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Report on the Parliamentary Development Practitioners Meeting

Geneva, 10-12 October 2013

Introduction

In recent years, organizations and practitioners providing assistance to parliaments have placed increasing emphasis on cooperation and coordination. The IPU welcomes this development and convened a meeting from 10 to 12 October 2013 in Geneva to contribute to this discussion and agree the way forward.

The meeting provided a forum for practitioners to inform each other of their work and the principles underpinning such work, as well as to discuss various ways of enhancing the effectiveness of legislative-strengthening programmes.

Overview

There is potential for enormous change in the field of strengthening parliaments, said IPU Secretary General Anders B. Johnsson as he welcomed over 30 parliaments and practitioners to an IPU meeting to discuss ways providers of parliamentary development support can better cooperate and develop a set of indicators for the work they carry out.

Discussions quickly drew attention to the lack of incentive on both sides for coordination of support – parliaments want to receive as much help as possible while practitioners don't want to lose contracts or projects in the name of better coordination. Nevertheless, all participants recognized that better cooperation is fundamental to the best interests of parliaments. It would lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness in parliamentary development work.

A recurrent theme was that parliaments are best placed to take the lead in driving and coordinating support for their own development at the national level.

Key Outcomes/Conclusions

There was broad support for a renewed attempt to improve cooperation among practitioners. Rather than aim for over-ambitious goals that cannot be met, cooperation could begin by maintaining regular lines of communication online and in annual face-to-face meetings. Cooperation could be manifested by working together on practical issues of relevance to the whole community, and seeing how it can be enhanced over time. Two proposals gathered a broad consensus among participants for the initial phase of cooperation:

Common document on standards for democratic parliaments

Many organizations in the room had undertaken work on standards/benchmarks/criteria for democratic parliaments. There has been a good level of coordination, leading to an international conference in Paris in 2010 and the preparation of a synthesis of the different initiatives. However, coordination had stalled since that time. Given that there was a high level of convergence between the different initiatives, it was proposed that the relevant organizations renew their coordination efforts, and work on producing a common document that could be endorsed by these organizations and others, in a similar way to the *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation*¹.

Statement of principles for parliamentary development practitioners

¹ <http://www.ndi.org/dop>

Participants agreed that it would be useful for the community of practitioners to draft a common set of principles for practitioners, which could serve to guide the practice of organizations providing support to parliaments. Again, the document could be made available for endorsement, including to donors and parliaments themselves.

A number of participants requested IPU to coordinate the community's efforts to cooperate on these two initiatives, and the IPU indicated its willingness to do so.

Participants also provided feedback on the IPU's initiative to develop Indicators for Democratic Parliaments. Many offered to remain engaged in this process as it matures over the coming months.

DAY 1: WORKING TOGETHER

Current Initiatives for Coordination of Parliamentary Support:

Participants were invited to share information on the main aims of their parliamentary development work (See Annex 1), after which they listened to three examples of current initiatives of coordination of parliamentary support:

Example 1

Donor Coordination of Parliamentary Development – Charles Chauvel, Senior Parliamentary Adviser, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The benefits of cooperation between donors include better coordination, pooling expertise, avoiding overlap and enabling funding to go further. However, the various parties involved in parliamentary development support don't talk nearly enough. There should be systematic communication and information sharing with a broader base of stakeholders, including progress reports to maintain awareness of activities and challenges. A formal set of discussions early in the design process about the support being offered helps to avoid duplicating what has been done before. Furthermore, there must be a consensus across parliament that the assistance being proposed is what is wanted and needed. Parliament in turn must put forward individual people with the influence and the power to push through programmes. Ideally the first point of contact should be with the Speaker or Secretary General. Finally, projects should focus on concrete deliverables.

Example 2

Coordination at the national level - Baby P. Tyawa, Deputy Secretary, Support Services, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

Parliamentary development support in South Africa is an example of the evolution of coordination from an international partner to locally-based management. Following democracy in South Africa in 1997, the coordination and delivery of European Union (EU) funding for parliamentary support was done by the EU. However, in 2009, the South African Parliament integrated the EU funding into its own budget, and this support is now managed by staff of the parliament. This helped to incorporate capacity building into a programme that matched the electoral cycle. The content of support programmes is driven by the members themselves but also draws on external expertise. MPs in South Africa come from wide-ranging parts of the country with varying skills. Given the high turnover of MPs at around 60% at each election, they are often new to job. It is hoped that the skills they acquire as MPs can also then be transferred to activities outside of parliament.

