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Governance and Social
Development Resource Centre

Helpdesk Research Report: Monitoring and Evaluation of Parliamentary Strengthening and Electoral Support Programmes
Date: 12/12/08

Query: Please provide an overview of the literature on measuring, monitoring, and evaluating programmes for parliamentary strengthening and electoral support, including tools and methodologies.

Enquirer: AusAID

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Overview

This helpdesk report has two parts. Part one provides an overview of the literature on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of parliamentary strengthening programmes. Part two explores M&E of electoral support programmes and political party support programmes. However, in the time allowed for this query it has only been possible to offer a snapshot of the issues.

It is worthy of note that there is a substantial body of material on assessing democracy assistance more generally. This material has not been included unless it was deemed directly relevant to the issues discussed in this query. Equally, specific programme evaluations have not been included in this report due to time constraints. Nevertheless, it is recognised that such reports often offer an insight into the evaluation methodology used and, as such, may prove useful points for further investigation.

Parliamentary strengthening

It is widely acknowledged that little progress has been made on measuring, monitoring and evaluating programmes for parliamentary strengthening. Donors and implementing agencies have, on the whole, failed to document the impacts of their parliamentary strengthening work. With little documentation, and even less in the way of independent, systematic, comprehensive evaluation, it is far from easy to identify the impacts of parliamentary strengthening, or to make generalisations about what works and what doesn't work. Furthermore, there appear to be

important discrepancies between how different development organisations measure the output and impact of their projects. That said, SIDA, USAID and UNDP appear to be the leaders in this field.

Challenges in M&E of parliamentary strengthening programmes

It is important to first distinguish between efforts to: a) assess parliamentary performance, b) assess whether a programme of parliamentary strengthening is needed, and c) assess whether a programme of parliamentary strengthening has worked. Whilst the focus of this report is on the third element, the distinction is not always clear in the literature.

Much of the literature stresses that parliamentary development initiatives need to be placed within a broader historical and social context of democratic development, and success measured in terms both of the local realities of democratic development and of the need to remain focused on overall democratisation goals. Legislatures are highly complex institutions which involve multiple actors seeking to achieve multiple goals simultaneously. The political nature of legislatures, the particular types of functions for which they are responsible, and the constant evolution in membership and political composition of legislatures lead to significant challenges in establishing indicators.

The problem of attribution is also raised in the literature. This is largely due to the large number of intervening variables in parliamentary performance. As such, neither the implementation of specific activities nor the expenditure of resources is necessarily correlated with parliamentary strengthening. It is also extremely difficult to divorce assessments from analysts' preferences in terms of democratic models. As such, it is suggested that nuanced political analysis is essential.

Methods and Indicators

Much of the literature emphasises the importance of a baseline assessment of the legislature's current capacity at the needs assessment / formulation stage of an M&E process. Participation of national stakeholders is key as their ownership is critical for programme sustainability. It is also argued that it is not enough to monitor changes within parliament – length of sittings, numbers of committees, questions and reports. It is much more important to measure changes in parliament's influence on government, and on governance. Objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) need to be selected to meet these criteria.

Some recommendations for good project evaluation include:

- Distinguishing among inputs, outputs, outcomes, objectives and goals
- Defining clear targets and goals at the project design stage in a participatory manner
- Collecting data on a continuous basis
- Measuring perceptions and attitudes
- Disaggregating evaluation data
- Measuring both immediate outcomes and results
- Focussing on evaluating improvements in process
- Engaging representatives of broader 'interested' society

Finally, it is noted that donors and other organisations are beginning to develop a number of indicators, benchmarks and standards for parliamentary performance. Whilst these are not designed to assess the effectiveness of parliamentary strengthening programmes *per se*, some commentators have suggested that these could serve as a starting point for such assessments. For example, the African Legislatures Project's (ALP) analytical framework could serve as a tool for measuring, monitoring and evaluating such programmes. A list of some of the most relevant of these indicators, benchmarks and standards can be found in the section of this report entitled: "Parliamentary performance".

<u>Electoral and political party support</u>

Electoral support

According to the Electoral Knowledge Network (ACE), electoral assistance spans a broad spectrum - from the establishment of the legal framework for the administration of elections, to inclusive electoral systems and voter registration processes, support to the institutions called to administer and adjudicate upon electoral processes, to the provision of financial resources, materials, equipment and expert advice, as well as technical and financial support to civil society engaged in civic and voter education, election observation and media monitoring, including technical assistance to political parties. However, in the time allowed for this query it has not been possible to address these individual components. Instead the report focuses on electoral support in its broadest sense.

From the limited literature in this area, it would appear that monitoring and evaluation remains the most neglected component of electoral assistance programmes. Nevertheless, it is often suggested that the electoral cycle approach offers a solid framework for planning, formulating, monitoring and implementing electoral assistance. The use of operational auditing, external and internal peer reviews, results-based monitoring and evaluation tools and independent or multi-stakeholder post-election reviews are recommended to help make electoral assistance programmes more effective and promote and assist in their evaluation.

It has also been suggested that standard situation tool kits for needs assessments should be developed in conjunction with stakeholders. Such a tool kit would include a menu of options for assistance during each stage of the electoral cycle. Lessons learned, conclusions from a post-election review and recommendations from observers' final reports should all be properly considered in developing needs assessments for the next electoral cycle.

Some recommendations for monitoring and evaluation include:

- ➢ Setting up a monitoring and evaluation mechanism before project implementation
- ➢ Ensuring that the budget for monitoring and evaluation is adequate
- ➢ Defining the scope of the project evaluation within the project document
- ➢ Monitoring the functionality of partnerships and information sharing networks
- ➢ Identifying whether innovative methodologies were used and were successful
- ➢ Monitoring results rather than outputs
- ➢ Identifying the level of participation among stakeholders, including donors
- ➢ Sharing and examining monitoring data with donors and management
- ➢ Assessing the contribution of the project to broader democratic governance goals
- ➢ Conducting a comprehensive electoral audit
- ➢ Ensuring the sustainability of systems and structures, and the transfer of best practices to reduce the need for outside help in the next cycle

Political Party support

According to the literature, political party assistance has yet to resolve the challenge of balancing strategic objectives and intermediate results as the defining measures of success. Whilst there have been some recent efforts to explore the effectiveness of democracy assistance, they do not specifically address political party assistance, and as such are not included in this report.

