

THE PARLIAMENTARY CENTRE
ANNUAL REPORT 2012 • 2013



RAPPORT ANNUAL 2012 • 2013

LE CENTRE PARLEMENTAIRE



The Parliamentary Centre

le Centre parlementaire

Celebrating its 45th year of existence in 2013, the Parliamentary Centre is one of the leading and longest serving non-governmental non-partisan organizations dedicated to the strengthening of parliamentary democracy around the world. Democratic systems and good governance rely on strong and vibrant legislatures that will voice the interests of the people and hold governments to account. The Parliamentary Centre's mission is to ***support legislatures in their lawmaking, oversight and representative roles to better serve the people they represent.***

We believe that every citizen has the right to participate meaningfully in the decisions of government and to hold government to account for those decisions, and that effective, democratic legislatures which engage with civil society and represent citizens are crucial to democratic governance and sustainable development.

Célébrant son 45^e anniversaire en 2013, le Centre parlementaire est l'une des organisations non gouvernementales de premier rang des plus anciennes qui se consacre au renforcement de la démocratie parlementaire dans le monde entier, et ce, de façon impartiale. Les systèmes démocratiques et la bonne gouvernance se fondent sur des institutions législatives efficaces et dynamiques qui défendent les intérêts des populations et exigent la responsabilité des gouvernements. La mission du Centre parlementaire est ***d'appuyer les institutions législatives dans leurs rôles de légiférer, de surveiller et de représenter afin de leur permettre de mieux servir les citoyens qu'elles représentent.***

Nous estimons que chaque citoyen a le droit de participer pleinement à la vie démocratique de son pays, et qu'il est crucial de disposer de parlements efficaces pour assurer la bonne gouvernance et le développement durable. Nous sommes résolus à soutenir l'apprentissage continu et à fournir l'appui requis en prenant soin de respecter le caractère unique de chaque pays sur les plans historique, culturel et politique, le tout en favorisant une plus grande transparence et une responsabilisation accrue des gouvernements.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Looking back over the last year



I believe it is safe to say that the Parliamentary Centre is on a list of many non-governmental organizations all adapting to a perpetually changing world. This year, we celebrated the Parliamentary Centre's 45th anniversary as being one of the leading and longest serving non-governmental organizations dedicated to the strengthening of parliamentary democracy in Canada and around the world. Taking a look at the past 45 years, I can confidently speak on behalf of the Board in saying that we are very proud of our achievements as an organization.

For many years, the Centre has enjoyed the generous support of the Canadian Parliament, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT). We appreciate their confidence in our work, and without them and many other international donors, we would not be celebrating this iconic milestone.

In consideration of our vibrant accomplishments over the course of time, it is clear to me that the Centre has what it takes to pave the way for years to come. Building a legacy requires a lifetime of dedication, commitment and relentless determination, and perhaps most importantly – the ability to not only ride the tide of change, but the courage to swim farther than ever before. The Parliamentary Centre's long history should not be overlooked, as an organization's past is one of the most important determinants of its future.

Upon reflecting on the Centre's activities over the past financial year, the Board feels confident that we have capitalized on the strength of our past to work towards building a positive future. As an organization that believes in the importance of innovation and self-assessment, the Parliamentary Centre developed a comprehensive Strategic Plan, one that would guide us for years to come. With a new mission, vision, values and strategic goals set in place,

the Centre is now poised for success and growth, prepared to cope with whatever change may come its way.

On that note, I would like to offer thanks to all my fellow directors who continue to provide the guidance necessary for the Centre's staff to function. The Board recognizes this as a challenging environment and applauds the Centre's continued efforts to strive and achieve great success. The Board also applauds the Centre's continued efforts to execute the operational activities set out in the Strategic Plan, and the Centre should be aware that they have the Board's full support moving forward.

As directors of the Centre, we are continually nurturing the need to meet strategic objectives in the priority areas of democratic development, and always looking for the most financially responsible route. On behalf of the Board, I am very pleased to draw attention to the Centre's excellent accomplishments this past year in new geographical areas of the world; particularly in Burma, Egypt and Bhutan. It is clear that the Centre is continuously focussed on creating new opportunities for growth in the evolving field of democratic governance. While we hone in on finding new opportunities, the Centre understands the need to add value to our stakeholders. We undoubtedly face a wide range of challenges in a competitive business environment and fragile economic recovery on the global scale. However, with a strong team that has undergone extensive capacity building and self-assessment, the Board applauds the ability of the staff of the Centre to add value and obtain great success. In particular, the Board would like to acknowledge the contribution of our CEO, Jean-Paul Ruskowski and his team in meeting our objectives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Murphy". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light grey background.

Michael Murphy
Chair / Président

Parliamentary Centre Board of Directors /
Conseil d'administration du Centre parlementaire

MESSAGE FROM CEO

This year, we celebrated an important milestone



As I reflect on the third year of my mandate, a few important things come to mind. Firstly, I have realized that there is more of a need now than ever to emphasize the importance of Parliaments in our society. Second to this, I realize that there is also a desire to learn. As an organization that specializes in self-assessment, strategy and education, we believe you must always be learning. Reaching new heights, gaining expertise and perspective from others, and always be evaluating the relevance of what you know.

This year, as we approached our 45th anniversary, we took some time to really reflect on our past, and I can confidently say I am proud to be part of an organization that has thrived for nearly half a century. The Centre would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of our supporters for their honourable dedication, hard work and passionate commitment. With our strategic plan in place, our growing team of experts and our rock-solid history, we are confident, excited, and prepared for the road ahead.