Example 3

There is a distinct lack of cooperation amongst information sharing in developed European parliaments, which is not in the interest of the partner countries for which the support is intended. There is increasing competition for projects and a growing number of commercial consortia looking to use other organizations' expertise to compete for contracts. The large variety of programmes on offer could result in confusion of contradictory advice, especially given the difference in parliamentary traditions. Support must be tailored to particular partner's development needs, as well as be sustainable. While programmes are often hampered by the high turnover of MPs and parliamentary staff, practitioners need to ask what political standards have to be maintained before support is given. For example, since the collapse of democracy in Egypt, people who were working on parliamentary development initiatives supported by the Bundestag are now in prison. So why should it offer further support in the future?

Summary of interactive discussion with participants:

- There is lack of incentive on both sides for coordination – parliaments want to receive as much help as possible while practitioners don't want to lose jobs or projects in the name of better coordination. Incentive issues are often behind coordination problems e.g donors often treating parliamentary development the same as procurement of mosquito nets.
- Value in having strong focal points with a coordinating role within national parliaments.
- Post 2015 development agenda should also address better parliamentary coordination.
- Coordination/leadership mandate should be jointly undertaken by UNDP-IPU in the context of post 2015. However care should be taken to ensure no conflict of interests arise with the same organization coordinating and implementing or funding.
- There should be more coordination and accountability at country level and particularly for UNDP Country Offices to take their role as convener at the national level more seriously.
- Increased transparency about what practitioners are doing and where, would improve coordination.
- It was proposed that IPU and UNDP, could take on a coordination role on a broader scale. (This did, however, raise the question of a conflict of interest with UNDP, as it is both a donor and practitioner of parliamentary support.)
- Instead of donors all funding similar projects, they could specialize their activities.
- In many parliaments the secretariat staff is more conservative than the members, so there needs to be cross-party consensus to drive through change.
- Parliamentary support has to be long-term to be effective.

Practical considerations in designing and establishing parliamentary training/learning centres:

This session looked at how to build parliaments' institutional capacity to deliver training, drawing on the experiences of three different parliaments:

Case Study 1

Parliamentary Institute of Pakistan (PIPS) – Amjed Pervez, Secretary General, Senate, Pakistan

PIPS is an independent institution providing research and capacity building services for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff working in Pakistan's national and provincial legislatures. It has a dedicated board to coordinate support between the assemblies. As well as training parliamentarians and staff, it offers

information and library services, undertakes research papers for individual MPs and parliamentary committees, produces handbooks on key parliamentary topics and organizes outreach events and programmes. USAID has funded a new 11.5 million USD building in Islamabad for PIPS including a 150 seat auditorium, training rooms, resource centre/library, staff offices, board room and IT lab. However, PIPS has a problem in recruiting trainers and facilitators particularly in the fields of drafting legislative and parliamentary research, and has low turnout for its orientation sessions for MPs.

Case Study 2

The Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia – Oum Sarith, Secretary General, Senate Cambodia

The PIC was established in 2011 as an independent, non-governmental organization providing non-partisan technical expertise to parliamentarians and training to parliamentary staff. It aims to promote democratic governance in Cambodia by building legislative capacity, developing local sources of parliamentary expertise, increasing parliament's research services and sharing experiences and expertise with other parliaments. It also incorporates gender and minority issues analysis into activities. The PIC adopts a needs-oriented approach to support, responding to requests from MPs and parliamentary commissions.

Case Study 3

Learning Centre – Myanmar Parliament – U Kyaw Soe, Director General Union Assembly of Myanmar

As Myanmar continues its progress towards multi-party democracy, the Hluttaw parliament relies on support from parliamentary staff, who themselves have little in-depth experience of parliamentary work. To help increase the effectiveness of MPs, the parliament plans to recruit more than 2000 new staff over the next two years and training them is a top priority. Staff need to be better skilled in writing material for MPs, internet research and in speaking English. MPs also want to improve their IT skills, learn English and be better informed about parliamentary practice and procedures. A new Learning Centre is being established which will offer a balance of practical and theoretical training in the English language to new and existing staff, using local trainers and teachers where possible.