In general, the literature suggests that party assistance funders and providers need to do a better job of analysing their own work. They should develop better systems for measuring results, formulating lessons learned, and sharing these lessons and best practices across governance programmes, countries and regions.

It is widely recognised that political party assistance can take years to bear fruit. M&E tools need to take this into account. Programme managers need to be patient. Direct and quantifiable attribution of outcomes to political party assistance is usually impossible. M&E tools need to be flexible enough to capture intended and actual results over time, and analyse each. Moreover, political party assistance is highly political. In particular, post-conflict contexts present unique challenges to political party assistance; the same is true for monitoring and evaluating in these situations.

Some recommendations for M&E of party assistance include:

- ➤ Following and assessing political developments in a sustained manner
- ➤ Describing the relative importance of multiple policy reform and other initiatives
- ➤ Assessing the effectiveness of the political party assistance strategy
- ➤ Including stakeholders
- ➤ Starting with clear, realistic, and measurable programme objectives
- ➤ Being explicit about underlying assumptions and expectations
- ➤ Clarifying expected outcomes with partners at the beginning
- ➤ Defining benchmarks of progress
- ➤ Determining the specific types of qualitative and quantitative information that need to be gathered
- ➤ Building relationships with the specific party activists responsible for gathering the information that your team needs
- ➤ Creating a system to analyse and distribute information
- ➤ Allowing sufficient time to gather the necessary information
- ➤ Periodically assessing results in relation to the initial objectives and expectations
- ➤ Acknowledging the contributions of other development partners and using networks
- ➤ Capturing unplanned political party assistance
- ➤ Highlighting the need for political party assistance where it is not being offered
- ➤ Focussing beyond beneficiaries
- ➤ Making lessons learned and best practices work for you

Monitoring and evaluating parliamentary strengthening programmes

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Parliamentary strengthening

UNDP, 2001, 'Indicators for Legislative Development', draft prepared for a UNDP Staff Training Seminar: 'Strengthening the Legislature: Challenges and Techniques' – October 22-24, Brussels
www.undp.org/governance/eventsites/LegislatureTechinques2001/indlegis.doc

This paper provides practical guidance in monitoring and measuring progress and results of legislative strengthening programmes through the use of performance indicators. According to the paper, the political nature of legislatures, the particular types of functions for which they are responsible, and the constant evolution in membership and political composition of legislatures. lead to significant challenges in establishing indicators.

Although quantitative indicator measurements are preferred, indicators that measure qualitative aspects are acceptable. The key requirement for qualitative or quantitative indicators is that they be defined so as to permit regular, systematic and relatively objective interpretation regarding change in the "value" or status of the indicator.

Key steps in establishing legislative development indicators are:

1. Establishing indicators at needs assessment/formulation stage - The information collected at this time should thoroughly document the status of development of the legislature, which will serve as a baseline against which to measure progress and achievements.
2. Introduction of indicators during ongoing programmes - The most appropriate time to establish indicators is during or immediately after annual reviews, evaluations or tri-partite reviews.
3. Participation of national stakeholders - Their ownership is critical for programme sustainability and their assistance often will be required when it is time to measure achievement and progress based on the indicators.
4. Establish clear and specific objectives - Carefully review the precise wording and intention of the objective. Be clear about the type of change that is planned. Is it a situation, condition, level of knowledge, behaviour or other change? Determine whether the change proposed in the objective is absolute, relative, or no change. Identify clearly the specific targets for change. Is it planned for certain processes, policies, legislative committee members, legislative staff, citizens, etc.?
5. Selection of indicators - It is important to recognise that indicators are very specific to the situation and condition of the particular legislature receiving assistance, so externally identified indicators could lend themselves to adaptation, but not adoption. Quantitative measures such as numbers or percentage should be compared to the baseline or benchmark information. Indicators should be sensitive to change. Assess each potential indicator based upon the core criteria outlined below:

   o   Directly link and match the indicator to the objective it is intended to measure.
   o   Each indicator should be clear and unambiguous about what is being measured.
   o   Indicator(s) should adequately measure achievement of the planned objective.
   o   Use quantitative measurements whenever possible.
   o   Disaggregate performance indicators by gender or other population characteristics.
   o   Consider practical implications of cost and time for collecting measurement data.
   o   Choose indicators where measurement data is sufficiently reliable in quality for confident decision-making.

There is a variety of measuring tools, but no one tool is intrinsically better than others. Principal data sources and collection methods are as follows:

   ➢ Secondary source data from government or international agencies
   ➢ Judgmental or narrative sources
   ➢ Content analysis of press coverage or other documents
   ➢ Sample surveys
   ➢ Focus groups
   ➢ Key informant interviews
   ➢ Case studies

NDI and UNDP, 2001, 'Guidebook on Strengthening the Representative Capacity of Legislatures', background paper for a UNDP staff training seminar 'Strengthening the Legislature – Challenges and Techniques', October 22-24, Brussels
http://www.iknowpolitics.org/files/NDI.%20Guidebook%20on%20Strengthening%20the%20Representative%20Capacity%20.pdf

Chapter 4 of this report (p28), "Assessment, performance, monitoring and evaluation", emphasises the importance of a baseline assessment of the legislature's current capacity when designing a programme to improve legislative representation. Appendix II provides an overview of the types of questions that should be considered in such an initial assessment – surveying the legal and political framework within which representation occurs, as well as internal and external

capacity. The baseline assessment can be supplemented with a number of specific indicators, which can be monitored periodically over the course of the programme, such as those outlined in the UNDP's "Indicators for Legislative Development" (see previous document).

