LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAAS	The American Association for the Advancement of Science
AAPR	Africa Association of Parliamentary Researchers
ACEP	African Centre for Energy Policy
ACEPA	African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs
ACET	African Centre of Economic Transformation
ACFIM	Alliance for Campaign Finance Monitoring
AEN	African Evidence Network
AfCoP	African Community of Practice
AfEA	African Evaluation Association
AFIDEP	Africa Institute for Development Policy
AfrEA	African Evaluation Association
AG	Auditor-General
AGDEN	Africa Gender and Development Evaluators Network
ANC	African National Congress
APNODE	African Parliamentarians' Network on Development Evaluation
APR	Annual Progress Report
ATC	Announcements, Tablings and Committee
ATRs	Action Taken Reports
B-CURE	Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence
CA	Constitutional Assembly
CCEDU	Citizens' Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda
CDD GHANA	Ghana Center of Democratic Development
CGAs	Committee on Government Assurances
CGW	Chief Government Whip
CIMES	County Monitoring and Evaluation System
CoB	Controller of Budget
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COPE	Congress of the People
COSATU	Congress of the South African Trade Unions
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CPST	Centre of Parliamentary Studies and Training
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSRO	Committee on Standing Rules and Orders
DAP	Data for Accountability Project
DFID	Department for International Development
DGF	Democratic Governance Facility
DIRS	Directorate of Information and Research Services

DLPS	Department of Legislative and Procedural Services
DP	Democratic Party
DRS	Department of Research Services
EA	Executive Authority
EAC	East African Community
EACJ	East African Court of Justice
EALA	East African Legislative Assembly
EAPI	East African Parliamentary Institute
EC	Electoral Commission
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
ESK	Evaluation Society of Kenya
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
FES	Friedrich Ebert Foundation
FMPPLA	Financial Management of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act
FPTP	First-Past-the-Post
GII	Ghana Integrity Initiative
GIJ	Ghana Institute of Journalism
GINKS	Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing
G-IPEN	Ghana Network of Independent Professional Evaluators
GMEF	Ghana Monitoring and Evaluation Forum
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
HoDs	Heads of Departments
HRAC	Human Rights Advocacy Council
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICED	International Centre for Evaluation and Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDRIG	Inter-Departmental Research and Information Group
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
INASP	International Network for the Advancement of Science to Policy
INESOR	Institute of Economic and Social Research
INGSA	International Network for Government Science Advice
IPAC	Inter-Party Advisory Committee
IPS	Institute of Parliamentary Studies
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
ISSER	Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research

JEEMA	Justice Forum
KEMRI	Kenya Medical Research Institute
KEWOPA	Kenya Women Parliamentarians Association
KEWOSA	Kenya Women Senators Association
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
KLISC	Kenya Library and Information Consortium
KSG	Kenya School of Government
LEGCO	Legislative Council
LGB	Leader of Government Business
LoP	Leader of Opposition
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDGs	Millenium Development Goals
MED	Monitoring and Evaluation Department
MMD	Movement for Multiparty Democracy
MMS	Management Monitoring System
MNDP	Ministry of National Development Planning
MoGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPEP	Malawi Parliament Enhancement Project
MPs	Members of Parliament
MPS	Ministerial Policy Statements
MPSI	Malawi Parliamentary Support Initiative
MPWC	Multi-Party Women's Caucus
MTBPS	Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement
NA	National Assembly
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science and Technology Innovation
NAMs	National Assembly Members
NBFP	National Budget Framework Papers
NCOP	National Council of Provinces
NDC	New Democratic Congress
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NEAPACOH	Network of African Parliamentary Committees on Health
NIMES	National Monitoring and Evaluation System
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NRMO	National Resistance Movement Organisation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme

NSS	National Service Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGP	Open Government Partnership
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PBO	Parliamentary Budget Office
PC-EIDM	Parliamentary Caucus on Evidence Informed Oversight and Decision-Making
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PIC	Public Investigation Committee
PUIC	Parliamentary Union of Islamic Countries
PMG	Parliamentary Monitoring Group
PMU	Policy Management Unity
PoG	Parliament of Ghana
PoZ	Parliament of Zambia
PP	Public Protector
PPM	Public Participation Model
PRS	Parliamentary Research Services
PSC	Parliament Service Commission
PWD	Person with Disability
RPLP	Regional Peer Learning Programme
SACP	South African Communist Party
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SAPST	Southern African Parliamentary Support Trust
SCoPA	Standing Committee on Public Accounts
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIU	Special Investigating Unit
SO	Standing Orders
SOSC	Standing Orders Select Committee
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TMT	Top Management Team
TORs	Terms of References
TPTTP	Taking Parliament to the People
TWGs	Technical Working Groups
UDM	United Democratic Movement
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UK-POST	United Kingdom Parliamentary Office on Science and Technology
UNASA	Uganda National Academy of Sciences
UN-DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Force
UWOPA	Uganda Women Parliamentary Association
VOPES	Voluntary Organisations of Professional Evaluators
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy
ZaMEA	Zambia Monitoring and Evaluation Association
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZeipNET	Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network
ZEPARU	Zimbabwe Economic Policy and Analysis Research Unit
ZIPAR	Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research
ZPC	Zimbabwe Power Company
ZSA	Zambia Statistics Agency

1

STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY: WHAT WORKS AND WHY?

**Caitlin Blaser Mapitsa, Hermine Engel,
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Introduction

In acknowledgement of the central role that parliaments play in strengthening governance in Africa, significant investments have been made in the region by governments, citizens, bilateral donors, and members of the global community to strengthen the capabilities of parliaments to realise their mandates of oversight, legislation and representation.¹ While parliaments are instrumental cogs in the national governance infrastructure, their capacities are undermined by resourcing and skills challenges, largely related to structural constraints on their effectiveness. This chapter speaks to the lessons learnt from capacity-strengthening initiatives implemented by the collaborating organisations aimed at strengthening evidence use for improved governance by African parliaments. While the collaborating organisations² have seen several notable successes in strengthening parliaments' contributions to good governance at a national level, there are several structural challenges that hold parliaments back and technical interventions alone cannot effectively respond to these challenges. These structural elements include the ways in which the development industry often enables the capture of power by the elite, expectations of patronage from the electorate of their representatives, punitive systems of electoral financing, and distributions of power across political parties in a way that discourages oversight. In many instances, capacity-strengthening initiatives – including technical assistance – cannot ameliorate entrenched structural barriers and dynamics that reinforce the very conditions that allow the capacity challenges to persist. However, there are many committed people working across parliaments who are aware of the inherent potential of parliaments to build more effective systems of governance and support for these individuals and groups can facilitate change.

Emerging from a history of one-party politics, most African regimes have viewed parliament as rubber-stamp institutions that passed policies that favoured the elite few and, in doing so, often entrenched inequality. As multiparty democracies arose, governance reforms called into question whether parliaments had the

¹ Lia Nijzink, Shaheen Mozaffar & Elisabete Azevedo. (2006) Parliaments and the enhancement of democracy on the African continent: An analysis of institutional capacity and public perceptions. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 12(3-4):311-335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572330600875563>

² The collaborating organisations who contributed insights to this chapter specifically include CLEAR-AA, Twende Mbele, the International Network for the Advancement of Science to Policy (INASP), the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA) and the two internal parliamentary training institutes – Kenya's Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST) and Uganda's Institute for Parliamentary Studies (IPS).

requisite capacity, incentives and resources to carry out their functions, most notably in the oversight of the executive. While analysis of parliaments in the region often focuses on issues of individual capacity, closer scrutiny also reveals varying incentives to fulfil the roles of oversight and representation effectively.

Most initiatives for parliamentary capacity building are structured around variations of a theory of change, which states that if an enabling environment is created and adequate skills and resources are provided, parliaments will be able to exercise their duties effectively resulting in a government that is inclusive, transparent and accountable to its citizens and which, ultimately, will lead to better national development outcomes.³

This narrative also acknowledges that as an institution parliament does not operate in isolation but is interconnected to the whole government framework, and thus points to the political nature of the parliament as one which is webbed with sectional interests from the various stakeholders therefore requiring a delicate balance in the interventions undertaken.

We have found that capacity-strengthening initiatives that are well designed and implemented can make critical contributions to improving governance at the national (or regional) level. However, even if these initiatives are themselves successful, a strong parliament is only one role player in national governance and cannot itself overturn deeply entrenched power dynamics. Fundamental issues on the structure of political party power, electoral financing, voting systems, patronage, and inequality must be addressed in tandem for legislatures to be able to legislate, represent and scrutinise effectively.

