

REPORT: TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PARLIAMENTARY STAFF

“Role of Parliamentary Staff and Parliamentary Committees during the Budget Process”

Accra, Ghana February, 2-6, 2009

1. BACKGROUND

The Parliamentary Centre has since 2006 conducted joint training workshops on budgetary oversight for Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff, involving a minimum of three countries during each training session. On several occasions, parliamentary staff have raised the need for a specific training program focusing on their needs and challenges in their work to support MPs. The Parliamentary Centre therefore developed a new training program for parliamentary staff, focusing on their role in the budget process and how they can better assist Members of Parliament in fulfilling their roles during this process.

In order to test the developed training material properly, the training was to be conducted in two phases, involving the same participants from the select countries. The first phase of the pilot training for parliamentary staff entitled *the Role of Parliamentary Staff and Parliamentary Committees during the Budget Process* took place in Kampala, Uganda September 29-October 3, 2008. The training was funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and planned and delivered in cooperation with the Parliament of Uganda, where several people from their Parliamentary Budget Office helped with the preparations and also delivered training on the role of legislative budget offices. Four committee clerks from Kenya, South Sudan and Zambia respectively and six from Uganda participated in the training. This first phase focused on the various stages of the budget process:

- Introducing the Budget
- Budget Preparation and the Drafting Stage
- The Legislative Stage of the Budget
- Issues to consider in Budget Approval:
 - The Budget and the National Development Framework
 - The Budget and MDGs
 - Pro-poor Budgeting
 - Gender Budgeting
 - HIV/AIDS and the Budget
- Budget Implementation, Monitoring and Control
- Audit and Evaluation

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this training workshop were to:

- increase the capacity and effectiveness of parliamentary staff in supporting and providing technical support for Members of Parliament during the budget process;
- Equip parliamentary staff with tools to better assist MPs and parliamentary committees in their legislative and oversight roles.
- Test the developed training material for phase two on the participants in order to get input on its relevance, usefulness and accessibility; the existence of information gaps; and on how to improve it in order to reflect their needs better.

3. WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The Parliamentary Centre organized the second phase of its pilot training program specifically developed for parliamentary staff entitled the *Role of Parliamentary Staff and Parliamentary Committees during the Budget Process* in Accra, Ghana February 2-6, 2009. The training, which had originally been scheduled for November 17-21, 2008 had to be postponed because of Ghana's planned election in the beginning of December 2008.

This training was funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and included committee clerks and other parliamentary staff from Kenya (three men and one woman) and Uganda (five men and one woman). In addition, four committee clerks from the Southern Sudan Legislature (three men and one woman) also took part in the training, funded by a different project. All participants had previously taken part in the first phase of the training in Kampala, Uganda. Parliamentary staff from Zambia, who participated during the first phase, were not able to be part of this training due to their ongoing budget process, but they will be invited to join the scheduled staff training in May 2009 instead.

The training workshop was officially opened on February 2, 2009 by Dr. Rasheed Draman. This was followed by the introduction of participants as well as the training program. After a brief discussion of participants' expectation, two presentations were made for the first day.

The program specifically contained:

- **Role of Parliamentary Committees and Parliamentary Staff in Ensuring Committee Effectiveness** (Issifu Lampo)
- **Introduction to Parliamentary Research** (Petra Andersson)
- **Effective Tools for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation - the Logical Framework Approach** (Petra Andersson)
- **Effective Tools for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation – Participatory Tools for Monitoring and Evaluation** (Issifu Lampo)
- **Transparency, Participation and Outreach** (Issifu Lampo)
- **Information Management and ICT** (Valentina Tetteh)

Day One

The first presentation examined the role of Parliamentary Committees and Parliamentary Staff in Ensuring Committee Effectiveness. The key issues discussed in this presentation included: *What constitute parliamentary committees, and why they are important? What are the functions and powers of committees? And what are the different types of committees?*

Apart from the interactive nature of the presentation which allowed participants to share their perspectives on the issues highlighted above, they also had the opportunity to examine in detail specific questions as part of their group exercise. And these include the following:

- What type of parliamentary committees do you have in your parliament and what are some of their distinguishing feature?
- What factors, in your view, can make the work of parliamentary committees most effective?
- How would you rate the effectiveness of the committees in your parliament? Explain some of the factors contributing to this.