Issues to consider when designing, measuring and evaluating a programme include:

- ➢ Measure perceptions and attitudes
- ➢ Disaggregate evaluation data
- ➢ Measure immediate outcomes and results
- ➢ Focus on evaluating improvements in process
- ➢ Involve programme partners in monitoring and evaluation

The guidebook suggests that if there has been a well-designed system to monitor ongoing performance, end-of-project evaluation of programme results should not need to be particularly elaborate. However, it is generally appropriate to revisit the baseline assessment to provide a more complete view of changes during the life of the programme. If significant progress has been made, or after significant political, social or economic change, it is also appropriate to revisit the initial broad-based assessment to determine whether the targeted programme areas are still appropriate.

Section 2 of the NDI's "Guidebook for Implementing Legislative Programs" http://www.accessdemocracy.org/files/22_gov_legisprghbk00.pdf also offers guidance on monitoring and evaluation with a strong emphasis on baseline assessments.

Hubli, K. S., 2001, 'Evaluation and Monitoring Methodologies', presentation given at the UNDP staff training seminar, 'Strengthening the Legislature: Challenges and Techniques', October 22-24, Brussels
http://www.undp.org/governance/eventsites/LegislatureTechinques2001/evalmonit.ppt

This presentation stresses the importance of distinguishing among the following elements in legislative strengthening programmes:

- ➢ Inputs (e.g., consultants, computers, etc.)
- ➢ Outputs (e.g., 40 people trained in a workshop on oversight techniques)
- ➢ Outcomes (e.g., increased knowledge of oversight investigation techniques)
- ➢ Objectives (e.g., increased oversight hearings)
- ➢ Goals (e.g., increased government accountability)

Some considerations in monitoring and evaluating legislative strengthening programmes include:

- ➢ Legislatures are highly complex institutions. They involve multiple actors seeking to achieve multiple goals simultaneously
- ➢ Legislatures have natural cycles
- ➢ Monitoring and evaluation is often highly political
- ➢ Resist the tendency to monitor outputs rather than progress in achieving desired outcomes, objectives and goals. Find ways to measure small changes in large goals; or outcomes that can be affected with the project time frame
- ➢ Evaluation should focus on process, not outputs
- ➢ There are many intervening variables including economic conditions, geopolitical developments, ethnic conflict, death of a key politician, etc. As such, there is no substitute for nuanced political analysis
- ➢ Perceptions matter
- ➢ Where possible, disaggregate data (by gender, party, region, etc.)
- ➢ Identify clear goals and targeted groups; watch for unintended consequences

Some practical tips include:

> General Issues - Tie evaluation and monitoring to the purpose or objectives. Consider resource availability, novelty of the programme, confidence in programme design and the needs of the funder. Budget sufficient resources.
> Issues in Doing a Baseline - Limit scope to allow for detailed coverage of programme areas; protect against biases of persons doing the baseline; pick timing carefully; describe any special circumstances; prepare carefully for baseline assessment team; cover the range of stakeholders; get out of the capital; consider focus groups or creative methods for documenting perceptions and processes; pay attention to protocol; build good will.
> Using outside evaluators - Outside evaluators can provide objectivity and insulation from the political consequences of an evaluation; combine multiple backgrounds; recognize value of "time in the trenches"; designate a lead person with responsibility for producing the document; get a sufficient time commitment
> Issues in Performance Monitoring - Draw on baseline and prior evaluations; design a performance monitoring plan up front and adjust it as the project evolves; tie it to likely performance issues; draw on low-cost existing information sources – these may be more quantitative, with less analysis; focus on outcome level, rather than objective or goal level; consider quarterly or semi-annual monitoring; expect, but explain, fluctuations; consider updating a baseline to try to identify issues.

Shultz, K., 2007, 'USAID's Legislative Strengthening Performance Measurements', presented May 21, Brussels
http://sdnhq.undp.org/governance/parls/docs/presentations/Session%20IV-%20Schultz.ppt

This presentation outlines USAID's system for measuring the progress and results of legislative assistance programmes. The system uses pre-determined goals and objectives and measures progress towards them through the use of indicators.

Goal 1: More Effective, Independent, and Representative Legislatures

Illustrative indicators:
> Survey of the level of confidence among political actors that the legislature has the capacity to perform its function; and level of confidence among legislators that the legislature acts as an independent body.
> Survey of the level of confidence among citizens that legislature acts as a check against the executive; and level of confidence among citizens that legislature represents their interests.
> Index of quality of legislative processes.
> Number or percentage of substantial legislative bills emanating from the legislature.
> Number or percentage of legislative bills drafted by the executive that are substantially amended by the legislature.
> Number or percentage of new laws which, as bills, were a) accompanied a written technical analysis, opinion papers, and/or legislative study; and b) were the subject of a public hearing.

Goal 2: More Effective and Democratic Internal Management Systems

Illustrative Indicators:
> The number of reform regulations and procedures adopted that enable the legislature to operate more efficiently and democratically in comparison with a list of reforms proposed.
> The number of months each year that MPs and staff receive promised remuneration in timely manner.
> The number of plenary session convened as scheduled with firm agendas in advance.

- ➢ The number or percentage of laws benefiting during drafting from the use of improved information systems.
- ➢ The percentage of MPs and staff who say they are able to obtain information when they need it.
- ➢ Observance of rules permitting equitable participation by opposition.
- ➢ Percentage of legislature's budget devoted to modernization and reform; and/or to research & information.

Goal 3: Increased Legislative Capacity to Influence National Policy and Budget Priorities

Illustrative Indicators
- ➢ Adequacy of legislative review of the budget
- ➢ Index of committee capacity
- ➢ Index of committee oversight

Goal 4: Increased Citizen Access to Legislative Processes

Illustrative Indicators
- ➢ The number of open public hearings in which citizens and citizen groups participate.
- ➢ The average number of meetings legislators hold with NGOs or constituents per week or per month.
- ➢ The percentage of legislators with functioning regional or local constituent offices.
- ➢ The percentage of legislative committee meetings open to the public and media.
- ➢ Scorecard of citizen access.
- ➢ Index measuring whether the content of public participation in committee processes is factored into legislation and budget decisions.