Drawing on the research, experience and insights from the collaborating organisations involved in various capacity-strengthening initiatives to strengthen African parliaments, this chapter discusses three main themes: 1) the challenges of capacity strengthening being located within the development industry in relation to power and ownership dynamics, 2) the importance of contextual relevance of capacity-strengthening work, and 3) the value of partnerships in strengthening capacity in African parliamentary contexts. The issues raised in relation to these themes are based on desktop research including relevant scholarly research and organisational reports, as well as direct input from representatives from the collaborating organisations based on experiences they shared through interviews and written submissions. The key capacity-

³ OECD. (2012). *Principles for parliamentary assistance*. p. 112. <https://bit.ly/2XS7Xzm>

strengthening initiatives by the collaborating organisations informing the discussion in this chapter include: the regional peer-learning programme led by CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele, the Vaka Yiko programme led by INASP and ACEPA, the Malawi Parliament Enhancement Programme (MPEP) led by AFIDEP, and internal parliamentary training institutions including Kenya's Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST) and Uganda's Institute of Parliamentary Studies (IPS). Each initiative is briefly described in boxed text in this chapter, and several case studies with more detailed descriptions and analysis of these initiatives are provided after the chapter.

Power and ownership: Capacity strengthening as part of the development industry

The Regional Peer Learning Programme led by CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele

Demonstrating the value of a collaborative peer-learning approach, CLEAR-AA in collaboration with Twende Mbele conceptualised and coordinated the Regional Peer Learning Programme (RPLP) aimed at strengthening evidence use for legislative oversight. The programme was jointly implemented with the African Parliamentarians' Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE), CLEAR-AA at GIMPA (the Ghana Institute for Management and Public Administration), the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA), the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), UNWomen, Kenya's Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST) and Uganda's Institute for Parliamentary Studies (IPS). The programme included a series of capacity-strengthening activities during 2018 and 2019, bringing together nominated representatives from ten parliaments and various capacity-strengthening organisations. The parliamentary representatives included Members of Parliament (MPs), as well as parliamentary staff nominated by their parliaments (or parliamentary networks/caucuses). The capacity-strengthening approach employed can best be described as facilitated peer learning, which provides a platform for sharing of approaches, experiences and lessons learnt by participants from the various parliaments supported by input and facilitation support from partner organisations. The programme was implemented in three broad phases including a diagnostic and development phase, an implementation phase of shared learning (on research and evidence use and on M&E frameworks), and a reflection and consolidation phase. At the conclusion of the programme a tracer study was

run which covered training with a wide range of MPs and parliamentary staff. The various partners brought expertise ranging from broader parliamentary mandates (ACEPA, CPST, IPS), the politics of evidence use (ACEPA, CLEAR-AA), evidence synthesis (AFIDEP), gender and equity mainstreaming (UNWomen), M&E practice and systems (CLEAR-AA, Twende Mbele, APNODE and GIMPA) – all contributing expertise on different elements of the ‘evidence chain’ in parliaments.

Historically, capacity-strengthening initiatives by development partners have been donor-led, lacked local ownership by parliaments, were inflexible in their approach, and were not guided by the needs of the specific parliaments. As a result, the approaches utilised resulted in no noticeable or sustainable change to parliamentary oversight systems. This strategy has been changing, as can be seen in the capacity-building framework by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that identified the need to tackle capacity strengthening at the levels of the individual, the organisation and the broader environment.⁴ However, there are limits to the extent to which parliamentary interventions can shift fundamental dynamics of power, inequality, patronage, and other threats to governance that can be part of the fundamental nature of the shape of the state in the region.

Much of the work that takes place in Africa’s parliamentary sector, and in fact in the region’s public sector as a whole, is financed by bilateral and multilateral donors. Parliaments in particular have long been underfunded by both their own governments and international donors, creating a vicious cycle of weak legislative capabilities.⁵ While the challenges faced by the development industry are well studied (Menocal & O’Neil, 2012) and many steps, such as the Paris Declaration, have been taken to address them, much work remains to be done to ensure that donor-funded work responds to real national priorities (Dzimbiri, 2008). At the same time, governance-focused development initiatives, particularly in the legislative sphere, are often specifically aimed at transforming the very power dynamics that hinder progressive governance reforms, and this can complicate buy-in and support from the ruling government elite.

⁴ European Parliamentary Research Service. (2013). *Understanding capacity-building/ capacity development: A core concept of development policy*. p. 2. <https://bit.ly/3BiTQkm>

⁵ Rotberg, R.I. & Salahub, J.E. (2013). *African legislative effectiveness*. Ottawa: North-South Institute Research Report. Available from www.nsi-ins.ca.

Aside from the financial commitments, some of which were specifically mandated to invest in parliaments, the international development community developed a parliament-oriented capacity initiatives strategy. This strategy was underpinned by five pillars. First, it was recommended that capacity-strengthening initiatives in parliament should appreciate that parliament operates within the context of the political economy in which it is located and therefore should be understood within the broader political system. Second, these interventions should be tailored to address the contextual needs of each parliament. Third, capacity-strengthening initiatives in the region should promote South to South collaboration. Fourth, it was proposed that multi-year rather than short-term and piecemeal approaches be used. Lastly, the need to improve programme coordination, design and M&E was identified and this included enhancing staff skills and availing incentives (Menocal & O'Neil, 2012).⁶

Different actors and stakeholders then went further to operationalise this strategy. As a result, six different capacity strengthening interventions were conceptualised:

1. Tailored capacity-strengthening programmes – short-term, ad hoc activities to develop the capacity of parliament, MPs and parliamentary staff in generic parliamentary functions, procedure and duties;
2. Direct funding for parliamentary organisations – core funding or grants to support parliamentary associations, political foundations, or groups operating within parliaments (e.g. multiparty caucuses and committees);
3. Longer-term programmes – multi-year programmes of linked activities to develop the capacity of parliament to perform its core functions, often focused on institutional and organisational reform;
4. Issue-based programmes and projects – long- or short-term interventions that work with or through parliaments and parliamentarians to achieve other, more targeted, policy objectives, either as a discrete project or as part of a broader sectoral programme;
5. Integrated democracy programmes single donor or basket-funded multi-year programmes integrating activities targeting different elements of democratic governance simultaneously; and
6. Advocacy – less a modality than a cross-cutting approach that seeks to understand and influence the informal politics, rules and relationships, based on political economy analysis, local buy-in and an adaptable programme (Menocal & O'Neil, 2011).

⁶ Menocal, A.R. & O'Neil, T. (2012). *Mind the gap: Lessons learnt and remaining challenges in parliamentary development assistance – A Sida pre-study*. UTV Working Paper.

Several cross-cutting challenges were experienced in the development and application of capacity-strengthening initiatives especially in their application in developing countries. Power (2015), for example, identified two main challenges – firstly arguing that most of these interventions are predominantly supply-driven (and more so from the Global North) rather than demand-led by the parliaments. This raises concerns on their contextual fit in terms of being able to address the fundamental challenges such as the organisational culture and the political economy as underlying factors affecting the functionality of different African parliaments. Various scholars have argued that capacity-strengthening interventions implemented in Africa should be more responsive to the local political conditions and be driven by local experts based in the countries in which they are being implemented (Hlubi & Schmidt, 2007; Hudson & Wren, 2007; Rugumamu, 2011; Power, 2015). In a recent interview, AFIDEP representative, Rose Oronje, also emphasised the importance of “responding to demand rather than suggesting the areas where they can help. The key is to be in agreement that the gap exists in the first place and that an intervention is necessary” (Interview with Rose Oronje, April 2020).

In the past few years, there has also been a growing recognition that capacity strengthening in parliaments should be less about enhancing the skills and knowledge sets of MPs and their support staff and more about institutional reforms, particularly in complex political settings. Capacity development in Africa should therefore simultaneously address individuals’ knowledge and skills; the requisite institutional reforms in terms of structure, process and organisational culture; as well as the political economy in which capacity-strengthening initiatives are being implemented (Rugumamu, 2011). INASP’s holistic approach to capacity strengthening in parliaments as employed through its leadership of the VakaYiko programme with the parliaments of Ghana, Uganda and Zimbabwe,⁷ ensures that each level is taken into account and addressed appropriately. For example, at the individual level, the programme trained parliamentary staff on the gathering and synthesising of evidence for decision-making. At the organisational level, the focus was on adapting processes and procedures affecting evidence production and use. At the network level the programme supported relationship building between legislatures and the national research sector.

