



Governance and accountability: sharing experiences of parliamentary oversight and poverty monitoring in Asia and Africa

Phnom Penh, October 4-7, 2004

1. Background

Countries in East Asia are world renown for the dramatic transformation of their economies and societies over the last 5 decades since the end of the Second World War. The economic miracle of East Asia was, however, subjected to intense scrutiny during and after the devastating Asian financial crises of 1997. Central to this scrutiny were issues of accountability and oversight, in particular for the financial sector, and in general for the entire governance regime (including economic governance). Poverty re-surfaced as a priority for public policy, as did the need for economic restructuring and social development. The role of parliaments in East Asia and the overarching requirement for parliamentary oversight of public policy thus became important challenges confronting that region.

Consequently, as both Asia and Africa seek models for rapid economic growth and governance that is both accountable and sustainable, the need to establish mechanisms for mutual learning between these two regions has recently been greatly emphasized, especially in regards to parliamentary oversight and accountability. Parliamentary oversight will be expected to contribute further not only to reorienting development policies and programs in favour of the beneficiaries and in particular the poor, but also to improving their cost-effectiveness and democratic governance in respective communities.

In most initiatives, Monitoring and Evaluation, the systematic process of using evidence to enhance accountability and learning have not featured prominently in the processes of parliamentary oversight. Hence, PC initiated a symposium that brought together African and Asian parliamentarians to share experiences (both positive and negative) on the role of parliaments in promoting accountability while seeking to advance the use of Evaluation as an instrument for good governance, accountability and learning.

2. Objectives

This symposium was designed with the following objectives in mind:

1. To develop a shared understanding about the concept and practice of parliamentary oversight, using Monitoring and Evaluation as instruments for enhancing accountability;
2. To review experiences in Africa and Asia on the role of Parliament and MPs in fostering accountability, in particular as this relates to monitoring poverty reduction and socio-economic development;

3. To begin networking and dialogue among African and Asian experts and Parliamentary leaders on issues of governance and accountability.

3. Workshop summary

The workshop brought together 6 African MPs (Ghana, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda), half a dozen Cambodian parliamentarians and one MP from India, Thailand and Timor Leste. A greater number of Asian parliaments were approached to take part in the symposium, but due to significant parliamentary work or last minute urgencies, those parliaments were unable to send a representative. (*The list of participants can be found in Appendix A.*)

The 3-day symposium was hosted by the Senate of Cambodia and was officially opened by Acting President of the Senate, HRH Samdech Sisowath Chivanmonirak. The first day featured plenary sessions, with a focus on sharing concepts and practices of parliamentary and civic engagement in monitoring public policies and poverty reduction. Five keynote presentations by parliamentary leaders from Asia and Africa, as well as experts with long-standing engagement in issues of accountability and parliamentary oversight took place:

1. **Parliamentary Oversight as a Mechanism for Accountability** – presented by Rasheed Draman on behalf of Steven Langdon
2. **Involving MPs in economic policy making and public finance: the Malawi experience** – Hon. Louis Chimango
3. **Thailand's experience in strengthening parliamentary oversight** - HE. Dr. Premsak Peayura
4. **Civil Society collaboration with Parliament in using M&E as a means of accountability and learning** – Sulley Gariba
5. **Civil society collaboration with parliament – a Cambodian perspective** – Chea Vannath

During the second day of the symposium, two leading NGOs, Urban Sector Group and CIDSE, who work on poverty reduction efforts in Cambodia, organized and managed a field-based learning experience for the participants in the symposium. One group visited a health clinic in the Dangkor district and shared experiences on urban poverty issues; while the second group engaged with the rural poor in Muk Kampoul district in Kandal province, exploring issues of sustainable livelihoods. Upon their return from the field, participants developed a shared understanding of the lessons they had learned and their implications for joint and collaborative actions in strengthening parliamentary oversight for poverty reduction. On the third day, these lessons were shared in the larger group and several central recommendations were generated for the way forward. (*The program of the symposium can be found in appendix B.*)

4. Observations

The symposium proved to be a useful initiative that provided MPs with the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and information related to governance and accountability in their region as well as in another region of the world facing similar challenges. Both African and Asian MPs felt that this innovative activity would open the door for much welcomed South-South linkages and would lead to stronger relationships between parliamentarians from both regions.