USAID, 1998, 'Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators', Washington D.C.
http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/pnacc390.pdf

This handbook offers detailed guidance on strategic planning and performance monitoring of USAID democracy and governance programmes, including developing, selecting and using indicators.

 Part 2.4, Section D of the handbook deals with measuring the effectiveness, independence and representativeness of legislatures. Each objective includes a list of indicators. For each indictor a definition and unit of measurement is provided along with information on the relevance of the indicator; data collection methods and approximate costs; and target setting/trendline Interpretation issues. Of particular relevance is objective 2.4.5 'More Effective, Independent, and Representative Legislatures' (pp 198 -214)

In addition, the appendices outline criteria for developing and adapting performance indicators, assessing data collection approaches and costs, and using scales, indexes, and scorecards for performance measurement.

Schulz, K., 2004, 'Measuring the Impact of Donor Funded Legislative Strengthening Programs on Legislative Oversight Performance', in Pelizzo, R., Stapenhurst, F. and Olson, D. 'Trends in Parliamentary Oversight', World Bank Institute, Washington D.C.
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PSGLP/Resources/TrendsinParliamentaryOversight.pdf

The final section of this report (p 55) describes the initial stages of a USAID project that attempts to measure the effectiveness of specific types of USAID legislative assistance activities and evaluate the overall impact of USAID legislative assistance programmes in a particular country.

Although work on the implementation of this research programme had not yet begun at the time of writing (2004), two different case study methodologies were decided upon in order to achieve the depth and breadth necessary for sustainable conclusions. First, a comparative case study approach would study the qualitative relationships between critical variables in depth, and would facilitate explicit comparisons between those things that are deemed to be the most important sets of contextual factors shaping democratic development. Second, a modified version of the field network approach was proposed to enable the gathering of data on a broader set of cases.

DFID, 2004, 'Helping Parliaments and Legislative Assemblies to Work for the Poor - A guide to the reform of key functions and responsibilities', London
http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/helping-parliaments.pdf

Chapter 14 of this guide (p 49) focuses on evaluating the impact of parliamentary reform programmes. It argues that it is not enough to monitor changes within parliament – length of sittings, numbers of committees, questions and reports. It is much more important to measure changes in parliament's influence on government, and on governance. Objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) need to be selected to meet these criteria and there needs to be a base-line.

Some possible indicators include:

> ➢ Improved governance - physical and economic security, human rights, basic freedoms
> ➢ Improvements in living standards and more say for the poor and minority and disadvantaged groups
> ➢ Changes in the amount of media coverage given to parliament, or in the amount of time dedicated by MPs to constituency matters – surgeries, volume of correspondence etc.

The effectiveness of legislatures is not simply a matter of making the government change its legislation or policies. Equally important but less obvious ways include providing a forum for public debate about an issue, raising the profile of a particular policy question, and highlighting areas of weakness within the government administration. The quantity and quality of these activities might also be expected to increase.

Imaginative ways of measuring the impact of particular assistance might include the use of attitude change survey methodologies, for example, in assessing the impact of training seminars or an ethical code. Statistical information about the number of laws passed should be analysed not only to show increases or decreases in activity, but also the number of times particular pieces of legislation have to be reconsidered because of flaws that were not noticed earlier. An increase in the number of representations received by parliament will not be very helpful, and is unlikely to be sustained, if parliament does nothing with them. The effectiveness of improvements to a library resource could be assessed by measuring changes in the attitudes of legislators towards the service, or changes in the number of inquiries made by members.

Brösamle, K. J. et al., 2007, 'Improving Fiscal Scrutiny through Legislative Strengthening'. Report to the UK Department for International Development (DFID), London School of Economics (LSE), London
http://sdnhq.undp.org/governance/parls/docs/Improving%20Fiscal%20Scrutiny%20through%20Legislative%20Strengthening%20-%20Final%20Research%20Report%20-%2014%20March%202007.pdf

This study presents a stock-take and review of development organisations' global activities aimed at strengthening parliaments' capability to scrutinise public spending. Chapter 3 (p 49) explores evaluation and impact assessment practices. The report confirms the difficulty in assessing both, the effectiveness of donor projects on legislative fiscal scrutiny, and the impact of parliamentary scrutiny on improved financial governance and development in general. There are large discrepancies between how different development organisations measure the output and impact of their projects and only some organisations apply rigorous evaluation methodologies.

Nevertheless, some recommendations for good project evaluation are identified:

➢ Clear targets and goals should be defined at the project design stage for concrete activities, their output and the outcome/impact they are intended to have. These should be based on a sound methodology
➢ Collection of data on outputs and activity levels should take place continuously and should be in place during project implementation
➢ Outputs can usually be best measured using SMART targets, whereas impact measurement is best served by using a mix of SMART and SPICED (subjective, participatory, interpreted, cross-checked, empowering, diverse/disaggregated) indicators;
➢ Defining indicators and targets should be participative and decentralised, while collection and evaluation of data should be centralised with regular feedback (especially on qualitative reports) given to the reporting units in order to ensure data coherence and quality;
➢ Data on macro-trends (such as spending levels, budget balance, public debt, poverty measures etc.) should be provided, though one must be aware of the indirect link of donor project work to changes in this data.

Given the difficulties in assessing parliaments' oversight effectiveness the report recommends that the donor community set up a body to:

➢ develop an index or framework that measures the quality of budgetary (oversight) institutions
➢ identify other relevant data on donor activity and reforms that affect the quality of budgetary institutions
➢ develop a strategy to collect this data in as many countries as possible
➢ implement this strategy and collect this data on a regular basis
➢ work with other major donors and draw on implementing agencies' experience with project output measurement.
➢ undertake a stock-take aimed specifically at measurement and evaluation practices.