In addition to recognizing our past achievements, we decided that this year would be an ideal time to elucidate where we stand in the world today. We sought the valued views and opinions of our Board of Directors, our funders, partners and the legislatures we work with to learn how they feel about our organization. We wanted to know how our efforts had been received, and perhaps most importantly, how we can improve and evolve in the years to come. And so, from our interventions, we have emerged with a three-year Strategic Plan, supported by a detailed and results-oriented operational plan – one that will help the Centre position itself as a leading organization in the field of good governance.

Along with a stronger mission, vision and values, we have come up with strategies to improve our performance, build and enhance sustainability, visibility

and quality of services to make us a stronger and more competitive organization that can continue to provide pertinent services to our clients.

In order to achieve our strategic results by 2015, the Parliamentary Centre has worked on various initiatives that align directly with our goals and objectives. The Centre has made some powerful strides in the area of partnership building, as we continue to build and foster a variety of partnerships promoting democratic development around the world, seeking advice and expertise and making important connections. We have also made great progress in the area of service delivery, by developing customized professional development courses for our clients. We continue to find new and innovative ways to apply our expertise in the field of extractive sector governance – an area that has become increasingly important.

The Parliamentary Centre is committed to excellence. With a solid team of experts, partners and staff, I feel confident in our abilities to evolve and grow.

Looking forward, I want to leave you with a quote by Nicholas Berggruen, Founder of the Berggruen Institute on Governance. He once said:

“The biggest determinant in our lives is culture, where we are born, what the environment looks like. But the second biggest determinant is probably governance, good governance or a certain kind of governance makes a huge difference in our lives.”

A statement like this not only reminds me why we are here; but also where we need to go in the years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JP Ruszkowski'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Jean-Paul Ruszkowski
President and CEO / Président-Directeur général

2012 • 2013

highlights

This year was an exceptionally important year



For 45 years, we have been providing support to legislatures, parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and other key stakeholders engaging with legislatures around the world.

Since **1968**, the Parliamentary Centre has become one of the leading and longest serving non-governmental organizations dedicated to strengthening of parliamentary democracy in Canada and around the world. To mark this iconic moment, the Centre hosted a celebration event on June 5th, 2013, inviting a wide range of partners, supporters and long-standing friends to rejoice and reflect on our legacy. This event also provided us with the ideal platform to introduce our new three year Strategic Plan – an important document that illustrates the Centre’s new mission, vision and values, all of which ultimately aim to guide our new priorities and position in the evolving field of good governance. As an organization that specializes in providing strategic advice and targeting our support to the specific needs of our clients, we recognize the importance of self-evaluation, reflection and improvement.

Undergoing an extensive internal strategic planning process and self-assessment was an important time for reflection on our challenges, the significant progresses and many accomplishments we have made as an organization, both nationally and internationally in over four decades.

The Parliamentary Centre recognize that as the world keeps on evolving, there will always be room for improvement, and we must be poised to adjust to the changes in our environment.

In addition to a period of reflection, the 2012-2013 financial year was very beneficial for the Centre, as we have continued to develop new partnerships, identify new avenues for funding, implement capacity building and outreach activities with legislatures in different parts of the world, conduct research, and to develop practical tools and training materials on issues most relevant to parliaments, as well as to conduct assessments to help our partners identify their priorities and entry points for knowledge strengthening and reform efforts with a view for a sustainable democracy building.

During this period, the Centre and its partners implemented over 14 projects and more than 100 activities, all of which aimed to support the lawmaking, oversight and representative functions of legislatures. We engaged over 1500 participants from around the world, including Members of Parliament, parliamentary staff, civil society representatives and community members.

BOLD

beginnings

pave the way for a

Legacy



When Peter Dobell joined the Department of External Affairs in 1952, he became increasingly perturbed by the lack of understanding from Members of Parliament on international matters, noticing the incredible effect this had on the country's foreign policy. With hopes of improving the situation, he made a decision that when he reached 40 years of age, he would resign from the Foreign Service and set up a Centre that specialized in strengthening the knowledge and capacity of MPs. It was meant to be a non-government base for a program of activities, designed to improve the understanding of Canadian Members of Parliament on international affairs, foreign trade and defense. And so, in 1968, the Parliamentary Centre was born, and built from the ground up.

* Photo © United Nations, New York, 1963.

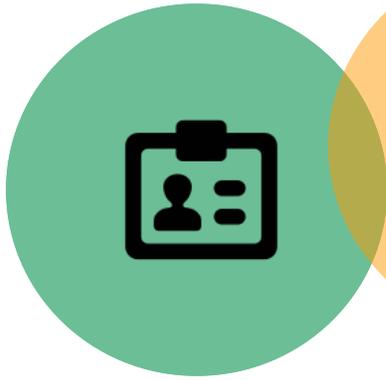
Over the years, the Centre became a facilitator for parliamentary committees, being called upon for advice and support on a range of activities happening abroad. Shortly after inception, the Centre embarked on a three month study through Europe to navigate a decision on whether or not Canadian troops should be removed from NATO. Soon after gaining recognition from this work, the Centre was approached by a series of other parliamentary committees, including the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Senate Committee on National Finance the Joint Committee on Immigration Policy and the Constitution Committee. Over the next 25 years, the Centre provided support to inter-parliamentary associations, meeting consistently on an annual basis, until federal priorities shifted in 1994 when the government decided to focus on reducing the national debt. This was around the same time that Mr. Dobell was asked by the Department of Foreign Affairs to support efforts to develop democratic government in parts of the former Soviet Union, marking the beginning of the Parliamentary Centre's reach into supporting democratic development and good governance at the international level.

