

CONCEPT NOTE: SPOTLIGHT 5

Parliamentarians and Effective Development Co-operation: The oversight challenge

Tuesday, 13 December 2022, 08:30 – 09:30 CET

Context

Accountability has long been recognized as a cardinal principle of effective development cooperation. While many institutions and processes contribute to making development actors accountable to each other, as well as to the public, for decisions about development cooperation modalities and allocations, parliaments have a leading role to play in this domain by virtue of their constitutional oversight and legislative authority.

In actual practice, however, parliaments are often sidelined and their oversight functions underutilized because of a combination of weak institutional capacities and limited legal authority, as well as, often enough, a highly polarized national politics. While parliaments of developing countries are at a particular disadvantage, those of developed countries - which account for the majority of global aid and other development cooperation flows - are not immune to oversight weaknesses.

Parliamentary oversight of development cooperation is exercised first and foremost through the budget process, which needs to be inclusive of vulnerable groups, sensitive to the specific needs of women, and closely aligned to the national SDG plan.

From the budget process, parliamentary oversight extends to a variety of other “modalities” such as loan agreements with international donors, public-private partnership contracts, and even public tenders to private sector providers.

Among the many elements contributing to strong budget oversight are a properly set up and empowered committee structure, expert support services such as those provided by a Parliamentary Budget Office, and independent assessments of government expenditures such as those provided by a Supreme Audit Institution.

Besides the budget process proper, parliamentary oversight of development cooperation revolves around the formulation and implementation of a national development cooperation policy which sets the main objectives and targets of development cooperation in each recipient country. As well, parliaments ought to be involved in key national dialogues for development cooperation as opportunities for development partners and stakeholders, including civil society, private sector and local authorities, to review development cooperation commitments and processes.

Objectives

This Spotlight session will explore the various ways in which accountability of development cooperation can be enhanced through parliamentary oversight.

Drawing from the results of the 2019 GPEDC monitoring exercise, a recent IPU case study of the Parliament of Rwanda as well as a number of IPU debates on SDGs, including the Parliamentary Forum at the 2022 HLPF, the session will consider the following questions:

- How can parliamentary oversight of the budget and other key aid processes be strengthened?
- How can parliaments contribute to national dialogue for development cooperation and related key processes such as the national development cooperation policy?
- How can donor support for parliamentary oversight be made more effective?