The information shared during the group exercise was very revealing. For instance, it was revealed that in the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly a member of parliament can only belong to two committees whereas in Kenya there is no restriction regarding the number of committees a member can belong to. While acknowledging the important role the Chairperson of the Committee plays in ensuring committee effectiveness, the participants cautioned against placing premium on experience and old age to the detriment of competence and dynamism. As a convention, the chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is chaired by the opposition party in most parliaments. However, in the specific case of Kenya where there is a grand coalition government it is difficult to determine who is in opposition. Interestingly, the current chairperson of Kenya PAC is said to be effective. Participants emphasized the necessity to have qualified and well trained staff attached to committees in order to optimize its output.

Committee powers also vary from one jurisdiction to another. In Uganda, for instance, police CIDs are assigned to parliament with powers to effect arrest of any person who refuses to honour committee's summons or stand in contempt of parliament. Liberia parliament has powers to effect arrest of any person charged with contempt of parliament. In other jurisdictions, these powers are not so explicit. It was also noted that even though specific committees in various jurisdictions have the same functions, their designations differ. A case in point is the examples given below: Committees which oversee accounts of state institutions in Kenya, Sudan and Uganda have different designations as indicated below:

- Kenya-Public Accounts Committee and Public Investments Committee
- Sudan-Committee on Economy
- Uganda-Public Accounts Committee and national Economy

It is also the case that the criteria for appointing MPs to committees are not necessarily the same in all jurisdictions. For example, in Ghana, parliamentary committee members are appointed based on the ratio of party representation. This means that the ruling party which normally has majority in parliament invariably has

more members on the various committees than the other political parties. Equally, the tenure of the chairperson(s) to committees varies from one jurisdiction to another. Whereas in Uganda committee chairperson's tenure is limited to two and half years, in some jurisdictions the chairperson's tenure spans throughout the life of the parliament. In Ghana, however, the tenure of the chairperson of parliamentary committee is indeterminate, he or she can be changed anytime and this seems to fly in the face of international good practice.

The presentation on Introduction to Parliamentary Research centred on legislative research and the group discussion was focused on the following questions:

- What type of research is needed for parliamentary committees you work for?
- What research /information/tools are available to you?
- What are the major challenges in relation to legislative research for:
 - Research staff?
 - Committees?

Participants during the group discussion identified some challenges faced with research staff and these include:

- Unreasonable timelines and/or deadlines
- Poorly equipped libraries and lack of software
- Unavailability of data
- Lack of cooperation from information sources (both government and private sources)
- Low consumption of research findings by MPs
- Inadequate funds to carry out research
- Limited competences of researcher to carry out robust research (political environment can influence some appointments, sometimes leading to personnel being hired for who they know, not because they are qualified)
- Pressure to carry out private research for members, not related to areas of responsibility

In addition to these challenges, they also identified challenges faced by parliamentary committees in respect of conducting research and use of research results. They for instance identified lack of technical support, inadequate funding, lack of knowledge of the research process by MPs, leading to unrealistic demands. They also talked about inability and/or reluctance to use research reports, shoddy research (due to lack of time/short deadlines), high committee member turnover, political considerations conflicting with research output (political biases) and greater belief in external experts.

