance Reform Act (H.R. 2139), as well as a link to the full text of the bill.

Africa

Conducting Elections in Darfur: Looking ahead to Sudan's 2009 Elections Schwartz, Stephanie. United States Institute of Peace, March 2009.

The 2005 Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between North and South Sudan requires elections across all levels – local, state and national – by July 2009. Preparations for these elections have been slowly inching along. The National Election Act, passed in July 2008, was supposed to be enacted in 2006. The National Election Commission was only appointed in late 2008, and the census, meant to be completed by July 2007, was undertaken in April/May 2008 but results have yet to be released.
As the CPA deadline for elections approaches, the question of how Darfur can and should participate remains unclear. The region is still experiencing violent conflict, with millions displaced and living in IDP camps and refugee camps in neighboring Chad. However, the specific challenges for elections in Darfur were not sufficiently addressed in the CPA or in the National Elections Act, and it has yet to be specified how elections will accommodate Darfuris.

[Political Parties in Southern Africa: The State of Parties and their Role in Democratization](#) Matlosa, Khabele, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2007.

Strong and sustainable democracy is dependent on the existence of well-functioning political parties. Political parties are crucial actors in bringing together diverse interests, recruiting and presenting candidates, and developing competing policy proposals that provide people with a choice. In a democracy there is no substitute for open competition between political parties in elections. International IDEA's series of reports on political parties in Africa is based on research and dialogue with political parties in thirty African countries.

Middle East and North Africa

[Pragmatism Rather Than Backlash: Moroccan Perceptions of Western Democracy Promotion](#) Khakee, Anna, Et. Al., EuroMesco, November 2008.

This study examines perceptions of Western democracy promotion among its "targets" in Morocco – namely, NGOs, political party activists and parliamentarians, representatives of the judiciary and the state, journalists, and academics. Underlying this question is the assumption that perceptions of legitimacy and credibility are crucial for the effectiveness of democracy promotion, which touches sensitive institutions at the core of the political system. Legitimacy and credibility are particularly crucial in the Arab region, where suspicion of official political motives is rife.

Eurasia

[Aiding the State? International Assistance and the Statebuilding Paradox in Afghanistan](#) Nixon, Hamash. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2007.

How can a sustainable, legitimate and effective state be established in Afghanistan? As it moves from a transitional framework to a longer-term development framework, insurgency, opium and popular discontent threaten to undermine progress and further destabilize the country. This paper from the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) argues that while these threats require short-term action, sustainable solutions depend on improved governance, which in turn requires realistic statebuilding goals. Aid dependence, donor-driven assistance, limited state control over resources and budget assistance all present difficulties for statebuilding in Afghanistan.

[Kyrgyzstan: NGOs Assail Proposed Legal Changes as "Threat to Democracy"](#) Mamatov, Arslan. Eurasianet, 3/10/09

In a potentially development ominous for democratization in Kyrgyzstan, parliament will consider draft amendments that would drastically curtail the ability of civil society groups to function in the Central Asian nation. Critics say the amendments, if enacted, would hamper the distribution of international assistance, and could possibly be used to bar non-governmental organizations from monitoring elections, or performing other governmental watchdog functions.