DFID, UNDP and WBI, 2007, 'Donor Consultation on Parliamentary Development and Financial Accountability', report, hosted by the Government of Belgium, Brussels, May 21-22
http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/PO56.pdf

This report on a two-day consultation for the donor community on parliamentary development concludes that donor evaluations of parliamentary strengthening work are few and far between. SIDA has shown itself to be a pioneer in this respect, undertaking a major evaluation from 2002-

2005, covering close to eight years of programming (1998-2005). USAID undertakes regular evaluations of individual programmes, although they have not yet done a full review of the overall impact of USAID legislative programmes. Other donors are also beginning to evaluate or assess parliamentary strengthening work more systematically. UNDP's mid-term evaluation of GPPS II will inform its work program and methodology in GPPS III (see next document for more details). DFID has attempted to gather lessons learned in its own projects and that of others, including around financial scrutiny, prior to increasing its support to parliaments.

According to the report, evaluations are often costly and time consuming. They require a firm commitment on the part of donors and implementing partners. Donors are encouraged to undertake more evaluations, particularly joint evaluations which allow donors to conserve resources and promote better coordination.

The report also finds that donors struggle to develop meaningful measures or indicators for evaluations. Even once such measures are developed, donors are challenged to find good baseline data. This may serve as an incentive for donors to support improvements in legislative recordkeeping systems and relevant infrastructure. Information may be attained from several sources including monitoring Hansards, committee reports, budget and other issue focused debates, private members bills and media reports. Interviews may be undertaken with the parliamentary secretariat or clerk, MPs, staff and CSOs, and donors may develop additional measurement tools such as scorecards, indexes and surveys.

Section 4, "Measuring Progress in Parliamentary Development" (p 21) reviews efforts to develop indicators to measure progress on parliamentary development. Of particular interest is the Parliamentary Centre's (PC) results-based management framework. Results are defined at three levels: outputs, outcomes and impacts. Strategies for monitoring and tracking results include indicators, methods and frequency of collection of information, evaluations forms and random interviews of participants during activities. At the outcome level, the PC attempts to monitor how knowledge and experience gained in trainings translates in individual MPs work. This is done for example by: monitoring member contributions on the floor of the house through; tracking committee reports; tracking member inputs during budget debates; tracking members' statements on the floor of the house; monitoring media reports on MPs activities. Work is also monitored at the committee level, at the community level and through a project steering committee. Challenges include poor response rates to surveys and difficulty in tracking information from print materials such as the Hansard which may be inaccurate and unreliable.

Murphy J., and Alhada, A., 2007, "Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening II Mid-term Evaluation Report", UNDP, New York
http://sdnhq.undp.org/governance/parls/docs/GPPS%20Mid-Term%20Evaluation%20Final.pdf

This evaluation report of the second phase of the UNDP's Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening (2004-2008) includes country level evaluations from Algeria, Benin, Lebanon, Morocco and Niger. Of particular interest here is Appendix One: "Considerations and constraints in evaluation of GPPS II" (pp 148-153). It outlines a number of constraints to evaluating parliamentary strengthening programmes. According to the report, definitive or data-based measurement of the impact of any institutional development activity is not possible, for several reasons:

> ➢ Impacting factors on institutions are multiple, multi-dimensional, and often themselves immeasurable
> ➢ Development resources are substantially fungible
> ➢ 'Micro' measures of parliamentary development are heavily impacted by the nature of the constitutional system and governance practices in individual countries.

- ➢ Certain political circumstances will naturally generate substantial 'evidence' of parliamentary effectiveness, even though in emerging democracies this eventuality can in some cases represent a source of democratic instability.
- ➢ Neither the implementation of specific activities nor the expenditure of resources is necessarily correlated with parliamentary strengthening.
- ➢ It is extremely difficult to divorce development assessments, particularly in the area of governance and democratization, from analysts' preferences in terms of democratic models
- ➢ Definitive impact is theoretically impossible because no control group is available.
- ➢ Parliamentarians and staff may be inclined to report positively on development activities if they have benefited from those activities. Those who have not personally benefited or have not benefited as they expected may present a negative evaluation.
- ➢ Political context is crucial. Parliamentary development initiatives need to be placed within a broader historical and social context of democratic development, and success measured in terms both of the local realities of democratic development and of the need to remain focused on overall democratization goals.
- ➢ Parliamentary strengthening can be evaluated to some extent through discussions with representatives of broader 'interested' society, including for example representatives of the media, government officials, and civil society organizations. However, external representatives of different social institutions also themselves come from positions of interest and their views need to be filtered.

Wilton Park Conference: "Enhancing the effectiveness of parliaments: challenges and opportunities", orgaised by DFID, WBI and CPA, 27-30 October 2008, West Sussex
http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/highlights/viewstory.aspx?url=/wp_128701988963933750.html

This recent conference addressed among other things, the issue of M&E of parliamentary strengthening programmes. The conference report has not yet been published but an order can be placed with Sue Reay (sue.reay@wiltonpark.org.uk)

Parliamentary performance

**Democracy in Africa Research Unit (DARU) and Center for Legislative Studies
 "African Legislatures Project (ALP)", South Africa**
http://www.bridgew.edu/CLS/LegisAfricanProjects.cfm

The African Legislatures Project (ALP) aims to develop a range of quantitative and qualitative measures of legislative performance to assess and compare the development of individual legislatures in relation to one another and over time. The project has identified more than 400 variables that explain the development and performance of legislatures, and in turn, their contribution to the broader processes of democratization and poverty reduction. ALP will collect data about these items in the 43 sub-Saharan African countries where a legislature of some form currently exists, with a special focus in 18 identified countries where the prospects for democratization and democratic consolidation are high or promising.

This information should enable donors and implementers to raise the quality and impact of their legislative strengthening programmes and help improve and systematise monitoring and evaluation components of parliamentary reform projects.

