

## Courses

Courses and workshop modules address the following areas:

**Parliamentary Oversight** – WBI has developed various workshops and seminars for members of the Public Accounts and Finance/Budget Committees and their staff, as well as representatives from Supreme Audit Institutions and other watchdog agencies, the Executive and civil society. The courses seek to improve government accountability through parliamentary oversight, principally (but not exclusively) through parliaments' involvement in the budget process.

**Role of Parliament in Curbing Corruption** – World Bank anti-corruption efforts emphasize strengthening "horizontal" accountability at the government level through building up the judiciary, audit institutions, ombuds offices and anti-corruption agencies while at the same time putting emphasis on "vertical" accountability to citizens through the media and civil society.

**Role of Parliaments in Poverty Reduction** - courses aim to facilitate effective participation of the Members of Parliaments in poverty reduction, strengthen their capacity to assess policy decisions to allow broader scrutiny and debate on economic issues, and provide a partnership bridge between parliamentarians and civil society organizations.

**Women and Parliament** - courses focus on increased inclusion of women in decision-making processes by raising the awareness of parliamentary staff on gender issues and how the interests of both women and men can explicitly be factored into social and economic policies.

**Parliaments in Conflict Affected Countries** - course addresses contentious issues and relationships in conflict-affected societies. It discusses the role of parliament in conflict-affected countries while considering the contribution parliaments make to poverty reduction and the well-recognized correlation between conflict and poverty; namely, that poverty increases a society's vulnerability to conflict, while conflict itself generates poverty.

**Improving parliamentary administration and finance** – courses aim to consider strategies that parliaments can adopt to improve their own administration and finance, for example by establishing corporate bodies to better utilize the resources available while at the same time enhancing their independence from the executive.

## Empirical and analytical work:

To support the main program areas noted above, WBI promotes applied research on parliamentary capacity building. A series of empirical and analytical studies have been undertaken, the results of which are incorporated into the design of activities and used as resource material. These include WBI's working papers under our *Series on Contemporary Issues in Parliamentary Development* and several books. Work published or under preparation includes:

### Books

- The Role of Parliaments in Conflict-Affected Countries (Edited by Rick Stapenhurst, Mitchell O'Brien and Niall Johnston)
- The Role of Parliament in Curbing Corruption (Edited by Rick Stapenhurst, Niall Johnston and Riccardo Pelizzo)
- Government Accountability and Parliamentary Oversight (Edited by Rick Stapenhurst and Riccardo Pelizzo)

### Working Papers

- Anti-Corruption Commissions
- Back from the Sidelines: Redefining the Contribution of Legislatures to the Budget Cycle
- Budget Institutions and Fiscal Responsibility
- E-Parliaments: The Use of Information and Communication Technologies to Improve Parliamentary Processes
- Legislative Ethics and Codes of Conduct
- Legislatures and Oversight
- Parliament and Access to Information: Working for Transparent Governance
- Parliament and the Media: Building an Informed Society
- Parliaments and the PRSP Process
- Parliamentary Libraries, Institutes and Offices: The Sources of Parliamentary Information
- Parliaments as Peacebuilders: The Role of Parliaments in Conflict-Affected Countries
- The Legislature and the Budget
- The Role of Parliament in Government
- The Role of Parliaments in the Budget Process
- Trends in Parliamentary Oversight.

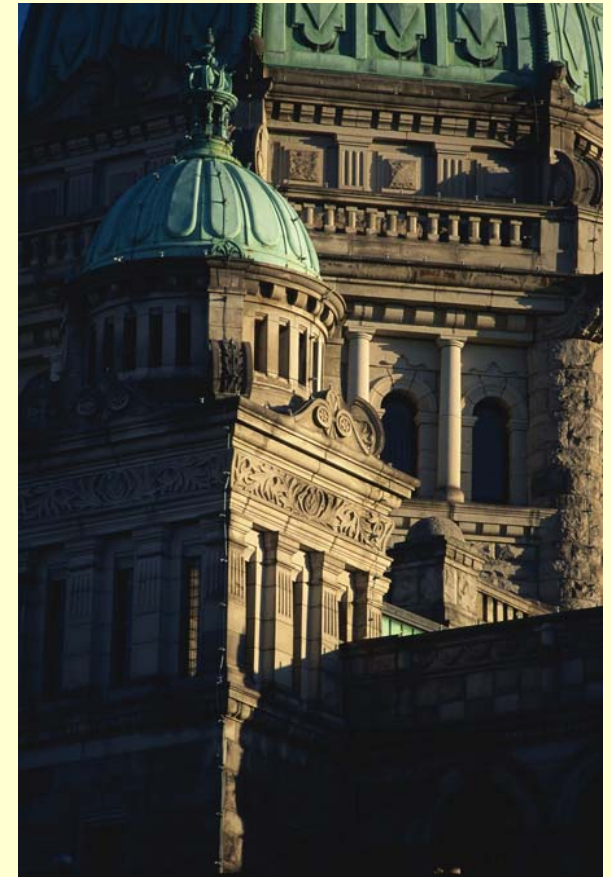
The working papers, and more information on past and current learning events and the Parliamentary Strengthening Program are available on the following website:

<http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/parliament/index.html>

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# Parliamentary Strengthening Program



Well-functioning parliaments are fundamental to promoting good governance. Governance goals of greater accountability, transparency and participation are directly related to parliament's three primary functions: legislating; overseeing the executive and representing citizens. Parliament, the executive and the judiciary, together with wider society, provide the overall governance framework of a given country.

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## Why the need for a program to strengthen Parliaments?

Historically, parliaments were established to represent citizens' interests and give them greater voice in government. Parliaments thus provide opportunities for more open and participatory governance.



Over time, parliaments have evolved to take on greater legislative and oversight powers. The challenge today is for parliaments to use their oversight responsibilities – particularly through the budget process and legislative leverage – to ensure that the needs of all citizens, including the poor, are heard and met through the delivery of well-designed programs and services. In practice however, many parliaments are ineffective and lack the capacity and/or resources to carry out their role. The **World Bank Institute's Parliamentary Strengthening Program** aims to enhance parliaments' capacity to effectively fulfill their responsibilities, particularly with regard to oversight of the budget and implementation and performance of government policies and programs.

### Program objectives:

- To strengthen the capacity of parliaments to oversee the allocation and use of public funds;
- To assist parliamentarians to better represent the interest of citizens in the policy process, particularly in the context of the poverty reduction strategies process (PRS);
- To support parliamentary learning networks on key policy issues related to development; and
- To encourage and promote action research on the role of parliaments. Such research contributes to the better design of World Bank parliamentary support programs and helps ensure impact and sustainability.

## Parliament and the World Bank Institute

Over the past decade some 6,000 parliamentarians have participated in World Bank Institute (WBI) training activities. Originally, WBI focused on "training" *individual* parliamentarians in areas such as economic reform, curbing corruption and environmental issues. Nowadays, the emphasis lies on enhancing the capacity of parliament as an *institution* of governance. As such WBI works closely with Committees and parliamentary administration.

More specifically, the program focuses on:

- **Institution building of parliaments**, to both better oversee public finance and to play a role in the policy process. This is achieved by enhancing the capacity of committees, by exposing the committee Chairs to "good practice" which could be adopted in their parliament, and by providing committee members with relevant information and analyses.
- **Reaching a broad participant base**, among parliamentarians but also including parliamentary staff, senior officials and representatives from the Executive arm of government, independent agencies (such as the Auditor General) and civil society.
- **Developing multi-year activities in a given country**, especially when the government has indicated parliamentary strengthening as one of its priorities and/or where parliamentary strengthening is a component of approved or planned World Bank loans or credits.



## Parliament and the World Bank Institute



The majority of activities are offered in the form of workshops and seminars and structured as carefully targeted technical assistance. WBI in collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is also developing self-paced on-line courses, geared towards both parliamentarians and parliamentary staff.

### Program Partnerships

Most of the Parliamentary Strengthening activities are delivered in partnership with outside organizations. Some, like the Parliamentary Centre and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) are able to bring substantial intellectual resources to activities, while others, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), are membership-based and have the power to convene. WBI is especially increasing its partnerships with universities, including the State University of New York (SUNY), La Trobe University (Australia) and Royal Roads University (Canada).

### Support to Parliamentary Networks

WBI has also supported the establishment of parliamentary networks such as the African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption (APNAC) and the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC). Both organizations facilitate information exchange among parliamentarians and seek to promote good governance and combat corruption. In addition, WBI has provided support to the Parliamentary Network in the World Bank (PNoWB).