⁷ The VakaYiko programme formed part of the Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (B-CURE) programme implemented between 2013 and 2017. For more information see the INASP Blog (undated) “Strengthening the use of evidence in three African parliaments”. <https://bit.ly/3vMIL9U>

The VakaYiko programme led by INASP including a peer-learning exchange initiative led by ACEPA

As part of the Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence Programme (B-CURE), the International Network for the Advancement of Science to Policy (INASP) led the VakaYiko project which included a strand focusing on strengthening capacity for evidence use in parliaments of Ghana, Uganda and Zimbabwe. VakaYiko was a three-year project that ran between 2013 and 2017 and was implemented through a consortium of partners including the Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network (ZeipNET), the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS), the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS), and the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA). VakaYiko built parliamentary capacity at the individual, organisational and network levels in each country through parliament-specific programmes, as well as peer-learning exchanges. A key aspect of the VakaYiko programme was that it worked through the parliaments' existing training/capacity building units, where those existed as in Uganda – working in collaboration with the representatives of the IPS. The support included training parliamentary staff involved in gathering and synthesising evidence for decision-making; reviewing processes and procedures affecting production and use of evidence; and relationship building between parliaments and the national research sector. INASP's approach pays special attention to the organisational culture, incentives and aspects that inform behaviour and decision-making. As part of the Vaka Yiko programme, ACEPA facilitated a peer-learning network between the parliaments involved and the aim was "to strengthen the role of parliamentary information support units in evidence uptake by providing a space for peer exchange and support, enabling individuals who are driving change within parliaments to collaborate and support each other." Based on the priority areas identified by staff from each parliament, they engaged in sharing their experience through a series of face-to-face and online learning sessions. The issues addressed included "strengthening mechanisms to enable citizen evidence to contribute to parliamentary discussions, to constituency profiling, different models for Parliamentary Budget Offices, and strategies to communicate evidence to MPs".

AFIDEP takes a slightly different but also holistic approach, as was demonstrated in its support to the Parliament of Malawi through its in-depth institutional-wide political and operational reform focus with the programme objective aptly described as “[seeking] to inspire supportive political behaviour and reforms and strengthen capacity that enables performance improvement and effective delivery of parliamentary functions”.⁸ At political reform level, the programme seeks to achieve increased autonomy of parliament; facilitates engagements between the parliamentary leadership and the executive; and also engages the leadership of political parties around the parliament’s autonomy reforms. For example, at operational level it has supported reviews of parliament’s strategic plan, provided training and mentorship to strengthen the technical capacities of staff (e.g. legislative research), and has supported committees to perform their oversight function more effectively by developing annual work plans and committee level M&E frameworks.⁹

The project has stimulated ownership and leadership of the Malawi parliament in driving the political and legislative reforms necessary to improve its performance. This was demonstrated by the parliament’s adoption of a report in December 2018 that proposed wide-ranging reforms to give it the financial, administrative and legislative autonomy needed for the parliament to more effectively deliver its mandates of oversight, budget allocation and tracking, lawmaking, and representation. It has also been demonstrated by the new parliament’s (following May 2019 elections) leadership (Parliamentary Service Commission) taking on the leadership of steering the proposed reform Bills through the parliament’s Legal Affairs Committee (AFIDEP, n.d.).¹⁰

In addition, various capacity-strengthening organisations have focused specifically on improving institutional procedures to strengthen evidence use and the overall governance role of parliaments. For example, working to strengthen the legislative role of local government councils in Uganda, the Institute for Parliamentary Studies (IPS) engaged in an extensive needs analysis and capacity-strengthening process of the local councils which led to harmonisation and

⁸ Through a partnership with the Parliament of Malawi, AFIDEP provides technical assistance to implement The Malawi Parliament Enhancement Project (MPEP). For more information see: <https://bit.ly/3vOALFq>

⁹ INASP Blog. (undated). Strengthening the use of evidence in three African parliaments. <https://bit.ly/3vMIL9U>

¹⁰ More information on the Malawi Parliament Enhancement Project available online at: <https://bit.ly/3vOALFq>

standardisation of the Rules of Procedure for Local Government Councils 2019.¹¹ At a broader level, the the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)'s support to the National Assembly of the Gambia focused on reviewing its Standing Orders to improve oversight and scrutiny of the work of the executive and undertook the initiatives described below.

CPA UK deployed two clerks from the Northern Ireland Assembly to Banjul in August 2018 to assist a working group of National Assembly Members (NAMs) and clerks in their review of the Standing Orders. Their report and recommendations launched an extensive consultation process with the Standing Orders Select Committee (SOSC) and other NAMs. The National Assembly reached a major milestone when it adopted the redrafted Standing Orders in September 2019. For the first time the Standing Orders afforded NAMs the space and time required for effective scrutiny of government.¹²

The importance of a political strategy for capacity-strengthening approaches in parliaments has also been highlighted. Various scholars such as Power (2015) and Rugumamu (2011) both note that while many programmes have focused on technical support such as skills, infrastructure and procedure improvement, few have engaged with the deeper underlying political factors, related power dynamics, internal institutional politics and incentive structures that influence behaviour and, ultimately, decision-making in parliaments. As Rugumamu (2011, p. 113) emphasises, "capacity development is essentially about politics, economics and power, institutions and incentives, habits and attitudes – factors that are only partly susceptible to technical fixes and quantitative specifications. These structural factors have to be negotiated carefully and tactfully." A political strategy is therefore necessary to ensure that capacity-strengthening programmes are built around how political change happens in particular contexts. Such an approach should ideally start with a political analysis of the broader political context and the prevailing institutional politics, followed by a continuous political awareness and engagement included in the approach. CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele have used the Six-Sphere Framework (Crawley, 2017) (introduced in Chapter 1 of Volume 1: Analytical Frameworks) to guide discussions with parliament representatives by ensuring a more careful focus on the deeper contextual, political and ideological factors in relation to the peripheral logistical and technical factors by exploring ways to better navigate and influence the politics of evidence use. As described above, AFIDEP's aim

¹¹ Based on written submission by IPS representative, Rachel Emaasit (1 May 2020).

¹² Extract from written submission by CPA representative, Felicity Hermann (16 June 2020).

and approach with the Parliament of Malawi is to address political reform in order to enhance the autonomy of the parliament by “[combining] interventions that engage and shape the power relations, incentives, and influences within and outside parliament” (AFIDEP, undated)).

As demonstrated through AFIDEP’s work with the Parliament of Malawi, political analysis and engagement should be supported by institutional ownership, ongoing reflection, flexibility in approach, and should be supportive rather than prescriptive or paternalistic. Power aptly describes such an approach as follows: “parliamentary support work should be seen less as a process of implementation, and more akin to a consultancy – helping the parliament to define both the problems and their own solutions” (Power, 2015, p. 41).

Development partners have raised concerns around supply-led approaches with no meaningful participation and even less ownership by those who are meant to benefit from the programmes. For example, drawing on the insights gained through ACEPA’s longstanding work with parliaments across the continent, Lampo (2020) notes that, “foisting training programmes designed by outsiders on target beneficiaries ... attendees of these training workshops just pass through the motions.” To redress this situation, Lampo further emphasises the importance of the involvement of parliamentary representatives. “It is vitally important to involve target beneficiaries in training programmes from the inception or design stage to make meaningful input that will address their training needs and capacity gaps.”¹³

This includes agreeing on programme objectives and designing implementation approaches and plans with key representatives of parliaments in a meaningful and participatory manner to ensure that a relevant theory of change and related implementation approach suitable to the needs of the specific parliament(s) is developed.

There is a tendency among development partners to submit proposals and obtain donor funding prior to approaching parliaments themselves, thereby undermining the importance of ensuring parliamentary ownership and buy-in and failing to determine the relevance of the activities through participatory planning approaches. Various development partners such as AFIDEP have made a deliberate decision to collaborate with parliaments at the outset and have noted that projects often take a long time to start due to the bureaucracy involved. But, as AFIDEP representative Rose Oranje states, “it is, however,

¹³ Extracts from written submission from ACEPA representative Issifu Lampo (6 April 2020).

worth it in the long-term because of the benefits of ownership, buy-in and participation. Donor agencies need to be attuned to this, and structure their funding and accountability models to incorporate this commitment” (Interview with Rose Oronje, April 2020).¹⁴

It is also important to be aware of the different incentives which motivate people to participate in capacity-strengthening initiatives. Some development partners have indicated that *per diems* sometimes attract people who are not interested in the content and may not be fully present in the programme. In the partners’ reflection workshop of the Regional Peer-Learning Programme (RPLP, December 2018) it was observed that this issue cannot be solved without primarily addressing the developmental challenges facing many countries in the region and the overwhelming pressures faced by elected representatives to provide financial support (and, in some cases, direct basic services) to their electorate, far beyond their representation function.