As the impact of our work has become more recognized by partners and beneficiaries alike, we have continued to develop our expertise in a variety of areas to help legislatures better serve the people they represent and to expand our geographical reach.

To this day, we have worked with over 75 legislatures at the national, sub-national and regional levels and successfully implemented over 80 projects in countries across the globe. The Centre is now able to draw from a strong roster of experts that can provide the targeted support necessary to address the constantly varying needs of our clients. This includes strengthening parliamentary capacity in budgetary oversight and financial control of public spending; supporting parliamentary committees and other support services to build stronger parliamentary institutions; helping to improve the governance of the extractive sector and a sustainable economic growth; and providing assistance for political and democratic reform.

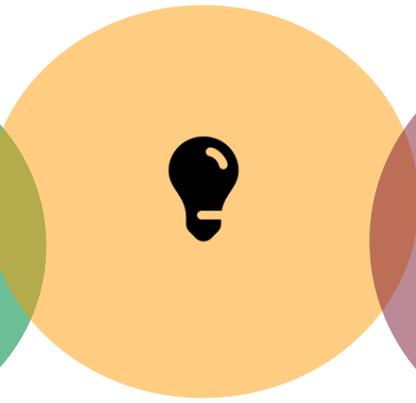
In 45 years, the Centre has evolved from a purely domestic focus to an international organization regarded as one of the leading non-partisan organizations dedicated to the strengthening of parliamentary democracy, both in Canada and around the world. Our focus on building strong partnerships, tailoring our services to meet the individual needs of our clients and partners, taking into account their uniqueness is why legislatures from all over the world continue to seek our expertise, research, strategic advice, capacity building and coaching. The Parliamentary Centre is truly grateful for the trust shown in us by all our partners over the years and look forward to many other successful relationships as we continue to evolve as an organization.

Read on to find out more about our achievements and accomplishments as we reflect on this year in review.



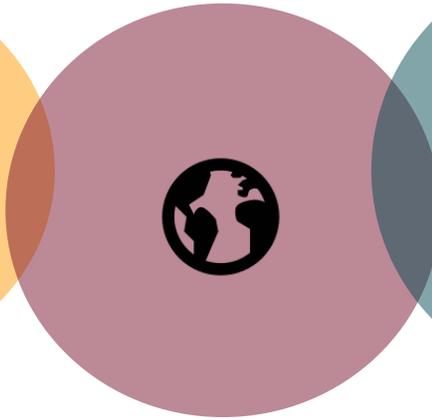
Peter Dobell joins the Foreign Service

1952



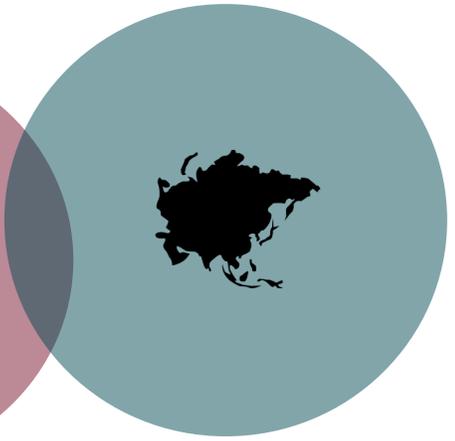
Parliamentary Centre is born, and spend 20 years working with Canada