The presentations delivered by African and Asian MPs, researchers, civil society representatives, governmental officials and PC covered the topic comprehensively while stimulating pertinent questions, reactions and debates from the participants taking part. The plenary sessions were well planned with relevant presentations followed by adequate time for interactions. In certain instances, discussions were interrupted for a very brief period due to translation challenges (in Khmer, French and English) or technical problems. Nonetheless, regardless of language barriers, exchanges both in plenary sessions and in informal settings between MPs were dynamic. The facilitator, Dr. Sok Hach, did a great job in ensuring all participants contributed to the discussions, in keeping the focus on the subjects and in respecting the schedule.

Case studies from Africa and Asia were mostly appreciated by participants and raised various questions and discussions such as Malawi's case study which was used to demonstrate the importance of MPs involvement in economic policy-making to further development and contribute to poverty reduction. Hon. Chimango's main message was that parliamentarians definitely have a role to play in tackling poverty and the way forward his through the exercise of their oversight role. Possible entry points range from reviews and renegotiation of PRPS to participation in NEPAD and regional parliamentary blocs.

Budget analysis, monitoring and evaluation are strategies for parliamentarians to focus on. Since inflation rates have negative impacts on the economy and do not encourage investment, it is necessary for parliamentarians to be aware of the implications at least and when possible push for macroeconomic stabilisation. When it comes to the shares of the budget for priority pro poor expenditures (PPEs), parliamentarians must keep in mind who are the real winners and who are the losers. Who really benefits down the road.

Among questions and reactions raised following the presentation, we can mention:

- 1) *Parliament has no linkages to the WB and IMF when programmes like the PRSP are being designed and negotiated.* PRSPs have more conditions attached to it than the past structural adjustments, however in certain cases these conditions do not produce conclusive results because the processes are not thought through and implementation is not done properly. Parliamentarians need to be involved, ask what is being done wrong and pose for serious reflection. In the meantime, MPs have demanded in the last years to sit at the table with the WB, however when some of these MPs become Ministers they push for not having MPs involved. Creates a double standard.
- 2) *How to measure poverty? What is being poor?* In countries rich of land and natural resources, productivity is a key element. Efficient use of resources is crucial as well as who owns the land and how it is distributed, such indicators can be used to determine who the poor are. To measure poverty we need to look not only at income growth but also at other indicators such as access to education, health and services. Cuba was used as an example as well as Cambodia to demonstrate the complexity of using only growth as a measurement of poverty levels.
- 3) *How to improve livelihoods and sensitize the poor to make investments instead of buying goods such as televisions with loans or credits? Lack of tools to ensure productivity.* Hon. Makinda shared with the group the example of Tanzania who faced similar problems when delivering programs. Instead of giving money to the poor, funds are now channelled through an organization or association to ensure that the money is used for the purposes it was intended to.

HE. Dr. Premsak Peayura presentation, even though lacking in substantive content (he mostly talked about Thailand's parliamentary structure and had no paper to present), led to a discussion among parliamentarians on their country's experience in tackling poverty, involving MPs in the process and engaging with the poor. MPs were most interested by India's approach. The country has identified their own criteria on how to evaluate poverty and every 5 years they conduct an evaluation of households to measure how levels of poverty have fluctuated. Moreover, all developmental programs undertaken by donor agencies have to be complemented by government in terms of funds. On one hand, parliamentarians through the Standing Committees have an important legislative role to play as all governmental departments need to forward laws to committees for review. On the other hand, even though India is not a PRSP country, MPs take on the role of implementation and elaboration of poverty reduction projects as they are evaluated by their constituents by the work they do in the constituency and not the work they do in parliament. For that reason, MPs spend most of their time in their constituencies meeting with the population, evaluating their needs and pushing for policies and projects that will benefit them.