Note: as this project is ongoing, no further details are publicly available. However, Professor Shaheen Mozaffar, of the Center for Legislative Studies (smozaffar@bridgew.edu) has indicated that he would be happy for AusAID to contact him directly should you wish to discuss this further.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, 2006, 'Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures. A study group report', London
http://sdnhq.undp.org/governance/parls/docs/CPA%20Benchmarks%20Report%20-%20FINAL%20-033007.doc

Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008, 'Evaluating parliament: a self-assessment Toolkit for parliaments', Geneva
http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/self-e.pdf

Parliamentary Centre, Ottawa: Parliamentary Performance Report Card and Indicators
http://parliamentarycentre.org/indicators/index_e.php
http://www.parlcent.ca/indicators/budget_process_e.php?template=print

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https://ndi.ndi.org/files/2113_gov_standards_010107.pdf

Parliamentary Centre and World Bank Institute, nd, 'Parliaments that work: a conceptual framework for measuring parliamentary performance', WBI, Washington D.C.
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Electoral support

UNDP, 2007, 'Electoral Assistance Implementation Guide', Democratic Governance Group, Bureau for Development Policy, New York
http://www.undp.org/governance/docs/UNDP-Electoral-Assistance-Implementation-Guide.pdf

The purpose of this Guide is to provide UNDP Country Office staff with clear direction on how to plan, formulate, monitor and implement electoral assistance using the concept of the Electoral Cycle to identify effective entry points. This assistance includes helping electoral management bodies (EMBs) prepare to conduct a specific electoral event, supporting civic and voter education programmes, building the long-term capacity of institutions such as the media or police forces, and providing capacity development support to political parties.

Chapter seven of the report (p79) focuses on monitoring, evaluation and audit. Key steps are as follows:

➢ Set up a monitoring and evaluation mechanism before project implementation. Define realistic indicators that can easily be measured objectively. Maintain records of monitoring meetings and decisions made during them.
➢ Be aware that monitoring of the project outputs and progress towards outcomes, and reporting corporately on them, is the responsibility of the UNDP Country Office. At the same time, UNDP should be encouraging EMBs to evaluate their own processes critically and constantly.
➢ Ensure that the budget for monitoring and evaluation is adequate at the design stage of the project.
➢ Define the scope of the project evaluation within the project document, which should state the goals or objectives of the evaluation. Determine what capacities should have been developed as well as what capacities were in fact developed (and how).
➢ Monitor the functionality of partnerships and information sharing networks.
➢ Identify whether innovative methodologies were used and were successful.
➢ Monitor results. For example, the important thing is not the number of voter education workshops that are held, but rather what attendees of the workshop learned about voting and how that knowledge was or was not translated into action.
➢ Identify the level of participation among stakeholders, including donors. It is usually preferable for UNDP to assist the EMB; ideally, the EMB should be driving the monitoring and evaluation process, not just participating in it.
➢ Share and examine monitoring data with donors and Country Office management.
➢ Assess which particular interventions or results contributed to strengthen democratic governance, sustainable development and human rights
➢ Assess the contribution of this project to any broader international programme of electoral assistance activities.
➢ Ensure that once a project is completed, lessons learned are passed along to the stakeholders that will continue to be involved in the strengthening of the electoral process.

The chapter also includes guidance on drafting the ToR for the evaluation team, reporting evaluations, ensuring knowledge gained through monitoring and evaluation informs future project design, and undertaking an audit.

European Commission-UNDP, 2006, 'Methodological Guide on Electoral Assistance', Brussels
 http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/worldwide/electoral-support/documents/election-assistance-methodological-guide_en.pdf

The European Commission's electoral assistance programmes use the electoral cycle approach, which sees the electoral process as an ongoing or cyclical activity, rather than being event driven at discrete points in time. As such, the evaluations and recommendations that follow every electoral event (such as EMBs' internal debriefings, peer-reviews, international and domestic observers' reports, external audits) should set the agenda for the following package of reforms.

Whilst this guide offers very little explicitly in the way of guidance on monitoring and evaluation, it is recommended that M&E of the electoral cycle approach be based on the EC's "Project Cycle Management Guidelines" (http://soundplanning.esflive.eu/files/pcm_guidelines_2004_en_0.pdf) Of particular relevance is section 4.5 'Implementation, including monitoring and reporting' (p 39)

USAID, 1998, 'Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators', Washington D.C.
http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/pnacc390.pdf

This handbook offers detailed guidance on strategic planning and performance monitoring of USAID democracy and governance programmes, including developing, selecting and using indicators.

 Part 2.2, Section B of the handbook deals with measuring the extent to which political processes are genuine and competitive. Each objective includes a list of indicators. For each indictor a definition and unit of measurement is provided along with information on the relevance of the indicator; data collection methods and approximate costs; and target setting/trendline Interpretation issues. Of particular relevance are objectives 2.2.1. to 2.2.4. (Impartial Electoral Framework; Credible Electoral Administration; Informed and Active Citizenry; and Effective Oversight of Electoral Processes) (pp 66-88)

In addition, the appendices outline criteria for developing and adapting performance indicators, assessing data collection approaches and costs, and using scales, indexes, and scorecards for performance measurement.

International IDEA, 2006, 'Effective Electoral Assistance Moving from Event-based Support to Process Support', conference report and conclusions, 2-4 May, Ottawa
http://www.idea.int/publications/eea/upload/Inlay%20FINAL.pdf

This conference focussed on how to make electoral assistance more effective. The working group on 'facing electoral realities' (p 15-17) emphasised the importance of needs assessment and programme evaluation in electoral cycle support work:

> ➢ Standard situation tool kits for needs assessments should be developed in conjunction with stakeholders such as Electoral Management Boards (EMBs), civil society organizations (CSOs) and observers. Such a tool kit would include a menu of options for assistance during each stage of the electoral cycle, linked to risk assessments and identification of the costs and benefits of implementing or not implementing items on the menu. Lessons learned, conclusions from a post-election review and recommendations from observers' final reports should all be properly considered in developing needs assessments for the next electoral cycle. In addition to early planning, proactive rather than reactive programming, including the development by donors of contingency plans to

meet late or emergency requests for assistance, is more cost-effective and has more impact.