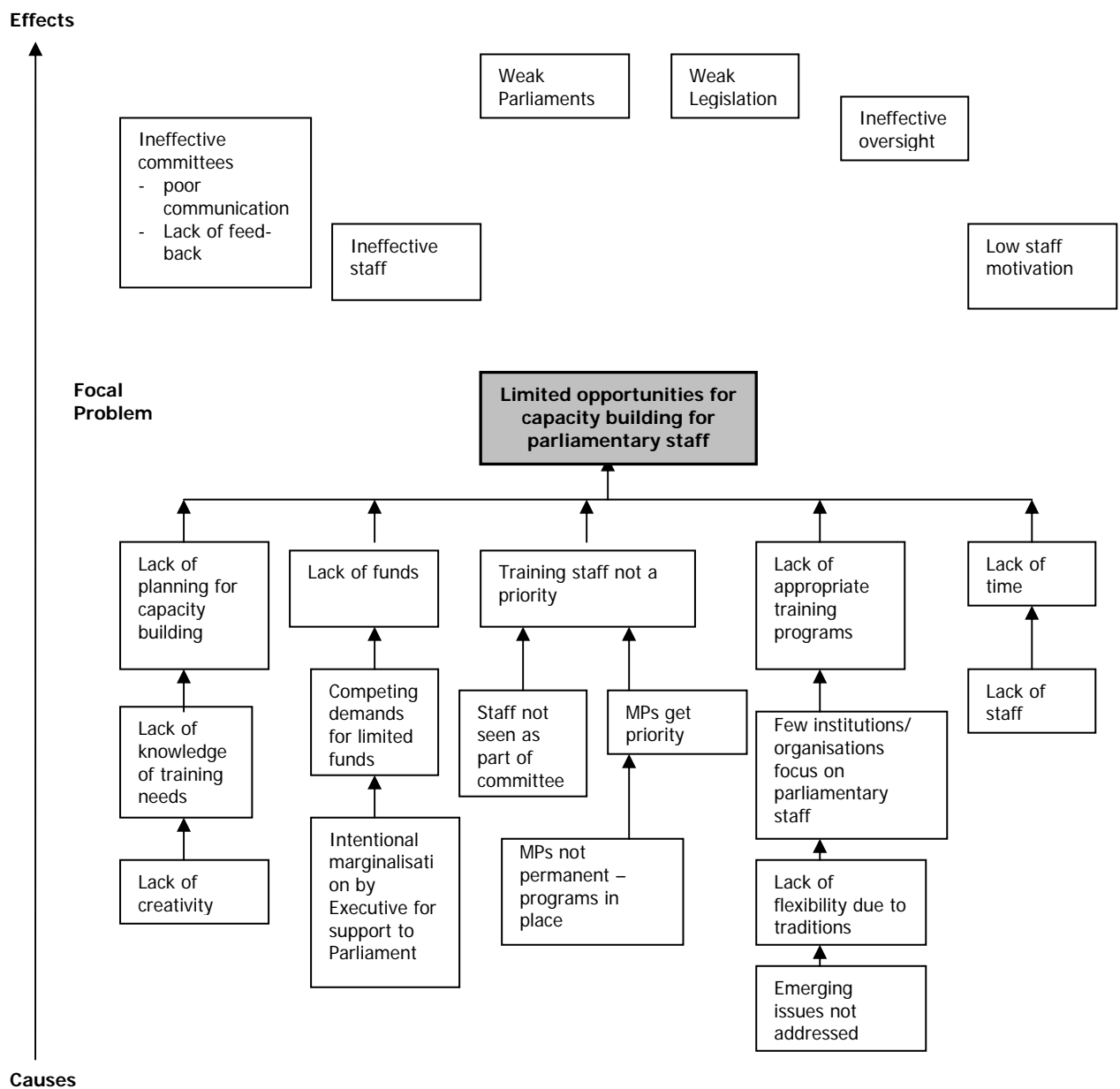
In the course of discussion it became apparent that few of the participants were parliamentary researchers, and several sections of the presentation were too general in nature and could easily be removed in future trainings. The areas relating to their work could instead be included in the presentation on the role of parliamentary staff.

Day Two

The discussions regarding the challenges in relation to legislative research as well as other challenges facing parliamentary committee staff were then used as a base for