After listening to the case studies, participants were invited to share their own experiences and opinions:

- Pay attention to the particular needs of gender sensitivity and Women MPs. Organise special activities on gender related activities (for both men and women MPs). Invite successful women in academia to share experiences with women MPs.
- MPs don't like to be 'trained' or lack the time to dedicate to courses. Thailand motivates MPs to join workshops by inviting high-ranking officials from public/private sector that MPs want to meet.
- If new parliamentarians don't take part in the inductions at the European Parliament they can't be rapporteurs for items on parliament's agenda. Parliamentary staff are also on hand to guide members through the complicated legislative process from draft to final legislation.
- Orientation sessions for MPs are essential in parliament. They teach MPs about resources available, give advice on how the Committee structures work and help MPs to avoid unwittingly breach compliance rules. Timing of such programmes is essential; a suggested good practice is to organize an orientation before the parliamentary session begins. Don't forget to provide orientation for MPs elected during bi-elections!
- Training material should be shared between institutes, as well as civil society groups and other stakeholders.
- CPA teaches participants to transfer the skills they've learnt to their colleagues.

Developing Capacity Building and training curriculum for Members and Staff:

This session provided three examples of capacity building training programmes:

Case Study 1

Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training (BPST), India – Dr Deepack Goasain, Joint Director, Lok Sabha Secretariat

BPST runs well-attended orientation programmes to help MPs learn the workings of parliament and be as effective as possible. They take place from 9am to 11am before parliamentary sessions start. Workshops are designed to be highly relevant and based on different topical subjects of socio-economic and political concern. They are attended by experts and specialists that MPs want to listen to. For example, one popular guest included US Vice-President Al Gore who spoke on climate change. BPST also has a training curriculum for parliamentary staff which incorporates outside institutions and study trips. In addition to providing support programmes for foreign MPs, BPST operates a one-month internship programme to around 53 participants from 33 countries every year. It also offers orientation programmes for the media, probation officers and the police.

Case Study 2

National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS), Nigeria – Dr Rabi Audu

The legislature in Nigeria is one of the youngest parliaments in Africa and the least developed arm of government compared to the executive and judiciary. NILS was set up by an act of parliament in 2011 with responsibility for capacity building for MPs and parliamentary staff to strengthen the Nigerian parliament. As in many African countries, Nigeria suffers from a high turnover of MPs which limits its growth. About 70 per cent of MPs are new at each new parliament. NILS, which will soon operate from a newly-built campus, has three main departments; research and training, legislative support and finance and administration. The Institute's mandate also extends to State Assemblies and the ECOWAS Member Parliaments. It has collaborations with UNDESA, UNDP, WFD and Harvard University amongst others.

Case Study 3

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) – Zeina Hilal, Programme Officer, Gender Partnership Programme

IPU's gender team focuses on four key areas: producing knowledge on women's participation in parliament; empowering women MPs; providing support to parliaments to be gender-sensitive; and building knowledge inside parliament on gender-quality issues to help curb gender discrimination. Women parliamentarians are not afraid of the word training and IPU has developed the capacity to respond to the needs for women MPs due to a strong demand from them. Many IPU programmes are carried out in partnership with other organizations such as UN Women, UNDP and NDI. The aim is to provide mid to long-term support so that parliaments can develop tools and capacities in-house and develop a peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge.

Summary of interactive discussion with participants:

Participants shared positive examples and experiences of their work.

- In Nigeria the NILS extend support to state, provincial and regional assemblies.
- Design activities imparting knowledge and learning that are immediately followed by practical implementation of skills just learnt.
- KPI have created a standard to evaluate each training which includes, among others, focus group interviews and participant observation by experts. They also provide feedback on activities to relevant standing committees in the Parliament.
- In Zambia the Parliamentary Centre supported MPS in the production of a "yellow book", a 20 page animated document that describes the budget and how it impacts people.
- Invite successful people in academia to share experiences with men women MPs.