1968



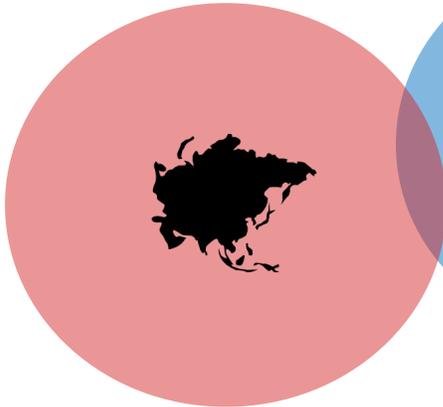
Parliamentary Centre goes international

1994



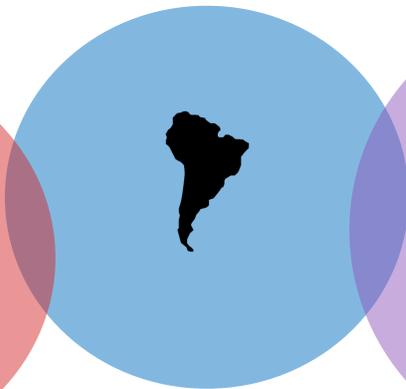
We extended our reach to Cambodia

2002



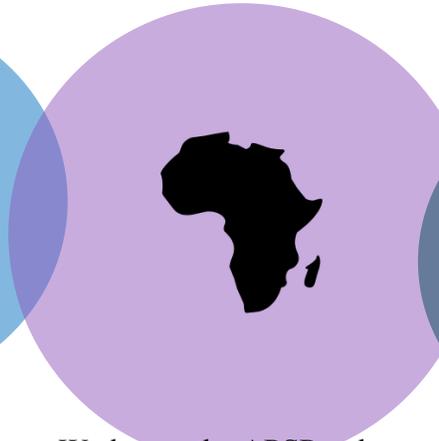
We extended our reach to China

2004



We extended our reach to the Americas

2007



We began the APSP—the biggest parliamentary program in African history

2009



We united to reflect and celebrate half a century of good work

2013

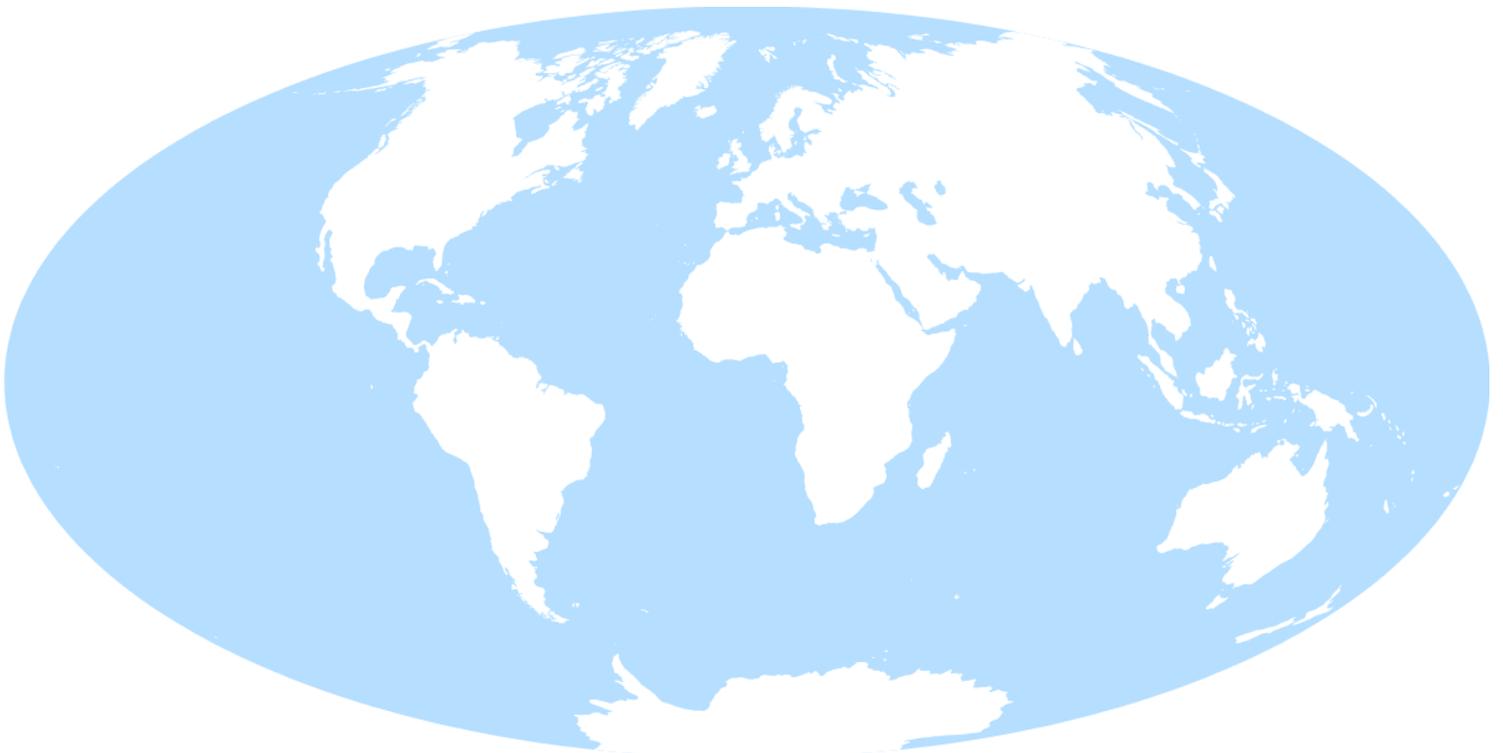


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To this day, we have worked with over 75 legislatures and implemented 80 projects in countries across the world.

A ce jour, nous avons travaillé avec plus de 75 législatures et mis en œuvre 80 projets dans des pays à travers le monde.

”





Measuring
Parliamentary
PERFORMANCE

Good Governance, transparency and accountability are key elements in democratic societies.

As the only elected and representative body, Legislatures play an important role in overseeing and holding the Executive to account on behalf of the people. Strong and well-functioning Parliaments are therefore essential for democratic and sustainable development. Increasing Parliaments’ oversight capacity can lead to more oversight effectiveness, more accountability, better democracy, less corruption, more socio-economic development and less poverty.

The Parliamentary Centre recognizes that each Legislature is unique and that each Parliament needs to identify the best way for it to become a more effective, efficient and representative institution in relation to its specific historical, cultural and political context. As legislative strengthening is an internal process that needs to be driven from within, the Centre works closely with our partners to help them identify their own needs, and then provides tools and support that are directly tied to these needs.

Parliamentary Performance Indicators can be useful to assist Parliaments engaged in reform and modernization efforts. The Centre has therefore developed a diagnostic tool called **the African Parliamentary Index (API)**. The API is aimed at measuring the performance of parliaments. This tool builds on the Parliamentary Centre’s work to develop and refine parliamentary performance indicators over the past decade and other international best practice examples.