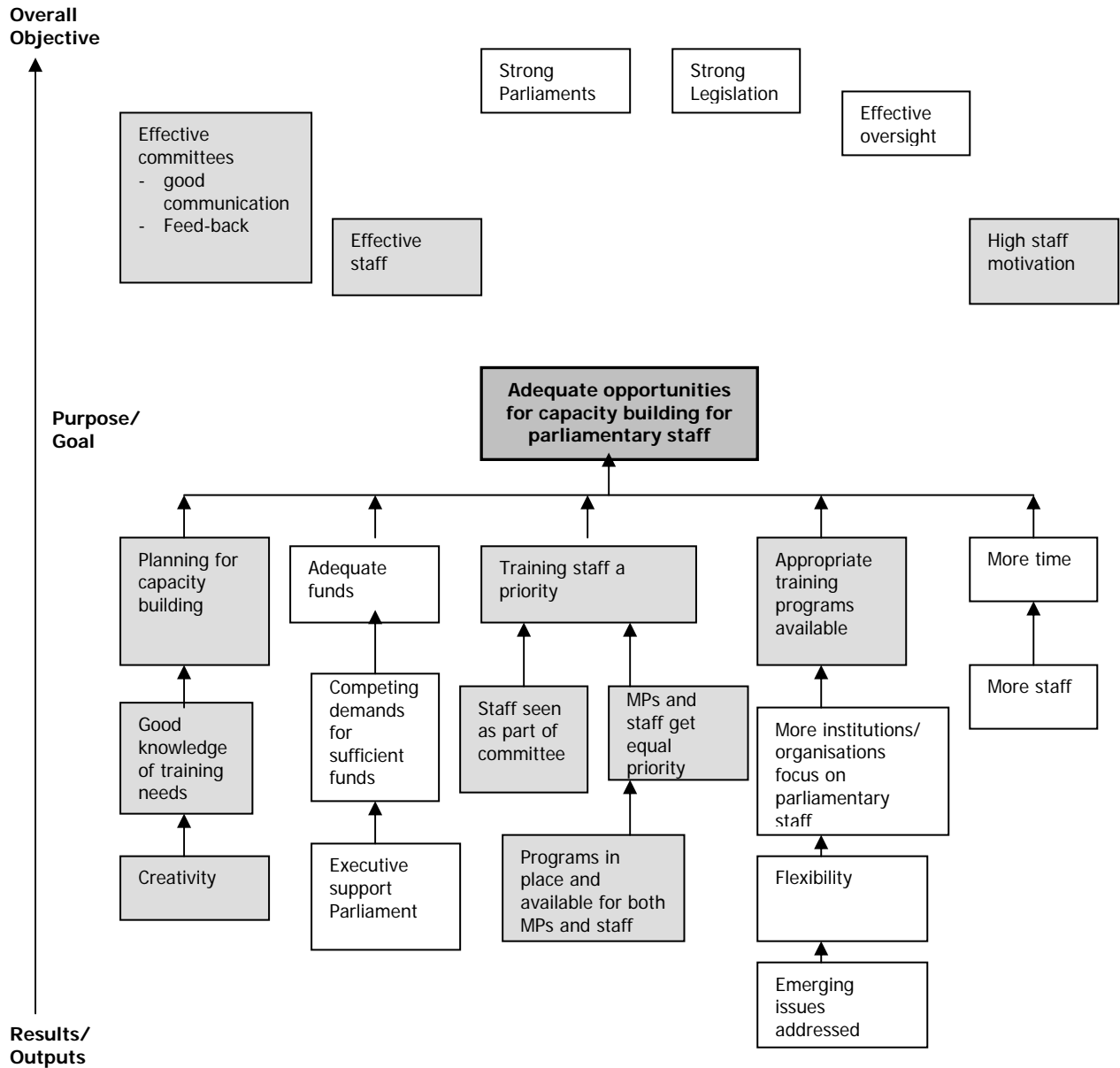
identifying a key challenge or focal problem during the presentation on the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). This presentation started with a general introduction to the concepts of a project, results-based management and the various phases of the LFA. However, the analysis of the problems was presented through a practical exercise involving all participants. The key problem participants identified for study was “Limited opportunities for capacity building for parliamentary staff”. They then went on to identify the various causes of this problem, followed by the identification of the impacts or effects of the problem. The participants played the role of the stakeholders and Petra and Issifu represented Parliamentary Centre (PC), as an organization that could potentially create a project addressing the problem, in order for the exercise to be realistic as possible.

Results of the problem analysis indicated below:



Following the problem analysis and the creation of the problem tree, an objective analysis, based on the problem tree was carried out. By this, the negative image was turned into the positive picture envisaged in the future.