Contextual relevance and participation

A common challenge that all parliamentary capacity-strengthening initiatives face is that they are (or ideally should be) fundamentally transformative projects of change. The reason that parliamentary capacity in the region is weak is not apolitical, and any attempt to support change must be willing to challenge existing power structures. Just as development initiatives fail if they are not contextually relevant, capacity-strengthening initiatives carry a double burden: they must be relevant to the context of a specific parliament, but they must also be able to shift strategic levers of power that have contributed to limiting the effectiveness of parliaments. These dual demands often pull programmes in opposite directions and managing both can often seem like a zero-sum trade off.

The unique parliamentary context

Capacity-strengthening initiatives should consider how the political context and dynamics affect the relationships between different parliamentary role players and how these impact on decision-making. As emphasised by Hubli (2007, p. 5), “parliaments are political organisations, and the starting point must always be an understanding of the political system in which they operate.” Various

¹⁴ Extract from interview conducted with AFIDEP representative Rose Oronje (16 April 2020).

initiatives, such as the RPLP led by CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele and the Vaka Yiko programme led by INASP and ACEPA, include a specific focus on the macro-level context and the related politics of evidence use and, more importantly, facilitate discussions with parliamentary stakeholders on how to navigate the political context effectively so that evidence can contribute more meaningfully to decision-making in relation to other factors influencing decision-making. A narrow focus on technical knowledge and skills on evidence generation and use will have little impact if the political context is not factored in. As indicated earlier, a number of collaborating organisations consider the political context as a starting point in the development of capacity-strengthening initiatives and also include the 'politics of evidence use' very deliberately as a key discussion point in the agenda of capacity-strengthening initiatives such as the RPLP led by CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele.

A recent tracer study by CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele (2020) looking at the effects of their parliamentary capacity-strengthening initiatives indicates that the deeper political and ideological aspects need to be addressed in order for meaningful change to occur. This should then have a bearing on the technical and logistic aspects of the initiative, including the allocation of the necessary financial and human resources and infrastructure. Respondents to the tracer study emphasised that the ability to apply and transfer learning gained from capacity-strengthening initiatives is heavily determined by political will and a conducive organisational culture that recognises and values the importance of strengthening evidence use in parliaments. In essence, if the culture does not exist, a prudent first step would be to lay a foundation that fosters the requisite culture.

As emphasised by an INASP representative, as a site of political debate and contestation, the political dynamic in parliament is fundamentally different to other institutions such as the executive arm of government – "parliaments are such a different type of public institution - different to civil service and ministries and departments because of the unavoidable politicised nature of work there. Parliamentary staff differ to civil service, executive and ministerial staff. Their motivations and approaches are heavily influenced by the political nature of the institution and the imperative of neutrality when their role involves providing evidence to different political actors at the same time" (Hayter, 2020).¹⁵

¹⁵ Interview conducted with INASP representative, Emily Hayter (24 April 2020).

Reviewing SIDA's support to parliaments, Hubli and Schmidt, M. (2005, p. 5) emphasise that "parliamentary strengthening programmes have often fallen short of their goals because they have not been sufficiently 'politically contextualised,' i.e. not designed and implemented in a manner that recognises the political incentive structures that govern parliamentary behaviour". While many organisations, including CLEAR-AA, Twende Mbele, INASP and AFIDEP, work with both the executive and parliaments, the importance of recognising the inherent differences and adapting approaches to suit the specific context of parliament cannot be underestimated. This is particularly important in terms of respecting and reinforcing the separation of powers in relation to the important oversight role of parliaments. The tendency for development partners to implement country-wide capacity-strengthening approaches often includes liaison with representatives from the executive as the starting point to discuss parliamentary capacity-strengthening programmes. As Hubli (n.d., p. 3) notes, "executives negotiate donor assistance with executive counterparts, which may not have an incentive to prioritise parliamentary development." While there may be value in country-coordinated approaches by development partners, it is important that the different country entities and sectors such as parliament be engaged separately on their own terms to understand their needs from their own various perspectives (of course recognising that there are different internal perspectives within a specific parliament) and not solely from the perspective of the executive. There needs to be a conscious effort to preserve (or increase) the autonomy and independence of parliament. The Malawi Parliamentary Enhancement Programme (MPEP), supported by AFIDEP, is a good example of a programme that has placed "improved autonomy and functionality" of parliament at the centre of its work, as emphasised by the Speaker of the Parliament of Malawi, Hon. Richard Msowoya, at the launch of the MPEP project: "as a Malawian, when I look at how we link up with the executive and the judiciary, I know that there is a lot that needs to be done. We need to tackle the issues that make us uncomfortable. We know that parliament could do a lot if it had legal autonomy, we know that parliament could do a lot if it had budget autonomy, and we also know that parliament could do a lot if it had operational autonomy. This project is an opportunity for us to address these challenges once and for all" (Oronje, 2018).¹⁶

¹⁶ Blog by Rose Oronje (1 March 2018) "Parliament of Malawi Launches Performance Enhance Project". <https://bit.ly/3nECsBQ>

Another important contextual consideration is the necessity to fully understand and to have a clear awareness of the internal parliamentary structures and processes. This includes how the different structures operate and work together, with due attention being paid to the election cycle and the broader parliamentary calendar (e.g. when parliament is in session). It is critical to understand the dynamics that underlie and affect parliament's processes (including the election and budget cycles) and this requires approaches that will allow for emerging (or unexpected) developments which may affect the parliamentary cycle. The election and budget cycles, for example, are major drivers triggering a demand for evidence to support campaigns and positions (accompanied by a surge in actual evidence use). This provides an important opportunity to demonstrate the crucial importance of effective evidence use by parliamentarians and the political parties they represent. As an example, the RPLP (led by CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele) included a specific module on the election, budget and reporting cycles for parliamentary and non-parliamentary representatives to explore and better understand (and promote) the potential for improving evidence use at these and other strategic points in the parliamentary cycle.

Synchronising capacity-strengthening plans with the parliamentary cycle and calendar can make a significant difference to the impact of the initiatives, at both strategic and practical levels. For example, the beginning of the parliamentary term is an important period of induction for new parliamentarians to understand their roles and responsibilities which include (but are not limited to) the effective use of evidence to inform and strengthen the ability to fulfil their mandates. When planning capacity-strengthening programmes/initiatives, it is important to consider the parliamentary calendar and its (often different) impacts on MPs and staff. For example, respondents in the tracer study felt strongly that capacity-strengthening initiatives (including the focus on evidence use) should be included from the start of the new parliamentary term during the induction phase.

This view was expressed by an MP during the tracer study as follows: "because the turnover [in parliament] is normally very heavy, ... we always start with close to 80% new people all the time ... if we wanted to be smart, we need to have national [capacity strengthening] programmes running from the beginning when members are getting the orientation" (MP, Tracer Study respondent cited in CLEAR-AA, 2020).

The importance of using the orientation period strategically is echoed by partners involved the VakaYiko programme led by INASP – “orientation is an important moment to raise the visibility of information support services, set a positive tone around evidence, and try to attract new ‘champions’ at the beginning of a new parliament” (INASP, 2017).¹⁷

While echoing the importance of synchronising capacity-strengthening initiatives with the parliamentary calendar and noting the importance of the orientation period, advice from Uganda’s Institute for Parliamentary Studies (IPS) draws attention to the ways in which the complexities of election processes affect alignment with parliamentary calendars – “much as orientation is done at the beginning, many members of parliament do not get into their positions for several months even years because of legal contestation, so you find that the latter groups miss a great portion of the initial orientation and trainings given. So we need to find a way to align with this process” (Emaasit, 2020).¹⁸

Experiences and related opinions vary on whether MPs and staff should be brought together to participate in capacity-strengthening initiatives on evidence use. On the one hand, the benefit of bringing the different role players together may be that they are better able to understand and address each other’s different but integrated challenges in the evidence generation and use process. This can also contribute to an organisational culture of mutual respect, thereby reducing polarisation. On the other hand, some argue that staff and MPs require different capacities (knowledge and skills) and may therefore be better served by separate dedicated initiatives to focus specifically on the needs of these different role players. A potentially useful middle-ground is to have a combination of some joint and some separate initiatives as part of the same capacity-strengthening programme. Many of the collaborating organisations engage in a thorough needs analysis to inform specific needs of the different stakeholders (MPs and staff). For example, CPST, in its work with county assemblies, describes its approach as follows: “CPST began a process of learning needs assessment in 2016 that sought to document the training and capacity profile of Members of the County Assemblies and staff; [and to] establish the training needs of members and staff of County Assemblies at the organisational level ... at the occupational level and ... at the individual level.”¹⁹

¹⁷ <https://bit.ly/3jG7MyW>

¹⁸ Written submission by Uganda IPS representative, Rachel Emaasit (1 May 2020).