The API is unique compared to other performance measurement tools available for Parliaments - it is a self-assessment tool. It is implemented according to a participatory approach, deeply rooted in the local context. It involves the parliamentary leadership, MPs and key parliamentary staff, as well as representatives from civil society, to help ensure that Parliament assumes ownership of the findings and conclusions that emerge from the exercise, review their own methods in hopes of ultimately improving them.

The focus is on the parliamentary involvement in the budget process and the oversight of government expenditures, as budget analysis and review are at the heart of parliamentary activity for most national legislative institutions and where they have an important role to ensure that the budget optimally matches a nation’s needs with the available resources.

The API covers the three core functions of representation, law making and oversight of public expenditure and finance according to the following categories:





During the year in review, the Centre finalized the second round of API assessments together with our partner parliaments in Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. A Summary Report of the results from these assessments was published.

The report was officially launched in Kampala, Uganda on August 16th, 2013 at an event graciously hosted by the Ugandan parliament, bringing together a range of key players from each partner parliament, including several MPs and parliamentary staff that participated in the process, members of the diplomatic corps, government officials and representatives from various media outlets.

During the opening speech, the Deputy Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament, Rt. Hon. Jacob Oulanyah, stressed how the API assessment process had been important in helping his Parliament shed light on where it had come from, where it is now, and more importantly, where they want to go.

“We need to know where we are going so we can design mechanisms to determine how to get there. The Index is one of the mechanisms to achieve that goal”, he stated, underlining that the API process has the potential to assist the institutional growth of parliaments through self-assessment and internal awakening.

The overall findings of this second API assessment process show mild improvements in the performance of the select partner parliaments. In addition to outlining progress made by each country and some key findings of the second round of API assessments, it was observed that the seven participating parliaments have a wide range of good practices that could be the subject of peer learning. However, there are still capacity gaps that partner parliaments have to work steadily to address. It is hoped that partner Parliaments, having seen the value of self-assessment of their performance, will embed the findings in their parliamentary activities. In addition, it is our hope that partner Parliaments will continuously assess themselves and make resources available to address the gaps that may be found, in order to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of their institutions.

To read more about the API report, visit our website at parlcent.org.

The Importance
of Budget OVERSIGHT

At the Centre, We place a great emphasis on supporting legislatures around the world to use tools they have at their disposal to effectively oversee the executive.

This is particularly the case for parliamentary involvement in the budget process, as the budget provides a comprehensive statement of a nation's priorities and has a direct impact on national development and the welfare of the people. As the representative institution of the people, legislatures have an important role to ensure that the budget optimally matches a nation's needs with the available resources. Effective legislative participation in the budget process establishes checks and balances that are crucial for transparent and accountable government and ensuring efficient delivery of public services.

The Parliamentary Centre has developed a considerable expertise in supporting legislatures around the world during the various stages of the budget process, from their involvement during the drafting of the budget, throughout the critical analysis and approval stages of the budget, to the oversight of budget implementation. This has included specific capacity building support to parliamentary committees and parliamentary staff supporting this process, as well as other support services.

During the year in review the Centre has continued to work closely with the parliaments of Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia as part of its DFATD (formerly CIDA) funded project African Parliamentary Strengthening Program (APSP) for Budget Oversight. The support has partly focused on strengthening the capacity of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to become more effectively involved during the analysis and approval stages of the budget by offering training to help improve their understanding of their role in the budget process.

Particular attention has been given to analyzing the responsiveness of the government budgets to the needs of the poor and how the budget impacts the poor and vulnerable groups, as well as present approaches for integrating MDGs into national policies and budgets and for introducing gender-sensitive results-based budgeting.

The challenges climate change poses to development and methods for improving predictability and control in public finance management have also been emphasized. In the case of Ghana, this has taken the form of yearly technical support to MPs and staff to review the economic policy statement and the annual budget in order to equip them with skills to effectively engage the various Ministries and to suggest possible amendments to the budget prior to the House debate and enactment of the Appropriation Act.

As a result of the usefulness of this support, the Parliament of Ghana has institutionalized this training workshop, as it provides opportunity for enriching exchanges between parliamentarians and experts who are drawn from academia, CSOs and think-tanks to analyze and critique key policies and programmes and related allocations in the annual budget. The Speaker of Parliament and the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning have both expressed how this support has engendered greater debates at the committee and plenary levels, allowing MPs to improve in their oversight mandate.

In the case of Benin and Senegal, the Centre's support has also been linked to the implementation of the harmonized framework for public finance within the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU/UEMOA), which are expected to bring more transparency, increase authority and time for parliamentary involvement throughout the budget process, and also allow for improved input from civil society in this process. Activities included a regional conference organized by the Centre for WAEMU member countries to discuss and share experiences on how to integrate these new directives into national legislation.

In cooperation with APNAC, the Centre also helped initiate a review of the national Standing Orders in Senegal in order to "modernise" procedures and rules in the Parliament that will also strengthen transparency and accountability in the proceedings of the Assembly. In addition, the Centre contributed during the review and approval of the new organic finance law (LOLF) in Benin, which is based on results-based management principles, and provided training on actions to be taken to ensure better oversight of the national budget.

Parliaments must be involved in every stage of the budget; from drafting, to analysis to oversight.