DAY 2: INDICATORS FOR MEASURING PARLIAMENT

Indicators are useful to donors and parliaments that are interested in assessing their performance and in measuring their accountability to citizens. There are 188 parliaments in the world and around 40 different agencies offering assistance. The question is whether the different interests can align around a common set of indicators?

Current initiatives and use of indicators:

Whereas a benchmark represents an ideal, an indicator is based on hard evidence. Most of the impetus on using indicators is coming from donors, which are themselves under pressure to show the impact of their funding. But what are the norms and standards for democratic governments? How do we identify the characteristics that distinguish a democratic parliament versus a rubber stamp parliament?

Participants noted that there is already a fairly wide consensus on common benchmarks for democratic parliaments and democratic legitimacy – parliaments should be democratically elected; proportional to the population; institutionally independent; have control over the budget; a set of minimum powers; and have access to staff and resources. Procedural fairness, minimum rights for the opposition and the ability to form caucuses are also important benchmarks. Now practitioners are at the point of working out how to measure these benchmarks.

However, while there is a need to support the development of democratic parliaments, this cannot be done with a mechanical list and box-ticking. Martin Luther King didn't say "I have a log frame!" Practitioners must not lose sight of the goal, which is to help parliaments.

Furthermore, parliaments are often unstable organisations and care should be taken about when indicators are used. Indicators should also distinguish between emerging, developing and mature parliaments, which are in different contexts with different needs.

Case Study:

The African Parliamentary Index (API) – Rasheed Draman, Parliamentary Centre, Ghana

The API is an assessment of seven different parliaments Africa. All parliaments were consulted in drafting the indicators which focus on six key functional areas with 61 different indicators. Parliamentarians take part in the self-assessment survey but all ratings are justified and moderated by civil society groups, academia and key sections of society who are interested in the parliament involved. The results have shown that a parliament can be critical of itself. In fact, civil society groups often rated MPs better than they rated themselves. The aim is not to name and shame or compare with other parliaments but to create an opportunity to pinpoint weaknesses and measure against best practice. The index tries to recognise that no two parliaments are the same, with some facing very basic challenges – for example, there are MPs who don't even have an office and are working from the boot of their cars.

European Parliament (EP) – Dick Toornstra, Office for the Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy

In its programmes of support to parliaments, the EP distinguishes between 'emerging', 'developing' and 'mature' parliaments. Each has different needs, and it would not be appropriate to measure

parliaments in different categories in the same way. As a general rule, the EP's target is to change behaviours in parliament (i.e., modifying the political culture), not only to implement technical reforms. Therefore, it is more meaningful to measure the 'impact' of parliament support projects than their 'outputs'. It should be understood that parliaments are different from other institutions of government, and should be measured in different ways. Purely mechanical auditing of parliament support projects would not be useful. Also, there is a need to professionalize the field of parliamentary support. A common understanding among practitioners of minimum standards for providing support to parliaments would be a good thing. Rather than seeking 'coordination' among practitioners, the goal should be to increase their 'transparency', 'information-sharing' and 'cooperation where possible'.

IPU's Indicators for Democratic Parliaments:

IPU's 100 Indicators for Democratic Parliaments are based on two principles. The first is that only people from the country should judge, so the indicators are for self-assessment. Secondly, the IPU indicators are universal and can be applied by developed and developing countries alike.

They are designed to get hard data rather than opinions. In some cases, important issues are difficult to find indicators for, making it hard to measure the effectiveness of parliaments. While indicators should be flexible enough to be adapted to different countries and conditions, too much flexibility can lead to an inaccurate picture of parliament.

IPU does not foresee collecting data across the set of 100 indicators, although it would aim to incorporate a certain percentage of the data into the PARLINE database. The indicators are designed to be a tool available to parliaments, civil society groups and citizens, not for comparison purposes.

Feedback from the discussion groups will be incorporated into the next draft of IPU's Indicators for Democratic Parliaments and sent out to parliaments in the coming months. An electronic version of the document is foreseen after the indicators are finalised in 2014.