The results of the Analysis of objectives are captured in the illustration below.



Having identified the objectives, the next phase of the LFA analysis was focused on discussions on what areas would be possible for an organization like the Parliamentary Centre to provide support in relation to the goals and outputs that had been identified. The discussion resulted in the identification of the light grey shaded areas as potential focus area for Parliamentary Centre in a project focusing on capacity building for parliamentary staff, whereas other areas would have to be addressed by other actors, mainly the Parliaments themselves.

Following this practical exercise, the presentation continued on the Planning Phase of the LFA, where the various components of the Logical Framework Matrix were

explained. This was then followed by another practical exercise, using the select sections of the objective tree already developed. The time available for this exercise was judged too short, and will need to be extended for the next training.

Also part of the unit Effective Tools for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, was the following presentation, focusing on Monitoring and Evaluation, with particular focus on the Community Score Card, a participatory tool for engaging community members in the assessment of the performance of service delivery at community level. The presentation centered on the purpose of monitoring and evaluation, the types of evaluations and the generation of indicators. A great deal of attention was devoted on discussing the Community Score Card (CSC) and the process involved was elaborated. Special focus was put on how to develop a performance score card and how scoring is done, which was illustrated through a performance scorecard matrix.

Day Three

Field Visit to Gomao Fetteh

On the third day of training, a field visit was planned to Gomao Fetteh, a less endowed community in the central region of Ghana. Gomao Fetteh is a coastal scrubland dominated by grass and shrubs and neem trees silk cotton trees “*Ceiba pentandra*”. The population of Gomao Fetteh is approximately 2000 people, the official language is English as in most Ghanaian communities; but majority of the people speak Fanti, a local dialect which is part of the Akan language. The main occupation of people in this community consists of artisanal marine fishing, farming, and working in the hospitality industry as well as sand winning.

The objective of the field visit was to conduct a pilot study on community assessment of development issues whereby parliamentary committee staff from Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan would interact with community members and promote dialogue on livelihood issues confronting the community. Through the engagement, the community members had the opportunity to identify key problems faced in the community and assessed the problems relative to performance of service providers and assign scores by using the Community Score Card (CSC) methodology. This visit had been planned by the help of a consultant and his team, who represented an NGO working closely with the community, in order to make sure that the activity was well communicated to the community in advance and that the members were representative of the various groups in the community.

Arrival in the Community and Engaging Community Members

After arriving in the community of Gomao Fetteh, a courtesy call was made to the District Administrator’s house to brief him on the mission of the visit. Thereafter, a transect walk was conducted to the beach where fishermen and fishmongers were gathered harvesting fish. This afforded the visitors the opportunity to meet some of the local people and also get a better picture of the village as well as the people in the community.

The meeting with community members (30) took place at the local Catholic Church with participants from the aforementioned countries including a three-member team from parliamentary centre (Petra, Valentine and Issifu). Also present was the consultant and two (2) local non-governmental organization (NGO) members who

were instrumental in mobilizing the community members and facilitating logistical arrangements.

At the community gathering, the objective of the visit was explained, questions were posed and clarifications sought. Community members, wanted to know, for example, what use the exercise was going to be them. It was pointed out that even though the exercise was a pilot, its results could have far-reaching implications in respect of highlighting the challenges faced by members of the community and making the report of the exercise available to the District Assembly of Gomao East. By this, it was hoped that the report will motivate action by duty bearers aimed at addressing some of the challenges.

Having explained the objective of the visit, three focus groups were formed comprising women's focus group, farmers and fishermen's focus group and youth focus group.

The three focus groups with the help of facilitators came up with a set of problems which were transformed into indicators. The group members agreed on the set of indicators they had generated and then proceeded to score them on the basis of the performance of services they receive in the community. The matrix below highlights the indicators of the various groups and their corresponding scores.