To enable legislatures to play a more effective and efficient role during the budget process, they also need to have the appropriate support services. Parliamentary Budget Offices can be instrumental in improving parliamentary oversight, which has been the case in both Kenya and Uganda. During this period, the Centre provided specific support to the Kenya PBO in preparation for its increased role to implement parliamentary outreach and citizen engagement activities during the budget process under the new Constitution. The public hearings that followed on the 2013/14 budget the county level afforded citizens the opportunity to participate in the budget process and to raise several concerns linked to sectors such as education, water, health, environment and agriculture.

The Centre also continued its support to both Ghana and Zambia parliaments in their efforts to establish their own parliamentary budget offices, processes that have greatly benefitted from a knowledge exchange visit the Centre helped facilitate to the Kenya PBO during the previous financial year. As a result of the high-level consensus building workshop the Centre organized for key stakeholders from the Ministry of Finance, Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff, the Leadership of the Ghana Parliament has now agreed to create the Office of Fiscal Analysis and Scrutiny.

With funding from CIDA-Kenya, the Centre has also provided support to the Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST), an arms-length training institute to the Parliament of Kenya. During the period in review, in close cooperation with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) and the Transition Authority, the Centre and CPST was able to provide induction training for over 2000 elected members and staff of the 47 newly established country assemblies, where their role in the budget process was a big focus.

The Centre has also provided support to the newly established Institute of Parliamentary Studies (IPS) in Uganda with a view to strengthen local capacity to support the Uganda Parliament in a sustainable manner, and is also working closely with the National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS) in Nigeria.

During the year, the Centre continued its focus on improving the oversight and governance of the extractive sector. The Centre had been requested by the Uganda and Zambia parliaments to organize a follow-up training on natural resource management, following the regional activity that took place the previous year on domestic resource mobilization. The workshop touched on natural resource exploitation and its impact on environmental sustainability highlighting the need for legal frameworks and effective oversight over the extractives sector.

Participants discussed legislative and institutional measures for tax revenue mobilization. The principles underlying state participation in the natural resources sector were also discussed and participants were provided with information on frameworks such as the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) for improved domestic revenue mobilization. Representatives from the Uganda, Ghana and Kenya National APNAC Chapters were also able to share their experiences on issues pertaining to corruption in the extractive sector during a knowledge-exchange activity, as well as to discuss strategies for improving parliamentary influence on the emerging oil and gas area, and how to make the extractive sector be more transparent and accountable to Parliament.





Developing **TARGETED SERVICES**

Over the years, the Parliamentary Centre has developed very close relationships with our different partners.

This has allowed us to become responsive to their expressed needs and to deliver targeted capacity building support, while maintaining a practically oriented and demand driven service approach. As part of our strategic plan, one of our objectives is to not only become clearer on what types of services we offer, but also to identify new services based on the specific and unique needs expressed by our clients, providing tools and support that are directly tied to these needs, as opposed to one-fits-all solution. This includes building strategic partnerships to enhance our service delivery and to widen our scope of expertise.

During the year in review, the Parliamentary Centre was approached by the Federal Inland Revenue Service of Nigeria on behalf of the Public Accounts and the Finance Committees of the National Assembly of Nigeria. They expressed an interest in learning more about the experiences of countries with very effective and efficient tax systems to feed into an ongoing tax reform process. The Nigerian Parliament was specifically interested in a study visit to Canada

to learn more about the Canadian system, as a means of furthering their knowledge of best practices.

In partnership with the Centre for Governance and Public Management, a research centre connected to the School of Public Policy and Administration at the Faculty of Public Affairs at Carleton University, the Parliamentary Centre developed a five-day *Professional Development Course* that highlighted the fundamental concepts critical to Canada's system of taxation at the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government.

This course was offered for the first time in September 2013 to a 19-member delegation from Nigeria, composed of members from the Public Accounts and Finance Committees in both the Senate and House of Representatives, as well as members





from the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) of Nigeria.

In addition to engaging with Canadian peers from the Department of Finance, the Canada Revenue Agency, and high-level Canadian MPs, the delegation was also able to hear from academic experts from Carleton University and Trent University, as well as from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Topics included Tax policy and administration; Legal frameworks for effective taxation and remittance; Effective tax collection mechanisms and practical ways of successfully curbing tax evasion/avoidance thereby enhancing tax compliance; Innovative ways of bringing the informal sector into the tax net; and Relationship between tax institutions and the Canadian Parliament.

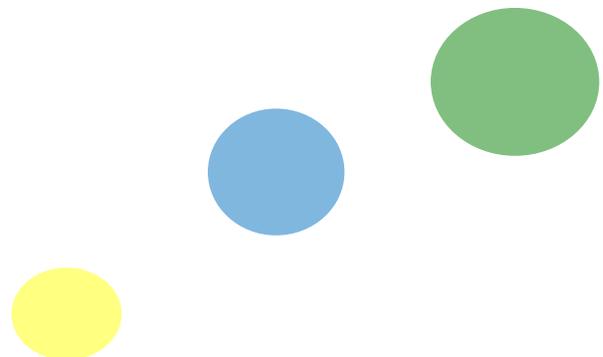
The delegation found that the professional development course provided them with a great understanding of the Canadian tax practices and allowed for mutually beneficial discussions and knowledge exchanges between Canadian experts and Nigerian officials in addition to more academic segments.