¹⁹ Interview with CPST representative, Dr Martin Mbewa (24 April 2020).

Lessons from the RPLP (led by CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele) indicate the value in bringing together MPs and staff from different parliaments to break down traditional hierarchies between MPs and staff so that they feel more comfortable sharing their concerns and challenges and to exploring solutions collaboratively. In the regional peer-learning scenario, the different role players are generally on a more equal footing in sharing and working through the different (interrelated or interdependent) challenges of evidence generation and use. While this situation is not without tension, a healthy dynamic seems more possible in situations where participants are from different parliaments and are representatives of learning and support rather than participating according to their hierarchical positions (CLEAR-AA, 2020).

The dilemma of buy-in

As parliaments are political institutions, the implementation of programmes is (at best) significantly smoother and (at worst) only possible with the enthusiastic buy-in of parliament's political leadership (e.g. the Speaker). As discussed in Volume 1, Chapter 5, parliamentarians have varied incentives to use evidence and their motivation is based largely on their political party affiliation, the timing of the electoral cycle, their political image, and other concerns. This is a dilemma for capacity-building programme managers as a close affiliation with the political objectives of those in power could advance the programme very efficiently. However, when power changes, the tables could turn (or possibly create new opportunities). Additionally, it could create unintended incentives for participation among parliamentary constituents. Often, these are the very political dynamics that an initiative seeks to transform, making this positioning particularly important.

For a number of reasons it is important that the political and administrative leadership within legislatures understand the value in the capacity-strengthening initiatives. First, buy-in from the leadership often translates into institutional support which strongly influences MPs and staff to appreciate the value of the initiative and, by implication, the importance of effective evidence generation and use. This appreciation may then result in greater interest in and commitment to participation in the initiatives. Likewise, there is a better chance of ensuring that the 'right' participants are selected to participate i.e. those who may be better positioned (in terms of their roles and/or interests)

to serve as champions of evidence use and who can effectively promote, apply and transfer the learning gained within their respective structures and broader institutions.²⁰

The Malawi Parliament Enhancement Programme (MPEP) led by AFIDEP

The aim of the MPEP project implemented between 2017 and 2020 was “to inspire supportive political behaviour and reforms and strengthen capacity that enables performance improvement and effective delivery of the Malawi Parliament’s functions.” The MPEP project “combines interventions that engage and shape the power relations, incentives, and influences within and outside parliament, to enhance Malawi Parliament’s performance. The project seeks to inspire supportive political behaviour and reforms and strengthen capacity that enables performance improvement and effective delivery of Parliamentary functions. MPEP is anchored within the Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC) to enable parliament to own, inform and steer its implementation and ensure sustainability of the interventions. The project is addressing both the political and technical bottlenecks that limit the capacity of parliament to effectively fulfil its mandate. The project team, comprising diverse local and international experts in governance and evidence-informed transformational change, works closely with all leaders across the political spectrum to galvanise sustainable action to decisively improve the performance of the parliament.”

Furthermore, leadership and broader institutional support often pave the way for participants of capacity-strengthening initiatives to be able to participate without being called away during the sessions or programme. As emphasised in a recent interview with the representatives from AFIDEP who were sharing key lessons from their work: “if the Clerk doesn’t see the value in the intervention, then the members of the legislative staff can be called back midway through an extensive training programme” (Interview with Rose Oronje, April 2020). CPST representatives further echoed this point by emphasising that a key recommendation to improve capacity strengthening initiatives is to “work with the Clerk and the official process since this is essential for buy-in” (Mbewa, 2020).²¹

²⁰ Extracted from project descriptions on AFIDEP’s website. <https://bit.ly/3vOALFq>

²¹ Interview with CPST representative, Dr Martin Mbewa (24 April 2020).

The tracer study findings (CLEAR-AA & Twende Mbele, 2020) also indicated that participants are better prepared and therefore more likely to apply and transfer learning gained within their institutions if there is leadership buy-in and institutional support as the interest from colleagues may be greater and the necessary resources more readily available (also noting the converse where this support is absent). A key recommendation from tracer study respondents is that “parliamentary leadership should be better oriented on the importance of strengthening evidence use to ensure buy-in and support for the initiatives and, more importantly, to ensure more meaningful, sustained impact” (CLEAR-AA & Twende Mbele, 2020).

Similarly, experiences in the VakaYiko programme led by INASP highlighted the importance of leadership support in shifting norms – “the Speaker and the Clerk ... play an extremely influential role in setting the tone and institutional culture of a parliament. It is important to gain their support for promotional activities around evidence, especially where these may challenge existing organisational norms” (INASP, 2017).²²

Mutual respect and trust between the key parliament representatives and the development partner(s) plays an important role in securing leadership and institutional buy-in. At the very basic level, the communication and authorisation protocols of the different parliaments need to be observed by the development partners. For example, both political and administrative parliamentary leadership roles, such as those of the Speaker and Clerk, require an awareness of the capacity-strengthening programmes and specific initiatives and why they are necessary, as is emphasised by AFIDEP representative: “the importance of having buy-in from different levels of leadership within parliament includes an awareness of the programmes that are going on and why they are needed” (Interview with Rose Oronje, April 2020). There would be even greater effectiveness if the leadership assumes responsibility for driving these initiatives.

The various development partners spend significant amounts of time sharing information and building relationships with different levels of leadership within the parliaments. This fosters leadership endorsement and enhances credibility for the initiative which, in turn, attracts greater interest. The importance of formalising relationships between development partners and the respective parliaments was noted and recommended by parliamentary representatives

²² <https://bit.ly/3jG7MyW>

as a means to ease procedural issues when invitations are received for capacity strengthening initiatives and this was expressed as follows: “so my recommendation would be for CLEAR-AA to formalise the partnership with our parliament. Once that is done, it’s to be like part of the institutional requirement for us to do whatever we need to do to move the evidence use agenda. In the absence of that it becomes a by-the-way thing” (CLEAR-AA & Twende Mbele, 2020, p. 35).

It should be noted that the highly bureaucratic nature of parliaments (including the different leadership levels) necessitates that sufficient time is allocated for approval. Therefore, development partners and parliamentary representatives emphasised the importance of advance planning and working through different political and technical champions including key individuals in parliaments and other relevant internal departments such as M&E and research units or parliamentary networks/caucuses such as APNODE and the Kenyan Parliament’s Caucus on Evidence-Informed Oversight and Decision-Making (PC-EIDM). Working collaboratively with such champions to promote and drive capacity-strengthening initiatives increases the potential for positively influencing the parliamentary leadership.

The value of specific parliamentary networks and caucuses focusing on evidence use (e.g. APNODE and PC-EIDM) has been demonstrated to be of particular strategic benefit as an entry point into parliaments and, in some cases, serves to influence parliamentary leadership effectively. Champions are also important to ensure that the learning gained from the various initiatives filters through to the broader institution, particularly to the relevant parliamentary structures engaged in evidence generation and use. This is important as it is unlikely that all MPs and staff will be able to participate in capacity-strengthening initiatives and therefore mechanisms for transferring the knowledge gained must be devised and driven by internal champions. Furthermore, champions are already experts in matching the benefits of evidence use to the unique incentives faced by MPs. Respondents to the tracer study conducted by CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele (2020) indicated that the transfer of learning often occurs in informal ways through the ability of champions to demonstrate the value and importance of evidence use to their colleagues and this was expressed by an MP as follows: “... the kind of argument we raised drew people’s mind to the point that this concept [evidence use] is very important. The few of us who attended the training ... any time we come in we make [our colleagues] understand and most of us who attended serve on different committees ... This is my own way

of transferring the knowledge to colleagues. It is informal and usually after the various sessions I bring some few colleagues around to share with them some of these concepts” (MP, cited in CLEAR-AA & Twende Mbele, 2020).