➢ Best practice is to use a multi-level assistance coordination mechanism for the implementation of assistance. By linking donors' financial transfers to key milestones and deadlines in the electoral cycle, cash-flow crises can be avoided. Stakeholders' interest in dialogue on the implementation of assistance must be engaged by requiring multi-stakeholder institutions in assistance programmes, for example, EMB/political party/CSO liaison mechanisms. Operational auditing, external and internal peer reviews and independent or multi-stakeholder post-election reviews all help to make assistance programmes more effective and promote and assist in their evaluation. Assistance programmes should adopt the results-based management approach, with indicators agreed by donors, implementers and recipients.

The Electoral Knowledge Network (ACE), 'Evaluation of electoral assistance programmes – ACE Network response'
http://aceproject.org/electoral-advice/archive/questions/replies/803921901

This ACE network response aims to address the question of how to assess whether an assistance programme has long-term benefits.

Key findings include:

➢ A properly conducted electoral audit examines the management structure of the Electoral Management Board (EMB) concerned, the legal framework, including any constitutional provisions relating to the conduct of elections, the conduct of all election processes, the contribution of all stakeholders to the election and conduct of election officials.
➢ Sustainability issues are of primary concern to most election auditors, ranging from proper staff development programmes to cost-effective measures in election preparation and conduct. Similarly, much work is being done on steering EMBs towards adopting best practices in election organisation and this effort is linked to post-election audits and or less extensive evaluation. Examples include South Africa, Botswana, Nigeria, Lesotho, Liberia and Zambia.
➢ Key questions which need to be incorporated into the evaluation include: did the project incorporate a longer-term perspective and did it contribute to the development of sustainable structures and systems? If not, why not and what could be done to turn this around? Were there counterparts for technical assistance? Were they the appropriate persons? Did the expert work with his/her counterpart constructively? Was there a transfer of skills and knowledge? Does it appear that this assistance will reduce the need for outside help the next time around?
➢ The same approach can be taken for the structures and systems provided by the assistance. Were they appropriate and sustainable? Did they have a national reach and enable better operations/communications/training, etc. Were they institutionalised by the EMB and is it continuing to use these systems? And finally, is the EMB protecting the assets provided in this assistance for use in future elections?
➢ The agency funding electoral assistance should also be assessed.

The Electoral Knowledge Network (ACE), 'Focus on Effective Electoral Assistance'
http://aceproject.org/ace-en/focus/focus-on-effective-electoral-assistance

According to section 8 of this online guide, entitled 'Setting Up an Effective Electoral Assistance Project: From Identification to Evaluation' **(**http://aceproject.org/ace-en/focus/focus-on-effective-electoral-assistance/setting-up-an-effective-electoral-assistance-project-from-identification-to-evaluation) monitoring and evaluation remains the most neglected component of electoral

assistance programmes, partly due to the objective difficulty of evaluating progress in the partner country's democratisation process in the short-term. Nevertheless, it points to the electoral cycle approach as a platform for development agencies to remain engaged in a continuous manner throughout the process. It recommends the use of operational auditing, external and internal peer reviews, results-based monitoring and evaluation tools and independent or multi-stakeholder post-election reviews to help make electoral assistance programmes more effective and promote and assist in their evaluation. It also recommends that assistance programmes should adopt the results-based management approach, with indicators agreed by development agencies, implementers and recipients.

The report also states that International IDEA, UNDP and the EC are committed to developing a new evaluation methodology for electoral assistance in line with the 12 principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Political party support

UNDP, 2005, 'A Handbook on Working with Political Parties', New York
http://www.undp.org/governance/docs/policy-pub-polpartieshandbook.pdf

Section 7of this guide (p 75) focuses on monitoring and evaluating political party assistance.

Monitoring

According to the guide, a good monitoring system capable of capturing the effects of political party assistance will:
  ➢ follow and assess political party development, reform and other processes in a sustained manner over time at the national, regional and local levels
  ➢ describe the relative importance of multiple policy reform and other initiatives
  ➢ assess the effectiveness of the political party assistance strategy
  ➢ periodically assess results in relation to the initial objectives and expectations
  ➢ include stakeholders
  ➢ acknowledge the contributions of other development partners in the area and use networks with and of partners
  ➢ measure the success or failure of the political party assistance
  ➢ capture unplanned political party assistance
  ➢ highlight the need for political party assistance in areas where none is presently being offered

Evaluation
.
Key issues in evaluation include relevance, coherence, credibility, engagement, and pragmatism. Furthermore:

  ➢ During project/programme formulation and implementation it is important to get good baseline data; craft good indicators; research and follow political, social, economic and other developments in the country; and research and follow what your partners and other donors are doing.
  ➢ Before and during the evaluation, include political party assistance in the terms of reference; secure the appropriate expertise; and focus beyond beneficiaries.
  ➢ After the evaluation, make the lessons learned and best practices work for you.

A number of caveats are outlined in the guide in relation to M&E of political party assistance, including:

- Political party assistance can be evaluated with any of the UNDP evaluation tools, but that some types may lend themselves more readily to party work. For example, outcome evaluations are particularly conducive to evaluating party assistance because they focus on the development change of capacities, policies, regulations, laws, etc.
- Political party assistance can take years to bear fruit. M&E tools need to take this into account. Programme managers need to be patient. Direct and quantifiable attribution of outcomes to political party assistance is usually impossible. M&E tools need to be flexible enough to capture intended and actual results—particularly outcomes—over time, and analyse each.
- Political party assistance is almost by definition highly political. In particular, post-conflict contexts present unique challenges to political party assistance; the same is true for monitoring and evaluating in these situations.

NDI, 2008, 'A Guide to Political Party Development', Washington D.C.
http://www.ndi.org/files/2297_handbook_PoliticalPartyDev_pdfen_041108.pdf

Chapter 3 of this guide contains a section on monitoring and evaluating political support programmes (p 21).