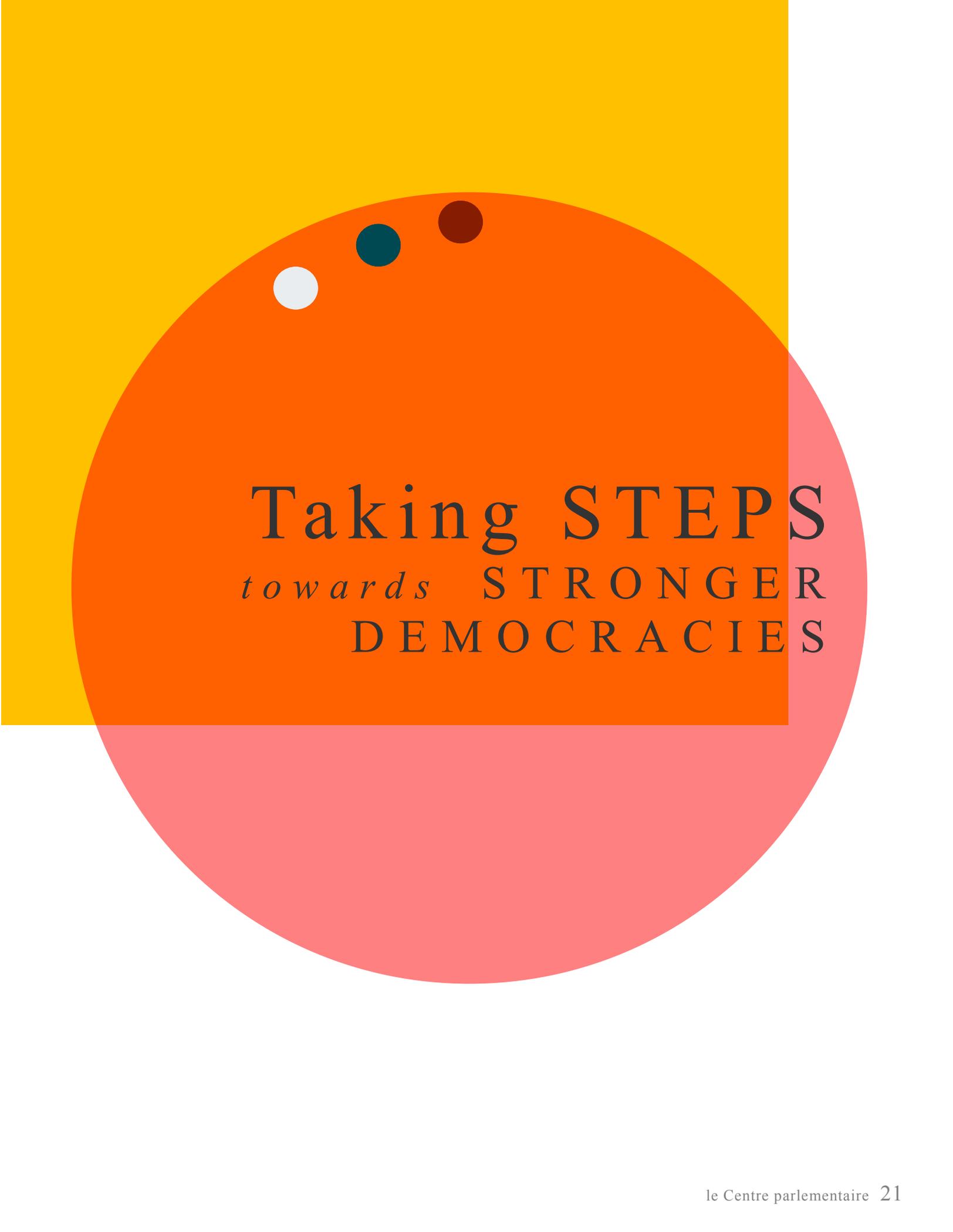
With two additional courses scheduled for Nigerian delegations in 2014, the Parliamentary Centre is happy to see the usefulness of the training and the continued

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This study visit will allow us to contribute to bills that will make the Nigerian Tax System more effective in all levels of government.

- Member of Nigerian Delegation





Taking STEPS
towards STRONGER
DEMOCRACIES

We live in a time of **continuous change** and **turmoil**.

The year in review saw people everywhere clamoring for change, for real citizenship and for a voice in their own governance. The use of social media as a tool for organizing collective action and for transmitting information from the local to the international level has created an unprecedented potential for political change. There is increasing recognition worldwide that citizen involvement is critical for enhancing democratic governance, improving service delivery, and fostering empowerment. Societies with strong, democratic institutions empower people to demand and shape better policies, openly express grievances, hold leaders to account and seek justice from abuse.

Democratic systems and good governance rely on strong and vibrant legislatures that will voice the interests of the people and hold governments to account. But there is no quick fix solution – the situation and the needs are unique to each country. The Centre understands and respects the historical, cultural and political uniqueness of our partners when we implement programs that foster greater citizen participation, transparency and accountability in government. The first step is therefore always to help our clients assess their strengths and weaknesses, identify their unique needs for skills and knowledge enhancement, and provide the necessary tools and support that will ultimately help build a stronger democratic future.

Over the past year in review, the Parliamentary Centre undertook a variety of activities that have supported small, yet significant steps towards building stronger democracies. One example is the Centre's engagement in Egypt. As a result of the popular uprising in the Middle East and North Africa region, the fragility of governance models within Arab regimes has been exposed. The debates that followed on elections, the role of political parties and state institutions put the Egyptian Parliament as a central player in the change promised to citizens by the Transitional Government. This was a critical period in the history of democratic development in Egypt – one that required support from the international community.