MPs were interested in knowing more on the levels of growth in Thailand and India and how it trickles down to the poor. They were much interested by the concept developed by Thailand: 1 village = 1 product. Thailand pushes for the implementation of one industry in each village which leads to the creation of employment in the beneficiary village and the increase of households' income. Parliamentarians cooperate with the people on how to best market the products. As a result, exports have increased with this program. In India, IT is a major growing sector which requires specialized professionals. For that reason, all those who have invested in education have benefited as they are now holding interesting positions in sectors such as IT.

Following Sulley's presentation on civil society collaboration with parliament and the use of monitoring and evaluation, MPs outlined the importance of working closely with civil society, shared examples of successful collaborations as well as challenges faced. It was pointed out that alliances with CS are beneficial and essential to work with through committees since they can provide advice and analysis on areas where parliaments have no expertise. On issues such as domestic violence, women organisations prove to be crucial allies to women caucuses and women MPs in their efforts to push for such laws. However, it was stressed that MPs need to go towards CSOs and not always wait for CSOs to come to them. Also, CSOs and parliaments need to work together and build a constructive and healthy partnership based on trust and openness. This will have for effect to eliminate any suspicion that may exist of the other.

5. Field-visits

Both groups were unable to complete their field-visits due to bad road conditions and in one case a flat tire. Nonetheless, they had the opportunity to exchange with the NGO's in charge of the projects, local community leaders and some villagers. African MPs were disappointed with the low participation of Cambodian parliamentarians (only 2) in the field-visits considering that it would have provided them with a good opportunity to meet with communities and evaluate the performance of the projects visited. The budgetary session may have kept the Cambodian parliamentarians from being able to participate. The MPs that did attend gained greater insight on the forms of poverty in Cambodia and challenges faced as well as on poverty reduction programs and their performance. The power point presentation prepared by Hon. Saudatu Sani on the urban poverty field visit presents observations and recommendations that were most

inspired of and confirmed during our unforgettable visit to the health clinic in a resettlement in the Dangkor district.

Conclusions

A variety of recommendations came out of this symposium, among others, the need for parliaments to collaborate with civil society and undertake joint-training and joint program implementation; the need to pursue exchanges of information and experiences between parliaments; and the need to include income-generating measures in poverty reduction projects. (*All recommendations can be found in the attached document: recommendations and way forward.*)

The exchange of ideas and experience among different countries, field visits and interactions were greatly appreciated. For African MP's the symposium was a great opportunity to learn more on the Cambodian and Southeast Asian context as well as the needs of countries in relation to the international context. One MP pointed out that more practical sessions would have been useful. In the evaluations, MPs ranked highly the usefulness of the symposium as well as it's relevance to their current work or functions. Exchanges proved to be greatly informative and inspiring. As one MP puts it, African MP's shared experiences that Asian countries could borrow such as strong committee work while African MP's were inspired by the *one village one product* initiative from Thailand. Likewise, it was suggested that recommendations that stemmed from the symposium should be moved forward by MPs or their committees accordingly to their capacity to do so. To pursue the collaboration between Asian and African MP's, it was suggested that a follow-up meeting take place in Africa this time with greater participation from Asian countries.

The symposium contributed positively to increasing capabilities in select national and regional parliaments as well as increasing committee policy-making knowledge and capacity on poverty reduction. Indeed, participants were able to share their understanding about the concept and practice of parliamentary oversight, participation of all stakeholders and using Monitoring and Evaluation as instruments for enhancing accountability. Sharing on Malawi, Thailand, India and Cambodia's experience in strengthening parliamentary oversight and the use of monitoring and evaluation provided MPs with greater knowledge on practices, accomplishments, challenges faced by their colleagues. Networking and dialogue among African and Asian experts and parliamentary leaders on issues of governance and accountability started off well. However, for dialogue and networking to really take shape and be reinforced mechanisms and greater opportunities need to be available to facilitate the exchanges. As such, participants included in the recommendations the need for a follow-up to the symposium.