Monitoring

The actual monitoring process can be as simple as talking with activity participants and providing evaluation forms for them to fill out. Between 1-6 months after an event, conduct interviews with selected participants to see how they have used the trainings, and collect anecdotes for your reports. Even in this simple model, however, it is important to collect not only participants' reactions to a training, but also actual demonstrations of impact on their practices.

Other approaches can include:

- Quantitative: Track the number of training sessions conducted, participants attending, consultations held, or materials distributed. Note that these are measurements are much stronger when your team has a baseline to compare the numbers against.
- Outputs: Collect any materials created by the parties as a result of activities. This can include newsletters, citizen questionnaires, policy documents, meeting minutes, and membership recruitment forms.
- Dialogue: Collect participants' testimonials using focus groups or informant interviews. Discuss the direction and usefulness of the program with party leadership. Ask participants of each study mission or special program to prepare a report on lessons learned and plans on implementing the best ideas.
- Outside Sources: Gather media reports related to program activities and results. Discuss the program's impact with other local and international organizations

Evaluation

Key points are:

- Start with clear, realistic, and measurable program objectives.
- Be explicit about underlying assumptions and expectations.
- Clarify expected outcomes with partners at the beginning. Be sure to have party leaders and activists buy-into the program goals and objectives.
- Define benchmarks of progress, including a programmatic beginning, middle and end. (e.g. effective message development and delivery, creation of newsletter, development of membership lists, door-to-door campaign activity, recruitment of women members, coalition viability, candidates elected, campaign plan developed, etc.)

- Determine the specific types of qualitative and quantitative information that need to be gathered. For example, if the objective is strengthening the party's capacity to recruit new members, it may be necessary to monitor the number of new members, as well as analyze the quality of the membership recruitment process.
- Build relationships with the specific party activists responsible for gathering the information that your team needs.
- Create a system to analyze and distribute information.
- Time – It can take party staff some time to gather the necessary information. Be sure to plan accordingly, especially when it comes time to writing reports.

International IDEA, 2007, 'Effective Party Assistance: Stronger Parties for Better Democracy' Stockholm
http://www.idea.int/publications/effective_party_assistance/upload/Effective_party_pol_paper_final_lowres.pdf.

The chapter entitled 'systematic planning and implementation' includes a section on monitoring and evaluation (p22) According to the guide, evaluation starts with the planning phase of a project. It is at this stage that appropriate indicators have to be chosen and a decision has to be made about the data that need to be gathered for this purpose during the implementation of the project. It is important that the results are made available beyond the group of organizations directly involved. There is an understandable reluctance to disclose evaluation results, especially if they document.

Depending on the nature of the underlying information, indicators can use different levels of measurement, ranging from ordinal (for example, low, middle and high) to ratio (numerical values with an absolute zero, such as number of participants). Indicators can either be lead or lag indicators. Lag indicators measure past performance while lead indicators are a proxy for future developments. For example, the number of registered participants could be a lead indicator for the size of the event itself. Regarding the measurement focus, there are four different categories: (a) input indicators that measure how many resources are put into the project, (b) output indicators that measure how many products are produced, for example, how many reports have been published, (c) outcome indicators that measure the effects of the output and (d) impact indicators that measure the medium- or long-term impact on the over-arching project goal . The indicators chosen to measure the objectives should be a mix of lead and lag indicators and of the different measurement focuses above. It usually gets more difficult to find suitable indicators as one moves down the list.

Input and output measurements belong to the sphere of operational control and are useful mainly for implementation monitoring. Evaluation at this level is usually done by the programme staff members themselves. Impact studies are mostly long-term (some might have to cover several years) and are not done by the implementing staff. This is for two reasons. First, evaluation should not be done entirely by those who are responsible for the project, because there are natural inherent limits to objectivity in reflection. Second, impact evaluation is clearly outside the project lifespan or cycle. Outcome evaluation is located in between and can be seen as part of either the internal evaluation or the external impact study.

Finally, it should be noted that comprehensive impact studies may not always be feasible. As noted, these are long-term tasks that are complex and can be costly. To avoid inefficiency, however, it is crucial to have impact studies for new activities and pilot projects that are later supposed to be scaled up or implemented elsewhere. Pilot projects in particular should be carefully designed to enable proper evaluation, for example with regard to the venue, selection of participants and contextual factors.

USAID, 1998, 'Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators', Washington D.C.
http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/pnacc390.pdf

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In addition, the appendices outline criteria for developing and adapting performance indicators, assessing data collection approaches and costs, and using scales, indexes, and scorecards for performance measurement.

USAID, 2007, 'A Study of Political Party Assistance in Eastern Europe and Eurasia', Washington D.C.
www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/dem_gov/docs/di_ee_ppa_study_report-final-branded.pdf

The literature review element of this report prepared for USAID includes a section on better evaluations and measurement of political party assistance (pp 21-22). According to the literature, party assistance has yet to resolve the challenge of balancing strategic objectives (ultimate results, e.g. democratic transitions, election outcomes) and intermediate results (e.g. party behaviour) as the defining measures of success. Whilst there have been some recent ambitious efforts to explore the effectiveness of democracy assistance, they do not specifically address political party assistance.

Recommendations emerging from the literature include:

- ➢ an improved methodology and indicators for conducting regular, systematic political party assessments.
- ➢ partnering with other organizations, such as Transparency International, the OAS and the UNDP, and the academic community to encourage better, more contemporary analysis.
- ➢ greater attention to publicly available systematic evaluations and impact assessments.
- ➢ a research agenda to (1) develop basic data on international assistance flows, (2) map different party systems (which International IDEA has already begun), (3) undertake a comparative study of different contexts for party assistance, and (4) undertake more and better programme evaluations.

In general, the literature suggests that party assistance funders and providers need to do a better job of analysing their own work. They should develop better systems for measuring results, formulating lessons learned, and sharing these lessons and best practices across DG programs, countries and regions. The development and evolution of programmes should be a result of intentional, reasoned changes leading to new approaches and phases of work.

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