Summary of a forward-looking discussion on indicators:

- Indicators should be relevant and apply to the real context of each parliament.
- To be valuable, they need to be easy to put into practice and be viewed as legitimate by a broad audience. Poor indicators can be misleading or even lead to bad practice. For example, a civil society group surveyed how long MPs spoke for, which motivated MPs to talk even when they had nothing to say. Looking ahead, civil society groups should be educated on how to draft indicators.
- Donors should also be included in discussions and their own indicators incorporated.
- Importantly, indicators must not only look at the formal powers of parliaments but also at how these powers are used in practice.
- Furthermore, we should be wary of creating indicators that can be used in a very partisan way, or possibly even risk destroying the careers of parliamentarians.

Outcome Common document on standards for democratic parliaments

Many organizations in the room had undertaken work on standards/benchmarks/criteria for democratic parliaments. There has been a good level of coordination, leading to an international conference in Paris in 2010 and the preparation of a synthesis of the different initiatives. However, coordination had stalled since that time. Given that there was a high level of convergence between the different initiatives, it was proposed that the relevant organizations renew their coordination efforts, and work on producing a common document that could be endorsed by these organizations and others, in a similar way to the *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation*².

² <http://www.ndi.org/dop>

DAY 3: THE WAY FORWARD

BUILDING ON EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE FOR BETTER COORDINATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Participants were invited to give examples of how donors, parliaments and practitioners can contribute to better cooperation at the national level in the field of parliamentary development.

Donors:

Donors could help coordination in several key ways: by sharing information, both on programme and policy support with all stakeholders; by incorporating – as a condition - coordination and harmonization into the design, implementation and working of programmes; and by aligning support with the capacity of parliament to receive it. Donors also need to be better informed about parliaments' needs, while a donor database of activities would also increase transparency and help avoid repetition of support. Avoid commercialization of donor support projects.

Parliaments:

Parliaments should drive their own development agenda. In so doing they should take the lead on coordinating support and share information on previous and current assistance being received to ensure assistance is moved forward and avoid duplication. Joint committees on cooperation or coordination groups within parliament could help avoid overlap and identify the real needs for support. Parliaments should not be afraid to say no to duplicating assistance and aim to learn more from each other by sharing knowledge and carrying out study visits. Parliaments may require help in understanding their needs and priorities through support to strategic planning.

Practitioners:

Practitioners could assist with cooperation by sharing work plans and operating joint assessments and activities. Coordination should be built in at each stage of a project. Prioritizing activities and setting strategic plans would also help to create more effective programmes which avoid repetition. Practitioners should build into projects some flexibility to allow for meeting emerging needs of a beneficiary parliament. Encourage senior national staff within the project who can explain in detail assistance being offered and provide local context knowledge.

Outcome: Statement of common principles for parliamentary development practitioners

Participants agreed that it would be useful for the community of practitioners to draft a common set of principles for practitioners, which could serve to guide the practice of organizations providing support to parliaments. Again, the document could be made available for endorsement, including to donors and parliaments themselves.

IPU's Deputy Secretary General Martin Chungong said IPU would be willing to coordinate the community's work in this area.

Participants and their work:

Parliaments:

Australia – Mr Andres Lomp (via Skype) – Director, International and Community Relations Office, Parliament of Australia -Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships (www.pacificparliaments.net) carries out capacity building and online mentoring for MPs and secretariat staff at all levels for parliaments in the pacific region.

Cambodia – Mr Oum Sarith, Secretary General of the Senate and Chairperson of Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia (PIC) www.pic.org.kh - The PIC was established in 2011 as an independent institution to provide technical support and capacity building to the Cambodian Parliament.

France – Mr François Duluc, Conseiller, Chef de la Division de la coopération interparlementaire de l'Assemblée nationale - The department gives technical assistance to 80 different parliaments of which only half are French-speaking countries. It works closely with the French Senate and in multilateral development with UNDP and the European Union.

India – R. L. Shali – Director, Lok Sabha Secretariat; Director Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training (BPST) - The BPST is an integrated part of the Secretariat of the Indian parliament. As well as providing orientation programmes for newly elected MPs and training legislative staff, it also funds international training initiatives for parliamentarians and secretariat staff from abroad.