Index: 1=very poor, 2=poor, 3=fair or ok, 4=good, and 5=very good

Group 1 Community Score Card Results. Number of participants (16)

Youth Group

Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average	Remarks
Availability of educational facilities/infrastructure	16x1	0	0	0	0	16	16/1=1	Very poor
Availability of educational opportunities	15x1	1x2	0	0	0	17	17/1=1	Very poor
Availability of capital(financial)	13x1	2x2	0	0	0	18	18/16=1	Very poor
Water & Sanitation	6x1	7x2	3	0	0	19	19/16=1	Very poor
Employment opportunity	15x1	1x1	0	0	0	17	17/16=1	Very poor
Food security	7x1	5x2	3	1	0	30	30/16=2	Poor
Availability of Health facilities	9x1	7x2	0	0	0	23	23/16=1	Poor
Availability of Recreational facilities	10x1	4x2	1x3	1x3	0	25	25/16=2	Poor
Issues of land degradation	10x1	4x2	2x3	0	0	24	24/16=2	Poor

Group 2 Community Score Card Results. No of Participants (9)***Farmers and Fishermen Group***

Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average	Remarks
Availability of Out-Board Motor machines	9x1	0	0	0	0	9/9	1	Too expensive
Availability of fishing nets	8x1	0	0	0	0	8/8	1	
Availability of Pre-mix fuel	0	0	9x3	0	0	27/9	3	Inadequate supply
Availability of landing sites	9x1	0	0	0	0	9/9	1	No construction of landing sites
Storage facilities	9x1	0	0	0	0	9/9	1	No storage facilities
Competition with local and foreign vessels and local commercial vessel	9x1	0	0	0	0	9/9	1	Depleted stock of fish; destruction of fishing nets
Availability of local canoes	0	0	8x3	0	0	24/9	3	Poor security, few police available

Group 3 Community Score Card Results. Number of participants (9)***Women's Group***

Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average	Remarks
Availability of credit facilities	8x1	0	0	0	0	8/8	1	No banking institutions
Adequacy of fuel supply	7x1	0	0	0	0	7/8	1	Retail fuel expensive. No subsidized fuel
Challenges of pair-trawling	8x1	0	0	0	0	8/8	1	Because of the activities of pair-trawling tend to diminish fishing stock
Availability of educational opportunities	9x1	0	0	0	0	9/9	1	Inadequate educational opportunities resulting in teenage pregnancies

Availability of health facilities & renewal of National Insurance Card	9x1	0	0	0	0	9/9	1	No health facilities, undue delay in the processing of health insurance card
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From the findings of the three focus groups highlighted above, two of the focus groups, the women’s focus group and the youth focus group identified common problems and scored them *very poor*. Common indicators in both focus groups include *availability of educational facilities, availability of credit facility, and availability of health facilities*. The findings point to a lack of educational infrastructure thus resulting in poor educational standards. The indicator on health also speaks to lack of health facilities, absence of nurses and basic drugs. They also complained about lack of credit facilities to help them promote their various vocations and business enterprises.

The farmers and fishermen’s focus group developed different indicators which reflect their concerns. These indicators include *fishing inputs such as fishing nets, canoes, storage facilities and availability of pre-mix fuel*. Members of this focus group like the previous two also assessed these indicators poorly. Lack of storage facilities for fish stock, unavailability of pre-mix fuel during the fishing season were some of the concerns expressed. They also decried lack of micro-credit facilities to promote their business ventures.

Debriefing and Emerging issues on Community Engagement

1. Community members showed keen interest in their own development and seemed conversant with key development challenges;
2. Shared experiences on collaboration between community members and national actors (in Kenya citizens at the local level provide input in development projects targeted at their communities);
3. Outgoing District Chief Executive showed commitment to dialogue with community members and expressed readiness to address their concerns;
4. The absence of service providers to share their own perspectives robbed the exercise of vital input into the discussion and in fashioning the way forward;
5. Apart from highlighting challenges faced by citizens in the community, little was said about concrete actions being taken by community members themselves to address some of the challenges highlighted;
6. The description of Goma Fetteh as marginalized and desperately poor did not match reality on the ground. The village seemed more developed than comparable villages;
7. Confronted with managing false expectations on the part of community member;
8. Community generated indicators were confusing to some participants;
9. Inadequate time for participants to prepare for community engagement; and
10. Inability to organize an interface meeting because of time constraints.