Follow-up actions

Taking into consideration the recommendations put forward by the participants, and initiative ideas expressed by parliamentarians during the symposium, the following actions should be pursued:

1. Plan a follow-up to the Asia-Africa symposium that would be looking at the recommendations of this year and how these have evolved or been integrated into the various parliaments. The symposium would take place in one of the NEPAD capitals to show the leaders what MPs have been doing in their respective parliaments. Each country would prepare a 10 minutes paper. MPs from a variety of Asian countries

would be invited to share their experiences in terms of governance and poverty reduction as well as how African countries could benefit from the Asian experience. Wider participation from Asian countries such as the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam would be desired to provide broader perspectives on the issues and a diversity of experiences and practices to share on.

2. Respond to the suggestion on the creation of an internet list-serve from this symposium to allow participants to exchange information. A list with the coordinates of all participants should be circulated among them. A follow-up should be done in a few months to evaluate the number of exchanges that have taken place since the workshop, to identify the participants who have been exchanging and the topics discussed. This would allow us to measure the impact of such policy-sharing initiatives in terms of lasting networking and pursuit of dialogue between parliamentarians.
3. Pull together a list of relevant documentation of experiences from different parliaments in areas such as oversight and poverty monitoring. Provide a list of websites where this documentation can be found.
4. Hon. Saudatu Sani's recommended the establishment of an Asia-Africa Parliamentary Caucus on Poverty Reduction. The objectives of this Caucus would be to: share current practices on poverty reduction; identify gaps and challenges; prepare a strategy to address the challenges; share on legislation; carry out visits to other parliaments. Hon. Saudatu Sani proposed to lead the project with support by the parliament of Nigeria. It will be relevant to follow-up with Hon. Saudatu Sani on the commitment of Nigeria to pursue this initiative, monitor the evolution and identify how the Parliamentary Centre could assist.

It will be important to follow-up with parliamentarians all through the year to monitor the extent of exchanges and dialogue between Asian and African MPs.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

6 Parliamentarians from Africa

- 1-HE. Ms Anne Makinda **Tanzania**, Chair of the Natural Resources, Environment and Poverty Committee Resources Committee
- 2 HE. Ms. Saudatu Sani **Nigeria** , Chairperson of the Commission on Women Affairs and Youth Development
- 3- HE. Ms Jalia Bintu **Uganda**, Executive Committee member Uganda Women Parliamentary Association.
- 4-HE. Mr Abdourahim Balarabe **Niger**, Chair of the Poverty Reduction Network
- 5-HE. Mr Louis Chimango **Malawi** , Member of the Budget and Finance Committee
- 6 -HE. Mr. Steve Akorti **Ghana**, Member of the Public Accounts Committee and the Poverty Reduction Committee.

3 Parliamentarians from Asia

- 1-HE. Mr. Sandeep Shri Dikshit **India**, Member of the Committee on Rural Development
- 2-HE. Dr. Premsak Peayura **Thailand**, Chair of the Committee on Labor
- 3-HE. Mr. Antonio Ximenes **Timor Leste**, Member of the Permanent Committee for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports.

8 Cambodian Parliamentarians:

Senate :

- 1- HE Mr. Sabu Bacha, Chair of the Public Works, Transportation, Posts and Telecommunications, Industry, Mine and Energy Commission
- 2- HE Mr. Chea Chet, Chair of the Interior, National Defense, Investigation and Anti-corruption Commission
- 3- HE Mr. Kong Korm, Chair of the Education, Cults, Culture and Tourism Commission

National Assembly :

- 1- HE Dr. Than Sina, Vice chair of the Finance and Banking Commission
- 2- HE Mr. Pou Sothirak, Vice-Chair of the Chair of the Education, Cults, Culture and Tourism Commission
- 3- HE Madam Ho Naun, Chair of the Health, Social, Labor and Women 's Affairs Commission
- 4- HE Madam Ker Sovanarath, Member of the Parliament
- 5- HE Mr. Amad Yahya, Member of the Parliament

NGOs and Policy Institutes:

- 1- Mr. Sulley Gariba, President of IDEAS
- 2- Ms Chea Vannath, President of the Centre for Social Development of Cambodia
- 3- Urban Sector Group
- 4- CIDSE

Parliamentary Centre

- 1- Mr. Rasheed Draman, Program Coordinator, Poverty Reduction Network Africa
- 2- Ms. Sandra De Moura, Project Officer, Poverty Reduction Network Africa
- 3- Ms. Ivory Christine, Program Director Asia