Myanmar – U Kyaw Soe – Director General, House of Nationalities – The Myanmar parliament is currently establishing a learning centre to train parliamentary staff. The parliament has had considerable assistance from IPU in developing research, information and library services.

Nigeria – Dr Rabbi Audu, Secretary, National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS) - NILS was set up to provide capacity building of the legislative staff of the National Assembly of Nigeria.

Pakistan – Mr Amjed Pervez, Secretary General of the Senate of Pakistan www.pips.org.pk - The Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) is an independent facility for provision of legislative, research, capacity building and public outreach services to over 1,000 parliamentarians in Senate and National Assembly of Pakistan as well as four provincial (state) legislatures.

South Africa – Baby Tyawa, Deputy Secretary, Support Services, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa In 2009, the South African parliament took over the responsibility of coordinating the European Union funding programme and integrating the training of MPs into parliament.

Thailand – Dr Borwornsak, Secretary General, King Prajadhipoik's Institute (KPI) www.kpi.ac.th. KPI is an independent academic research institute mandated to promote democracy and provide support to the Thai parliament. It offers training for new MPs, Senators and parliamentary staff and has centres in each of Thailand's 48 provinces. It also collaborates with emerging democracies in the region to develop democracy and good governance.

United Kingdom – Ms Dominique Rees, Deputy Director of the British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union (BGIPU). www.bgipu.org - Present as an observer.

Practitioners:

UNDP – Charles Chauvel, Senior Parliamentary Adviser www.undp.org - UNDP has parliamentary development programmes in 68 different countries. It works to strengthen parliaments, especially in post-

conflict and new democracies, and empower MPs as law makers, scrutinizers of the executive and representatives of citizens.

CPA UK – Andrew Tuggey, Director, Commonwealth and International Relations, London www.parliament.uk/cpauk - The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) has over 175 branches across the world. CPA UK focuses on parliamentary diplomacy and parliamentary strengthening activities. It deals with State, national and territorial parliaments and runs capacity building programmes which draw on expertise from MPs, clerks and officials of both houses of parliaments.

International IDEA – Frank Kayitare, Stockholm www.idea.int - International IDEA advocates the implementation and adoption of electoral quotas, manages electoral process in terms of gender and helps women MPs establish caucuses. Its major partners are UN Women and UNDP.

National Democratic Institute (NDI) – Scott Hubli, Director Governance Programs, and Susan Markham, Washington www.ndi.org – NDI and its local partners work to promote openness and accountability in government by building political and civic organizations, safeguarding elections, and promoting citizen participation. It also works to build capacity among new women MPs in projects around the world.

IPU – Hiroko Yamaguchi, Research and Database Officer, www.ipu.org The division is currently working on two major projects – indicators for democratic parliaments and a renewal of the PARLINE database expected to be achieved by June 2014.

IPU – Laurence Marzal, Programme Officer, Technical Cooperation, Geneva
IPU currently provides technical parliamentary support to 22 countries. The majority are emerging from conflict or in transition. It helps parliaments to function better through implementing procedures, training staff, providing advisory services on legislative content and organising study missions for MPs and officials.

OECD – Lisa von Trapp, Policy Analyst, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Parliamentary Centre (PC) – Jean-Paul Ruzowski, President and CEO, Ottawa - PC is a non-governmental, non-partisan parliamentary support organization which supports parliaments, particularly where there are problems with lack of transparency and accountability.

Chemonics International – Margarita Seminario, Director, Washington www.chemonics.com
Chemonics implements USAID in many different countries. In the field of democracy and governance, it works towards building government legitimacy by engaging citizens, improving laws and policy, and strengthening parliaments.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) – Jamie Tronnes, Director of Programmes, London www.wfd.org - WFD works to strength parliaments in countries undergoing a transition to democracy. It focuses on strategic three-year projects with parliaments at the regional, national and sub-national level. It currently runs programmes in 11 different countries.

UN Women - Ms Julie Ballington, New York www.unwomen.org - UN Women's overarching themes are gender equality and women's empowerment. In the parliamentary sphere it works to support individual women MPs as well as sensitize male MPs to gender equality. It also promotes gender-sensitive legislation.