



European Commission United Nations Development Programme International IDEA

***Joint Training on
Effective Electoral Assistance***

DAY 2

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Assistance to Political Parties & Parliaments

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Questions

- What are the particular challenges of working with political parties?
- How can these be addressed through assistance?



What comes to mind when you hear the term 'political parties'?

- Role in processes – elections, policy formation, opposition
- Role in institutions – parliamentary and executive representatives
- Image:
 - Self-interested
 - Discredited
 - Not representative
 - Captured by elites
 - Not issue based



What is the role of political parties in a democracy?

- Aggregate interests
- Structure the vote
- Integrate and mobilize the public
- Foster future political leaders
- Organize government
- Influence or form public policy



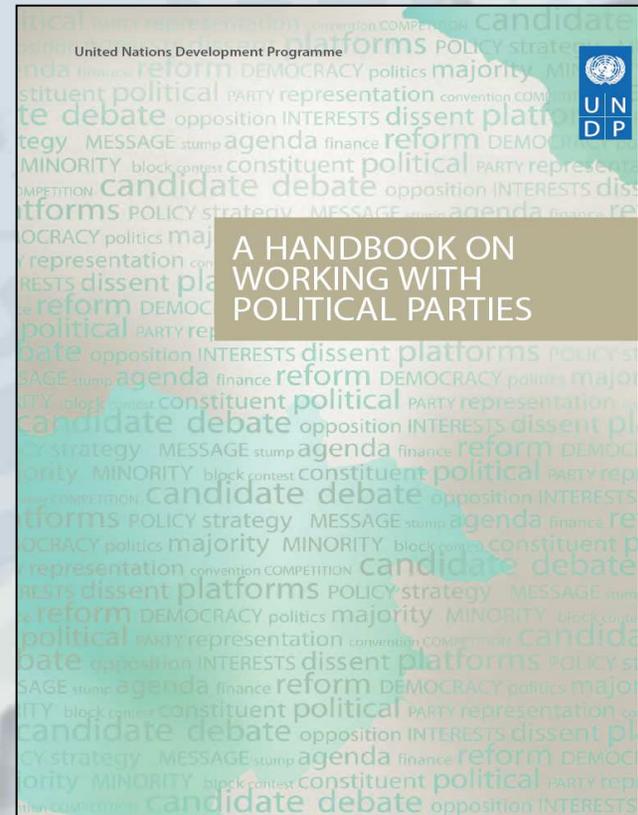
Why are Parties Important?

- Critical governance and electoral actors
- Have been left out of DG assistance
- Traditional assistance of limited utility – why much is ‘bouncing off’ parties
- Division of roles/attributes (political party institutes, party internationals, multilaterals)



Engaging Political Parties

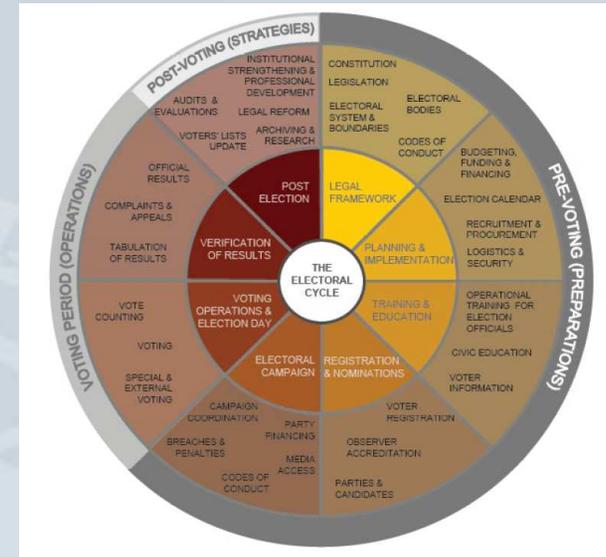
- Should we work with political parties?
- If yes, how can we without jeopardizing our position?





Value added?

- What do we bring?
- Electoral Cycle entry points:
 - Role in **Institutions**: EMBs, Parliaments, Government, Political Party Commissions
 - Role in **Processes**: Legal framework, voter+party/candidate registration, voter sensitization, campaign, pollwatching, electoral disputes, accepting results, conflict management
 - **Functioning** and **Image**: Codes of conduct, relations with media, internal rules and regulations, nomination procedures





Lessons Learned thus far: Do's and Don'ts

DO

- Be aware
- Be non-partisan
- Be transparent and clear
- Be inclusive
- Be equitable
- Know your capacity
- Use HD/MDG agendas
- Focus on dialogue
- Think about the cycle
- When in doubt seek help

DON'T

- Give funding directly
- Favor parties over each other

WHAT ABOUT?