CCLSP :

- 1- Mr. Men Bunleng, Field Project Manager
- 2- Ms Mom Sokhayouk, Deputy Field Manager

Facilitator :

Dr. Sok Hach, Director of the Institute of Economic of Cambodia

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: SHARING EXPERIENCES ON PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT AND POVERTY MONITORING IN ASIA AND AFRICA
Phnom Penh, October 4-7, 2004

	MONDAY OCTOBER 4, 2004	TUESDAY OCTOBER 5, 2004	WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 6, 2004	THURSDAY OCTOBER 7, 2004	FRIDAY OCTOBER 8, 2004
MORNING		<p>Plenary session Senate of Cambodia</p> <p>9:15 am Opening address HRH. Samdech Sisowath Chivanmonirak Acting President of the Senate The Kingdom of Cambodia</p> <p>10:00 am Health Break</p> <p>10:30 am Parliamentary oversight as a mechanism for accountability Rasheed Draman, Coordinator for the Poverty Reduction Network, Africa Program on behalf of Prof. Steven Langdon, Program Director – <i>Africa</i>, Parliamentary Centre</p> <p>11:15 am African experiences in strengthening parliamentary oversight and the use of monitoring and evaluation Hon. Louis Chimango, <i>MP from Malawi</i></p> <p>Discussion period</p>	<p>Outreach session Field-based visits organized by <i>NGO Forum</i></p> <p>8:00 am Departure from hotel</p> <p>Group 1: Rural poverty Visit to Mukkampoul District, Kandal Province with the NGO CIDSE</p> <p>Group 2: Urban poverty Visit to Dangkor district, Phnom-Penh, with NGO Urban Sector Group</p>	<p>Plenary session Senate of Cambodia</p> <p>8:00 am Courtesy call with the President of the Senate of Cambodia and currently Acting Head of State, Samdech Chea Sim</p> <p>9:00 am Presentation by Rapporteurs to plenary on field-visits, lessons learned and implications</p> <p>10:00 am Recommendations for way forward and conclusions Final plenary discussion</p>	DEPARTURES
LUNCH		12: 30 to 2: 00 pm Lunch at Topaz Restaurant	12: 30 to 2: 30 pm Lunch at Lotus Pond Restaurant	12: 00 to 2: 00 pm Lunch at Riverhouse Restaurant	

AFTERNOON	<p>Afternoon</p> <p>Cultural visits for participants</p> <p>Departure from hotel lobby for a tour of the Royal Palace and National Museum</p>	<p>2:00 pm</p> <p>Asian experiences in strengthening parliamentary oversight and the use of monitoring and evaluation Hon. Dr. Premsak Peayura, <i>MP from Thailand</i></p> <p><i>Discussion period</i></p> <p>3:00 pm Health Break</p> <p>3:15 pm</p> <p>Civil society collaboration with Parliament in using M&E as a means of accountability and learning By Sulley Gariba, <i>President of IDEAS</i></p> <p>3:45 pm</p> <p>Civil society collaboration with Parliament – Case study from Cambodia Chea Vannath, <i>President of the Centre for Social Development</i></p> <p><i>Discussion period</i></p> <p>5:00 pm</p> <p>Synthesis of key issues</p> <p>5:30 pm</p> <p>Short briefing on field visits</p>	<p>9:30 am</p> <p>Keynote presentation Hon. Sina Than, <i>Vice-Chair of the Banking and Finance Committee of the National Assembly</i></p> <p>3:00 pm</p> <p>Group discussion on lessons learned and implications for joint and collaborative actions in strengthening Parliamentary oversight for poverty reduction</p>	<p>Participants may wish to take the afternoon to visit the city, do some shopping or organize official and semi-official meetings with local MP's, civil society organizations or government officials. These can be arranged on request.</p>	
EVENING	<p>Free evening</p>	<p>5:45 pm</p> <p>Reception at the Hotel Royal</p>	<p>5:00 pm</p> <p>Free evening</p> <p><i>(Women MPs meeting at 18:30)</i></p>	<p>6:30 pm</p> <p>Traditional Khmer Dance Show</p>	