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**International Organization for Migration
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Strengthening the Role of Parliament in the Reform of Political Party Legislation

The Arab Region Experience

Karima El Korri
Programme Manager, Participation Cluster, POGAR
Coordinator, Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region, GPPS-POGAR
United Nations Development Programme

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Context

- Launch in 2004 of the Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region, a joint project of the Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening and the Programme on Governance in the Arab Region
- Increasing demand for support, knowledge building, and capacity development in areas not easily covered through national-level programming addressed through:
 - Development and launch of www.arabparliaments.org, a Parliamentary Development Knowledge Portal for the Arab Region.
 - Launch and consolidation of regional parliamentary working groups each aiming at strengthening the role of parliament in a specific area.
 - Involvement of women MPs in regional activities in an effort to increase their visibility and capacity



Context

The Working Groups approach:

- Creating platforms for in-depth learning and information exchange
- Addressing topics often categorized as too sensitive if addressed at national level
- Identifying main challenges and best regional and international practices
- Building the capacities of the working group members
- Creating and disseminating knowledge across the region's countries
- Strengthening parliament-civil society relationship by engaging research centers and think-tanks in a regional policy dialogue.



Working Group on Political Party Legislation: Towards a Stronger Role of Parliament in the Reform Process

- Launched in 2006, in an effort to address the shortage in knowledge and seize the momentum as several countries were preparing to either promulgate new laws or reform existing ones
- Participating MPs from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, oPt, and Yemen. Later on Algeria and Kuwait.

Key Objectives

- Building knowledge and consolidating research
- Highlighting strengths and identifying inadequacies in existing political party legislation
- Strengthening MPs' capacities in assessing legislation and playing a stronger role in the amendment and reform process of a law that regulates their parties



Working Group on Political Party Legislation: Towards a Stronger Role of Parliament in the Reform Process

Key Achievements

In addition to set-out objectives,

- Reaching consensus among participants representing over 40 political parties from across the region on minimum standards for political party legislation that abide by the principles of participation, inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability.
- Stimulating the debates in several countries where there is not a law that regulates the establishment and functioning of parties (Lebanon and Kuwait)
- Producing knowledge on key issues such as political party internal governance and political party finance



Towards a Stronger Role of Parliament in the Reform Process

Phase 1: Regional level

Networking, learning, knowledge and consensus building

- Research
 - Compiling the laws
 - Analyzing and comparing the laws
 - Deepening knowledge of certain aspects (political party finance, internal governance of parties...)
 - Online database on political parties
- 3 Regional workshops over a 2-year period
- 1 focus group meeting



Towards a Stronger Role of Parliament in the Reform Process

Phase 2: National level

Knowledge dissemination and national-level policy dialog and advocacy

Pilot projects in 2 countries (Jordan and Morocco)

- Broaden the scope and accompany the national debates
- Create a national platform for dialogue and reform with the support of the strategic partners
- The regional working group (members, experts and outputs) to provide support and guidance
- Stronger involvement of the parliamentary institutions and political parties in the process



Challenges and Lessons Learned

Major challenges when setting up working groups:

- Selection of participating countries
- Identification of participants
- Relationship with the parliaments
- Involvement of academia, civil society and the media
- Creating synergies and maintaining cohesion

Lessons Learned:

- Importance of regional approach
- Limits of the regional approach and need to have a follow-up strategy at the national level
- Allow flexibility in programming to adjust to change
- Easier to move to national level in countries where a parliamentary support project is already in place



Online Database on Political Parties

Why?

- Information about political parties from across the region is scattered and hard to find
- High demand for easily accessible resources on political parties in Arabic
- Need to further strengthen the existing data on arabparliaments.org

So far

- Information (Fast Fact Sheets) on over 100 political parties from 4 countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco) collected, organized and available on-line

Soon

- Algeria, Mauritania, oPt and Yemen



Quick tour of arabparliaments.org

Working Group and Database

United Nations Development Programme برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي

UNDP Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region GPSS POGAR
مبادرة التنمية البرلمانية في المنطقة العربية

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Arab Parliaments: Working Groups: Parliament and the Reform of Political Party Legislation

This working group was launched in March 2006, in an effort to bring together members of parliaments and experts to review and assess existing political party legislation in the Arab countries, recent proposals of political party reform and recently reformed party laws, and the role of parliaments in proposing and reforming party legislation.

This working group is intended as a forum to learn more about the national debates on political parties across the Arab region, more specifically the current debate on the regulatory mechanisms which structure the creation and functioning of political parties across the region. Members include MPs and experts from Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine, in addition to resource persons from Egypt and Yemen.

The main objective is to support the consolidation of a regional network of parliamentarians (representing political parties) and experts who reflect together on means to accompany the reform and modernization of political parties and party systems in the Arab region. Networking and knowledge building opportunities will be facilitated by UNDP, through its parliamentary development initiative in the Arab region.

- Activities
- Related Publications
- Related Laws
- Useful Links
- Arab Political Parties Database

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