Internal Parliamentary Training Institutes

The Parliament of Kenya’s Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST) and the Parliament of Uganda’s Institute of Parliamentary Studies are both specifically mandated by their respective parliaments to build the capacity of parliamentarians and support staff in partnership with several organisations. Their experience therefore cuts across a range of content areas requiring attention in the parliamentary context and adds a valuable insider perspective on the capacity needs of parliamentary stakeholders. Uganda’s Institute of Parliamentary Studies (IPS) realised early on that MPs need to be able to make use of research and other forms of evidence to have meaningful debate. It has since been reviewing what structures or systems need to be in place to enable ease of practice of EIDM to give advice on the set up of such systems in the Parliament of Uganda. IPS works in partnership with several organisations including INASP, the Natural Resource Governance Facility (NRGI) and the Center for Rapid Evidence Synthesis (ACRES) at Makerere University to offer regular continuing education and professional skilling in evidence-informed policy and decision-making. Kenya’s Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST) provides a range of capacity-strengthening opportunities to the Parliament of Kenya and to the county assemblies in particular. Its training curriculum covers a broad spectrum of specific skills development on parliamentary operations, roles and responsibilities and ensure that parliamentarians and support staff understand and fulfil their mandates and duties. Both these institutes also contributed to the Regional Peer-Learning Programme (RPLP) led by CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele.

Partnerships and coordination

All our capacity-strengthening experiences revealed a common need for stronger partnerships in the sector. These partnerships make programmatic work more effective and also create polycentric power, which can address some of the difficulties discussed above regarding complacency with the prevailing power structures of parliament. Additionally, partnerships outside parliament

with civil society organisations, academics, and other role players, can help shift the dynamics of entrenched discussions, and change the way conversations take place.

The initiative that led to this book evolved organically due primarily to the fragmented nature of the parliamentary capacity-building space. We shared collective experiences of many actors simultaneously offering various capacity-strengthening opportunities and all involved had experienced the frustrations of parliaments taking on the onerous job of donor/development partner coordination, as was highlighted by the INASP representative: “[There are] so many different actors at one time trying to build the capacity of parliament. Parliamentary staff are bombarded with offers of training. Some parliaments do not have a donor coordinating function that ensures there isn’t duplication or ensures relevance. In other parliaments this function exists but doesn’t work very well [due to] lack of trust and incentives that undermine effectiveness. People trained have been to many of the same training by different donors. The sector may have to talk to each other more” (Hayter, 2020).²³

In many of the capacity-strengthening initiatives, we uncovered issues of duplication, training fatigue, and inefficient time and resource use. This is intricately linked to the structural flaws of the development industry. While it is not a complete solution, taking on some of the responsibility for coordination within programmes in terms of the relevant activities and resourcing is a role that capacity-strengthening initiatives could play. As the INASP representative further notes, “parties interested in improving the work of parliament ... should regularly touch base in order to avoid doing the same thing over and over again” (Hayter, 2020). Improved coordination could also ensure that limited resources are aligned and used effectively to harmonise and strengthen the initiatives. The various internal and external role players working in the space of parliament should therefore be purposeful and should factor in the valuable role of coordination in efforts to improve parliament-focused capacity strengthening initiatives.

The partnership development experience during the regional peer-learning programme led by CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele highlighted that the development of partnerships for collaborative programmes requires a significant investment of time. We need to explore and understand partners’

²³ Interview with INASP representative, Emily Hayter (24 April 2020).

fit for collaboration in terms of their focus, approach, values, interests and expectations. In the case of the Regional Peer-Learning Programme, for example, CLEAR-AA staff spent an initial three-month period researching potential partners during a scoping visit to identify and build relationships with potential partners. Thereafter they developed the relationships further through joint planning and implementation of a series of events over a one-year period. In retrospect, it is clear that we needed more time for initial research and relationship building prior to the joint planning and implementation phase.

A collaborative programme also requires sufficient flexibility to work in different ways with the various partners and to allow for input into the proposed approach and this may lead to changes to the original conceptualisation. Ideally, partners need to invest in joint resource mobilisation strategies that will allow for greater shared responsibility for direction setting, implementation and management, while playing to the different strengths of the partners.

Reflections and lessons

During our collaboration, we found that, fundamentally, parliamentary practice is both shaped by and shapes the national systems of governance. Capacity-strengthening initiatives cannot view parliaments from outside this context and, as a result, initiatives which ignore the surrounding political economy and incentive systems tend to fail. However, when environments are created for open exchange among key parliamentary role players in a way that promotes acknowledgment of the many prevailing difficulties in this environment for all stakeholders, real strategies emerge that may provide important ways of catalysing change and building support for development.

To make inroads into strengthening evidence use in parliaments, an important step is to systematise learning around evidence use. This includes a deliberate effort to incorporate evidence use as an integral part of induction curricula of national parliaments and to include the topic in orientation sessions for all committees and other key organs of parliament. While this does not obviate the need for continuous learning, it ensures that the issue is not addressed in a piecemeal fashion and that there is continuity across changes in staffing, elections, etc. The representative from Uganda's IPS, for example, recommends that, "the subject [evidence use] should be introduced during induction of incoming parliaments and orientation sessions for all committees and other key

parliament organs. Training is not enough; it is beneficial to spice the learning process with other interventions such as exposure to demonstrated success of evidence use."²⁴

All capacity-strengthening providers acknowledge that training alone is not enough and that there is often inadequate provision for post-training follow-up, support services, learning exchanges, and other activities that could serve to strengthen capacity more holistically. Particular value was ascribed to peer-learning approaches. Collaborative, regional peer learning should be expanded to improve the support for potential and strategic champions by means of learning from different parliamentary contexts and from different capacity-building organisations.

Effective diagnostics are critical to build appropriate capacity. Often, improved collaboration among internal units within parliament or outreach to academic institutions and knowledge brokers, could prove to be more effective strategies for promoting evidence use than training alone. To sufficiently understand the needs of a parliamentary system of evidence use, it is important to consider individual capacity, and individual and organisational incentives and decision-making processes, coordination and communication, as well as organisational culture and leadership.

Good practices should continue to be shared in a range of formats and platforms to demonstrate the value that systems of evidence can play in politicised contexts. Rather than push parliaments to be the technocratic institutions that they are not, the value of evidence in a political environment should be better demonstrated. Good systems of evidence use can both highlight the success of the ruling party as well as reveal the failures. They can give elected representatives the tools to respond to public criticism as much as they can arm opposition parties with the same evidence. But, mostly, they can significantly enrich the contestation of open and free debate that underpins all governments in the region and, in so doing, support the strong articulation of the most effective and appropriate development pathway for each country.

²⁴ Written submission by Uganda IPS representative, Rachel Emaasit (1 May 2020).

Conclusion

Capacity strengthening within parliaments has its advantages and its limitations. Parliaments are crucial role-players in national governance, but their capacity is not simply a reflection of internal resourcing and skills. Parliaments also face a range of structural constraints to their effectiveness which capacity-strengthening initiatives cannot directly address but may occasionally be able to influence.

One of the critical reflections from parliamentary capacity builders is that changing the framing of these initiatives may transform them into more strategic interventions. Articulating capacity building as an activity merely to be received can reinforce several negative attributes of the international donor industry, such as poor coordination and lack of ownership, with the consequence that interventions are neither used nor sustainable. Issues such as participation being led by *per diems* rather than by a genuine need to build skills, cannot be blamed solely on individual participants or specific donor practices. It is part of a systemic problem of unrealistic expectations of elected representatives and donor collusion with a development system that is broken – a context in which economic opportunities of a wide range of political stakeholders are limited. Appropriate mechanisms to support adaptive management and continuous learning within parliaments might shift both the debate and the processes through which interventions are implemented.

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1.1

CAPACITY-BUILDING CASE STUDY: REGIONAL PEER LEARNING

Demonstrating the value of a collaborative peer-learning approach, CLEAR-AA, in collaboration with Twende Mbele, conceptualised and coordinated the Regional Peer Learning Programme (RPLP) aimed at strengthening evidence use for legislative oversight. The programme included a series of capacity-strengthening activities over the course of 2018 and 2019, bringing together nominated representatives from ten parliaments, the African Parliamentarians' Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE), and various capacity-strengthening organisations from the east, west and southern African regions. The parliamentary representatives included Members of Parliament (MPs), as well as parliamentary staff (researchers, content advisors, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officers, and strategic planning officers) nominated by their parliaments (or parliamentary networks/caucuses). The initial idea was that the nominated representatives would participate as a single cohort in all events throughout the programme but this was not always possible due to parliamentary commitments and individual interests in the different focus areas of each of the events.