Day Four

The session on '*Transparency, Accountability and Outreach*' addressed a number of key questions including the following:

- What is parliamentary transparency? And what are its requirements?
- How important is freedom and access to information for transparency?
- Explain the key mechanisms for ensuring transparency of parliamentary committees
- Why do parliamentary committees need constituency outreach programs?

Discussions that took place during this session centred on access to information, transparency and accountability, organizing outreach programs and so on. It was noted that parliamentary transparency, which involves how information is managed as well as devising the appropriate mode of communicating such information, is not only critical in publicizing the work of parliament to constituents and the public at large, it is also cardinal in assuring accountability and embedding good governance. Participants emphasized the significance of the Freedom of information Act in facilitating the concepts of transparency and accountability. Even though the freedom of information Act was passed in Uganda in 2004, the State Secrecy Act is not repealed. This therefore makes it difficult to freely access information from government agencies. With regard to the specific case of Uganda, other challenges impeding easy access to information is unyielding bureaucracy and lack of user-friendly information. In countries like Ghana and Kenya, the freedom of information Act has not been passed yet. However, in Kenya, a bill has been laid before the Kenya Parliament. The good news in Ghana is that the new administration has promised to pass the Freedom of Information Act as soon as practicable. In both countries there is a growing civil society pressure to pass the freedom of information Act to allow for easy access to information. On a more positive note, the Whistle blower's Act has been passed in Ghana, where acts of malfeasance in public agencies can be reported by insiders without fear of victimization.

The last presentation on the fourth day focused on Information Management and ICT. After a brief presentation on the various concepts and terminology such as *internet, e-mail, web-based e-mail, World Wide Web, Skype*, the focus shifted to a more hands-on approach where participants were paired (two each) to seven desk top computers available at the Learning Resource Centre. The facilitator guided the participants and they carried out quite a number of exercises including the use of Tables in MSWord, the use of Mail-Merge in MSWord, use of Functions and Formulae in Excel, creating Charts in Excel as well as exercise in Power Point presentation. Without doubt, the exercise was interactive and participants found it enjoyable and useful.

Finally, the participants were given the opportunity to make input into the development of the training manual by suggesting models they consider critical to their work in parliament for both the first and second phases of the training program. Suggestions and contributions as outlined below however covered the second phase as participants were generally satisfied with the models designed for the first phase. Suggestions outlined below include the following:

1. Include a unit that addresses contemporary issues reflecting world economic trends e.g. current financial melt down
2. LFA and M&E modules were loaded and need to be redesigned and allow for more time
3. Financial Bill Analysis with reference to financial implications
4. Legal Framework relative to the Budget Process
5. Budget Process, focus on revenue mobilization
6. ICT module should include record keeping and back ups

Other recommendations made:

- Involvement of members of parliament and perhaps a joint program with wide scope of committees dealing with public finance issues-finance, budget, PAC, etc.
- Include other aspects of the budget into program e.g. taxation , the role of the donors in the budget process and the macro economic implications arising from budget execution

Day Five

The fifth and final day of the training workshop was devoted to presenting certificates to participants for successfully completing both phases on the first training program for parliamentary staff as well as to evaluating the training workshop. The participants were given the opportunity to evaluate not only the facilitators on how they delivered their presentations but also to indicate how relevant or otherwise the modules were to them. They also had the opportunity to comment on any other aspect of the training workshop including organization and logistical arrangement (Evaluation report is contained in Annex A).

Conclusion

The five-day training program of the second phase of the Professional Development for Parliamentary staff-*the Role of Parliamentary Staff and Parliamentary Committees during the Budget Process* came to a successful conclusion. The key objectives of providing a platform for interaction and sharing experiences among parliamentary staff of Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan and equipping them with knowledge and skills were achieved.

The field visit to Gomoa Fetteh was particularly useful as it afforded participants the opportunity to apply the community score card in assessing service delivery in the community by engaging with community members.

Even though the training workshop ended on a high note, a number of areas have been identified for improvement and this include allocating sufficient time for some of the modules as well the field visit. Useful suggestions were also made with a view to improving the content of the training manual.