- Parties and violence
- Parties that prohibit women



Parliamentary Development - a key pillar of Democratic Governance

- Relatively new area of DG & few engaged in PD
 - Since nineties gradually gaining in importance
 - But few actors, international donor community relatively shy in providing funding to parliaments, still preference for executive and CSO
 - Important electoral assistance too often not followed by assistance to parliaments, but changing
- Quickly expanding area of UNDP's DG practice
 - a tenfold increase in 10 years : currently over 60 parliaments supported – became main provider of assistance
 - but in terms of resources relatively small (about less than 3 % of total DG support or 40 million out 1,4 billion USD/year)
- Became integral part of UNDP's comprehensive DG agenda in 2000



What is the role of parliaments in a democracy?

- Three chief functions:
 - Law-making
 - Oversight of government/ executive, including state budget
 - Represent the will of the people
- Important role in mediating different constituency interests and in relieving different ethnic, economic and religious tensions
- Effective, representative and accountable parliaments are an important conflict prevention tool



Electoral versus Parliamentary Assistance

- Need to engage parliaments in electoral assistance work:
 - Key role in adopting electoral law & framework as law-maker
- “Strong parliaments are necessary to sustain the democratic gains of free and fair elections” UN Secretary General Kofi Annan
 - But many newly democratically elected parliaments lack capacity, experience and resources to play the vital functions most constitutions provide them – with consequences to their image, participation in elections and confidence in democratic system
 - High turnovers after every elections (50 % + of change)
 - To consolidate important investments of international community in EA, limited assistance to parliaments would seem well spent to maximize the democratic dividend
 - PA not expensive business - 5% of EA would go a long way
- Work on minimum standards/benchmarks for democratic parliaments (using the norm-setting experience of electoral field)



Parliamentary assistance trends

- Evolution in the types of support and approaches:
 - From limited parliamentary administration reform and equipment support to strengthening the core functions; a lot of attention to oversight and representative function and comprehensive capacity building programs growing
 - Institution building through issues-based approaches (e.g. Niger decentralization law)
 - Moving from a pure technical approach to one recognizing and introducing political variables into our support (political party groups, reform champions, ensure opposition rights etc).
 - Trend towards single parliamentary programmes where all donors pool their resources and coordinated by one partner (e.g. Afghanistan, Benin) – response to Paris Declaration



Some lessons learned

- Importance of **long-term sustained engagement** which is correlated with project effectiveness
- Ensuring **broad-based involvement/support** in the preparation and implementation of the strengthening efforts (steering committees with majority and opposition representatives as well as parliamentary administration teams)
- **L.T. Parliamentary development plans**, if elaborated with involvement of all relevant stakeholders, ensure ownership of the reforms, and are also an effective vehicle to channel donor support
- **Committees** are a good entry point for support in particular in parliaments that are more closed



Some lessons learned

- Importance of **regional exchanges and south-south collaboration** (exchanges of good practices); working groups on sensitive issues (e.g. SSR and political party legislation); promising modality to broach difficult subjects before addressing these at national level
- When providing support to the legislative and oversight function do it with a **comprehensive approach** looking at procedures, committee structures, executive-legislative relations, incentives for MPs etc. Training alone on the techniques do not suffice.
- **Link parliamentary assistance to other thematic areas** of support for **DG** (electoral processes, audit institutions or ombudsman, anti-corruption and Human rights work, political parties, security sector reform, etc.) to consolidate DG
- Importance of having a **permanent project support structure based within the parliaments**



Learning agenda -Tools and resources

- Need to consolidate learning in this new area - UNDP is trying to build knowledge through research, documenting good practices and building practical tools for parliamentarians:
 - Handbooks for MPs (e.g. on budget oversight and gender)
 - Guidelines on the role of Parliaments in conflict prevention and peacebuilding; see www.parlcpr.undp.org
 - Arab region knowledge building: www.arabparliaments.org
- General: www.undp.org/governance/sl-parliaments
- Global Programme on Parliamentary Strengthening
- Donor consultation on Parliamentary Development – 2007
<http://sdnhq.undp.org/governance/parls/>