The capacity-strengthening approach employed can best be described as facilitated peer learning (as opposed to training in the traditional sense) since it relied more heavily on providing a facilitated platform for sharing of approaches, experiences and lessons learnt by participants from the various parliaments supported by input and facilitation from partner organisations. The programme was implemented in three broad phases including a diagnostic and development phase, an implementation phase of shared learning, and a reflection and consolidation phase. The diagnostic phase included a scoping visit to gain a better understanding of the different parliamentary contexts in the region and their particular experiences and needs around evidence use followed by the building of a working relationship with key individuals as current and potential champions in parliaments. In addition, the scoping visit served to identify and build relationships with some of the organisations working to support parliaments in order to facilitate collaboration during the programme and beyond. This was followed by an inception workshop to jointly unpack the factors enhancing and constraining evidence use in the different parliaments. Crawley's Six-Sphere Framework (Crawley, 2017) was used to focus the discussions on technical, logistical, contextual and relational aspects as well as on deeper political and ideological factors.

Based on the issues raised, the partner organisations engaged in a collaborative curriculum development process which informed the implementation of regional peer-learning workshops on research and evidence use in parliaments and on M&E frameworks in parliament. The workshops focused on the conceptual, political and ideological aspects of evidence use, the institutional systems and incentives, and the technical elements. The content and facilitation approach for these workshops drew on the expertise of the different partner organisations and parliamentary representatives to share their experiences on the various challenges and good practices in their institutions. Finally, the reflection phase served to consolidate and share learning and inform future collaboration on parliamentary capacity strengthening which also inspired the idea for this collaborative book project. This included a reflection workshop with representatives from partner organisations and regional parliaments, as well as a broader learning symposium to share lessons and emerging issues with a broader audience.

The various partners contributed their different areas of expertise in some of the following ways: ACEPA directed the discussions on defining the concept of evidence and exploring the politics of evidence use within the parliamentary context and its specific mandates; AFIDEP shared its expertise in strengthening the evidence selection, synthesis and evidence packaging skills required in order to select and use evidence effectively; CLEAR-AA, GIMPA, Twende Mbele and APNODE drew attention to parliament's role as an evaluative institution by guiding discussions on the role of M&E in parliaments and parliament's role in national evaluation systems; UNWomen raised awareness around the importance of an integrated focus on generating and using evidence on gender equality and equity within the framing of the SDGs, and specifically the role of parliaments in addressing inequalities by examining social inclusion and power relations to promote more inclusive growth and development. Specifically mandated by their respective parliaments to build the cross-sectional capacities of parliamentary staff and MPs, the internal parliamentary training institutes – the Parliament of Kenya's Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST) and the Parliament of Uganda's Institute of Parliamentary Studies – brought valuable insider perspectives on the intersection between evidence use and the different mandates, roles and responsibilities within the parliamentary context. The programme's reflection phase also benefitted from the involvement of the International Network for the Advancement of Science to Policy (INASP) as a strategic thought partner highlighting the value of a

holistic approach to capacity strengthening, with particular attention being paid to organisational culture, incentives and aspects that inform behaviour and decision-making.

Lessons learnt

The programme reinforced the importance of a participatory needs analysis (diagnostic) process that develops understanding and builds good relationships, coupled with a flexible participatory planning approach to ensure that the programme is adjusted where and when necessary to meet the needs prioritised by participants (and their respective parliaments) as far as possible.

The regional peer-learning approach worked particularly well to allow for mutual learning from the experiences of different parliaments and partner organisations. Profiling relevant good practices in the various parliaments and profiling the work of partner organisations provided a valuable basis for participants and their respective organisations to continue learning from each other and working together to strengthen systems of evidence beyond the programme initiatives.

The partnership development process throughout the programme allowed for ongoing strategic relationships to develop among partner organisations and champions within parliaments. As a result, informal communities of practice have developed among participants for ongoing sharing of learning and resources and for exploring collaboration opportunities to champion and enhance systems of evidence use in parliaments.

Based on the authors' direct experiences in conceptualising and implementing this programme as well as various internal project reports including, among others, the tracer study report frequently referred to in the chapter:

CLEAR-AA & Twende Mbele (2020) "Tracer Study Report: Effects of the Parliamentary Capacity Strengthening Initiatives implemented by CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele between 2017 & 2018".

1.2

CAPACITY-BUILDING CASE STUDY: VAKA YIKO – BUILDING CAPACITY TO USE RESEARCH EVIDENCE

As part of the Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence Programme (B-CURE), the International Network for the Advancement of Science to Policy (INASP) led the VakaYiko component of the programme aimed at strengthening capacity for evidence use in the parliaments of Ghana, Uganda and Zimbabwe. VakaYiko was a three-year project that ran between 2013 to 2017 and was implemented through a consortium of partners including the Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network (ZeipNET), the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS), the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS), and the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA).

The VakaYiko programme was one of six linked projects in the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (B-CURE) programme that aimed to build the capacity of decision makers in low- and middle-income countries to access, appraise and use research evidence and rigorous data (Itad, 2020).

VakaYiko built parliamentary capacity at individual, organisational and network levels in each country. At the individual level, VakaYiko drew on INASP's evidence-informed policy-making toolkit to train parliamentary staff involved in gathering and synthesising evidence for decision-making. The individuals included parliamentary researchers, committee clerks, librarians and IT staff (INASP, 2017).

At the organisational level, capacity building helped teams implement processes that allowed for the effective access, appraisal and use of research evidence and rigorous data. For instance, VakaYiko's intervention in the Parliament of Ghana led to the development of a 'strategic approach to evidence', and the Parliament of Uganda reviewed and updated their research policy (INASP, 2017). In the case of the Parliament of Ghana, the strategic approach to evidence consisted of seven key elements to "support collaboration between information support units on both a technical and strategic level to meet evidence needs" (INASP, 2018, p. 3). The first element is a reflective process that looks at the roles of each information support department, and subsequent steps "involve mapping the political, organisational and other factors affecting key evidence processes before identifying how each department can contribute to improving these processes" (INASP, 2018, p. 3).

Finally, at the network level VakaYiko engaged in relationship building between legislatures and the national research sector. In the Parliament of Uganda, a Research Week was held after a series of dialogues and events on the use of research evidence (INASP, 2017). Other activities included peer-learning networking between parliaments (INASP, 2017). Led by the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA), parliamentary staff shared their experiences and made suggestions on topics they wanted to learn more about through face-to-face engagements and online learning sessions. INASP reports that “these addressed a variety of issues, from strengthening mechanisms to enable citizen evidence to contribute to parliamentary discussions, to constituency profiling, different models for Parliamentary Budget Offices, and strategies to communicate evidence to MPs” (INASP, 2017).

VakaYiko’s approach to capacity building began with policymakers’ suggestions on areas of interest that needed to be strengthened. VakaYiko therefore consulted on ‘demand side’ considerations rather than speculating on possible areas of interest that might be appropriate for context – the ‘supply side’ (ODI, 2016). This approach meant that the consortium looked both at legislative needs and ways to create demand for evidence for policymakers.

Lessons learnt

The VakaYiko initiative revealed a number of lessons that can and should be taken into account when planning future parliamentary capacity-strengthening programmes. First, legislatures are inherently political, and therefore the political structures, dynamics and considerations underpin any decision-making process (Hayter, 2017). Likewise, the intensely politicised nature of legislative work means that different considerations apply for evidence use and research for organisations building capacities in legislatures compared to building capacity in the civil service or ministries (Hayter, 2017). Moreover, it is equally important to acknowledge that parliamentary staff differ from civil service, executive and ministerial staff. Their motivations and approaches are heavily influenced by the political nature of the institution. Finally, the parliamentary cycle often dictates the availability of MPs and their staff. Implementing organisations need to be aware of the parliamentary calendar and its implications on staff and MP availability and willingness.

Most importantly, perhaps, we learn from the VakaYiko project that intervention should only be initiated after legislatures have reached the point of recognition of their internal limitations and their requirements which then prompts a request for assistance (INASP, 2017; Hayter, 2017). In addition, the value of working through parliaments' existing systems and with local expertise to address capacity needs was highlighted as a key lesson.²⁵ African legislatures are recipients abundant of external capacity and technical support which is often uncoordinated and/or underreported. INASP concluded that their future interventions need to focus less on enabling parliaments' self-sustainability and more on empowering parliaments to recognise the limited capacities which can be addressed by means of efficient coordination of agreements with external actors and improved internal collaboration.

The Vaka Yiko programme also provided an opportunity for INASP to partner with ACEPA to analyze what they had learnt about evidence systems in African parliaments.²⁶

Ultimately, these lessons create the introspective and internally collaborative environments and processes that will allow legislatures to identify their own capacity-strengthening needs, and to take ownership of ensuing capacity-strengthening initiatives. Furthermore, this experience illustrates the value of a collaborative partnership with ACEPA bringing the parliamentary expertise and INASP, the EIPM expertise.

Compiled by Tefo Mosienyane based on an interview with Emily Hayter, specifically conducted as part of the research for this chapter, as well as relevant online documents describing the programme of work.

²⁵ See for example, INASP's work with the Parliament of Uganda, included in the INASP report (specifically Section 3.5, p. 47-48). <https://bit.ly/3lIme5z>

²⁶ The analysis included case studies of specific parliaments involved in the programme. <https://bit.ly/2Xmkc6A>

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1.3

CAPACITY-BUILDING CASE STUDY: THE MALAWI PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT INITIATIVE

The ongoing Malawi Parliamentary Support Initiative (MPSI) is a targeted intervention which started in May 2018 and is funded by USAID/Malawi through the Malawi STEPS grant to Counterpart International and implemented by AFIDEP as a sub-grantee. The aim of the initiative is to bolster the oversight, legislative and representative capabilities of the Malawian Parliament in relation to budget analysis, financial scrutiny and policymaking. Members of Parliament, parliamentary leadership, parliamentary technical staff, civil society organisations and academia are amongst those targeted by MPSI.

MPSI has three primary objectives. The first is to strengthen the prevailing structures and systems that inform evidence-informed budget analysis, financial scrutiny and policymaking. The second objective is to conduct interventions to build on existing skills and technical knowledge of parliamentary staff, specifically in financial oversight, budgetary analysis and informed policymaking. Finally, AFIDEP provides budget analysis and related research to support the legislative, oversight, and representative roles of parliament throughout the tenure of MPSI.

AFIDEP developed guidelines and manuals based on lessons learnt from past similar interventions in regional parliaments and tailored these findings to the specific and nuanced needs of the Parliament of Malawi. These guides and manuals are effective tools for on-boarding new members and employees. As these tools are specific to Malawian needs and underpin certain parliamentary processes, they serve to institutionalise the knowledge and create a platform on which to build future knowledge.

MPSI has developed five guidelines and manuals in line with the goals of this project. The Budget Analysis Manual is used by the Parliamentary Budget Office, Public Accounts and Budget Committee and MPs to track and monitor the national budget and to assess its impact on policy implementation. The Legislative Research Manual targets the Research Section, Committee Section and MPs by strengthening the processes and quality of legislative research. The Bill Drafting and Analysis Manual is used by the Legal Section, the Research Section and MPs to establish high quality standards in research evidence for debating and decision-making during the Bill drafting and analysis processes. The fourth guide is the Guidelines for Parliamentary Committees Formulating Open Calls for Evidence. This guide is used by the Committee Section, the Research Section and the Civic Education Section to standardise calls for and analysis of evidence submitted to parliament. Finally, the Guidelines

for Submission of Evidence to a Parliament Committee Inquiry Guide was developed to guide the general public on procedures for evidence submission to parliamentary committees (AFIDEP, 2020).

Based on prior experience, AFIDEP's objective was to ensure that these guidelines and manuals were not treated as an end in themselves, but were widely disseminated and integrated into training and on-boarding programmes. AFIDEP found that this can only be achieved if a programme has won the buy-in from all levels of leadership in parliament and is valued by those participating in initiatives derived from the guidelines. Buy-in can be secured by ensuring that interventions are developed from parliaments' expressed needs and, crucially, when all levels of leadership are made aware of every intervention being implemented and why each intervention is necessary. Similarly, staff and MPs value intervention when it is understood to be responding to relevant gaps in the prevailing systems or in their own skill sets.

Lessons learnt

AFIDEP shared several lessons from their work with the Parliament of Malawi. The first lesson is that it is critical to be aware of the politics and political dynamics of actors in the context in which the intervention takes place, to ensure projects respond to demand, and to try to mitigate challenges that come with *per diems*.

The second lesson is that legislatures are inherently political. The political and informal culture of the institution informs how systems operate and the rationale behind actions.

The third lesson is that the tendency to develop proposals and obtain donor funding before approaching parliaments not only leads to projects that may not win institutional buy-in, but also entrenches uncoordinated donor systems that are characterised by overlapping donor-provided interventions and poor participation.

The last lesson is that programmes must seek creative ways to mitigate instances where participant numbers are inflated by the allure of *per diems*. There is a danger that *per diems* may attract participants who are not interested in training material but are drawn to destination training events, executive treatment, and supplementary income.

Compiled by Tefo Mosienyane.

Reference

African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP). 2020. *Malawi Parliamentary Support Initiative (MPSI)*. Available: <https://bit.ly/3jGYrqs>

Interview with Rose Oronje (AFIDEP): April 2020.

1.4

CAPACITY-BUILDING CASE STUDY: STANDING ORDERS AND EVIDENCE- BASED SCRUTINY AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA

During President Yahya Jammeh's 22-year rule in The Gambia, the National Assembly (NA) was widely perceived as an ineffective and rubber-stamping institution rather than an efficient scrutinising body. Following his surprise defeat in the 2016 presidential election, the NA embarked on a transformative reform process. Speaker Hon. Mariam Jack-Denton and an external evaluation facilitated by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK (CPA UK) identified outdated Standing Orders last updated in 2001 as a key obstacle to effective, evidence-based scrutiny.

CPA UK, the UK branch of the parliamentarians' membership organisation strengthening democracy across the Commonwealth, supported the NA's reform process through a targeted and coherent programme of activities based on peer-to-peer learning. The two-year technical assistance programme delivered in partnership with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) provided an evaluation of the National Assembly; a review of the NA's Standing Orders; training on the new draft Standing Orders; and other capacity-building activities to enhance the skills of clerks and NA Members (NAMs), over 85% of whom were newly elected.

CPA UK deployed two clerks from the Northern Ireland Assembly to Banjul in August 2018 to assist a working group of NAMs and clerks in their review of the Standing Orders. Their report and recommendations launched an extensive consultation process with the Standing Orders Select Committee (SOSC) and other NAMs. The NA achieved a major milestone when it adopted the redrafted Standing Orders in September 2019.

For the very first time the Standing Orders afforded NAMs the space and time required for effective scrutiny of government. According to the UK's Centre for Public Scrutiny, good evidence is the backbone of good scrutiny. Although this holds true for legislative scrutiny, the previous Standing Orders did not specify minimum periods between stages of a Bill. As a result, NAMs felt that Bills were passed too quickly, often within a single day, allowing no time for scrutiny or external consultation.

The new Standing Orders preclude any Bill from passing the third reading in less than nine days (S.O. 66) to ensure that NAMs have an opportunity to reflect on evidence and committee reports. The new Standing Orders stipulate the inclusion of all NAMs and not only members of the relevant committee

in this process, but committees may also only recommend rather than make amendments at committee stage. These changes introduced the space needed to gather and analyse evidence to inform amendments to and votes on Bills.

Limited or unclear timelines similarly prevented the effective use of evidence in financial scrutiny with provisions in the 2001 Standing Orders and the 1997 Constitution effectively allowing the Assembly only three weeks to scrutinise the national budget each year. To accommodate the tight deadline, the NA held intensive budget workshops for members facilitated by experts but without extensive external consultation. The new Standing Orders stipulate a five-week process for this, where the Finance and Public Accounts Committee and the government must agree to administrative arrangements (S.O. 81).

In addition to ensuring that parliamentarians have the necessary resources, capacity, and skills to gather and use evidence in their scrutiny role, parliaments need the requisite framework, including adequate Standing Orders and practical guidance. Hon. Sidia Jatta MNA, Chairperson of the Standing Orders Committee, recognised Standing Orders as ‘dynamic’, requiring updating ‘to meet the prevailing time and circumstances’. While Standing Orders may evolve over time, they must always enable parliamentarians to make decisions and recommendations based on evidence. Without evidence, parliamentarians invariably fail in their responsibilities to their constituents – scrutiny, legislation and representation.

Submitted by Felicity Hermann, representative of The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) UK.