In late 2012 and early 2013, with funding from the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the Parliamentary Centre and Clic-Consultants worked in close partnership with MADA for Research and Consultation, a local organization that promotes dialogue amongst civil society, the media, academics, intellectuals and religious leaders. The focus of the partnership was to build local capacity to provide continuous and sustainable support for the institution of parliament in Egypt. This was partly done by developing the capacity of a diverse group of public servants, parliamentary staff, political party staff and CSO representatives to conduct a systematic needs assessment of Parliament, as well as providing practical tools and opportunities for peer learning for institutional strengthening, especially in the area of legislative drafting and review, policy and electoral reform, parliamentary administration, the role of parliamentary committees and public budgeting. It also focused on bringing together key actors from civil society, former Members of Parliament and representatives from the main political parties to engage in deliberative dialogue, and discuss the role of Parliament, citizen engagement, civil society-parliamentary relations and media involvement. By bringing together key players to assess the needs of the future of Egypt's Parliament, the project was viewed as a valuable opportunity to provide support during a critical process of transition to a democratic model of governance.

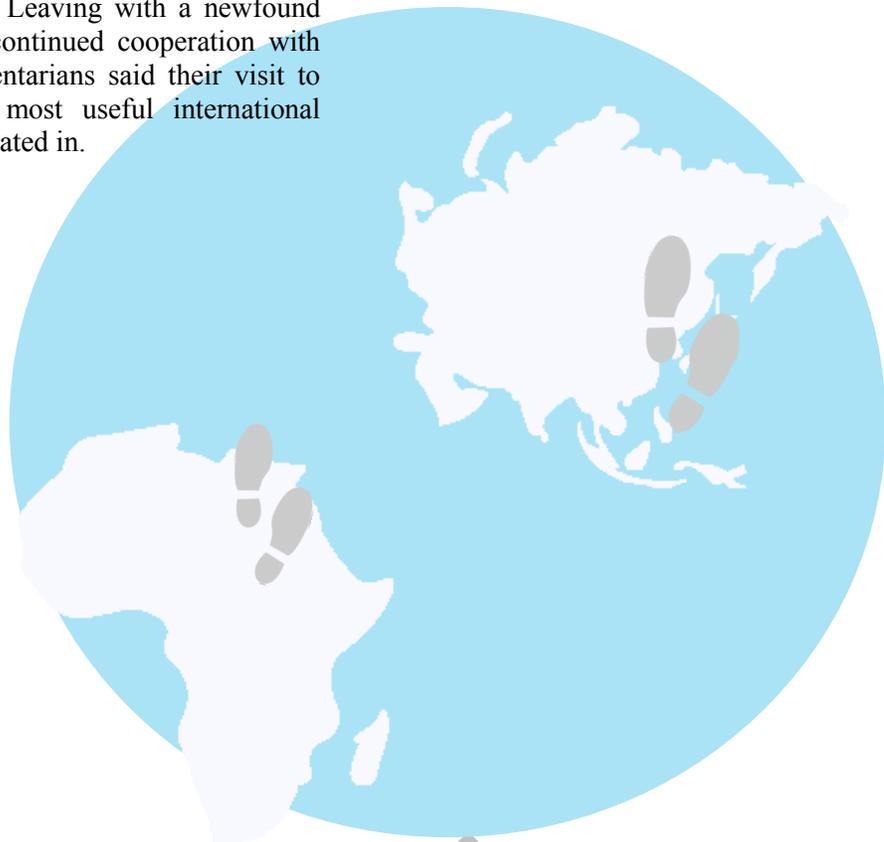
During the year in review, the Parliamentary Centre's programming also focused on helping to strengthen representative governance in Burma. Since 2011, following general elections in 2010, the new Burmese government under the leadership of President Thein Sein has embarked on a series of reforms aimed at helping Burma emerge from decades of military rule. The goal of the new leadership in Burma is to introduce democratic principles and reform, which includes rebuilding the economy and ensuring the rule of law as well as ethnic diversity are respected. However in order for this desired outcome to be achieved, international support is greatly needed.



As a result of Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Baird's visit to Burma in March 2012, the Parliamentary Centre was chosen to implement an important series of knowledge exchanges between Canadian Parliamentarians and practitioners and their Burmese counterparts, allowing for exchanges of best practices in parliamentary governance.

The first visit to Burma by a 14-member Canadian parliamentary delegation to Burma took place from February 15 until February 22, 2013. This multi-party delegation, headed by Parliamentary Secretary Deepak Obhrai, was composed of Members of Parliament from all key parties, veteran Conservative, NDP and Liberal political strategists, representatives of the staff of the House of Commons and the Senate, an official from the Office of the Auditor General, as well as members of the Parliamentary Centre team. It helped to introduce members of the Burmese government, opposition political parties and civil society organizations to the fundamentals of the Canadian model of parliamentary governance, including the role of government and opposition parties as well as the rights of women and ethnic minorities and their participation in the democratic process.

This was followed by a reciprocal visit by a 11-member multi-party Burmese delegation to Canada in April 2013, consisting of both Members of the House of Representative and parliamentary staff where the various aspects of the Canadian parliamentary system was explored, including Canadian federalism and federal-provincial relations, parliamentary oversight, democratic oversight of the military and women's participation in politics and parliament. Leaving with a newfound knowledge and hope for continued cooperation with Canada, Burmese Parliamentarians said their visit to Canada was one of the most useful international exchanges they had participated in.



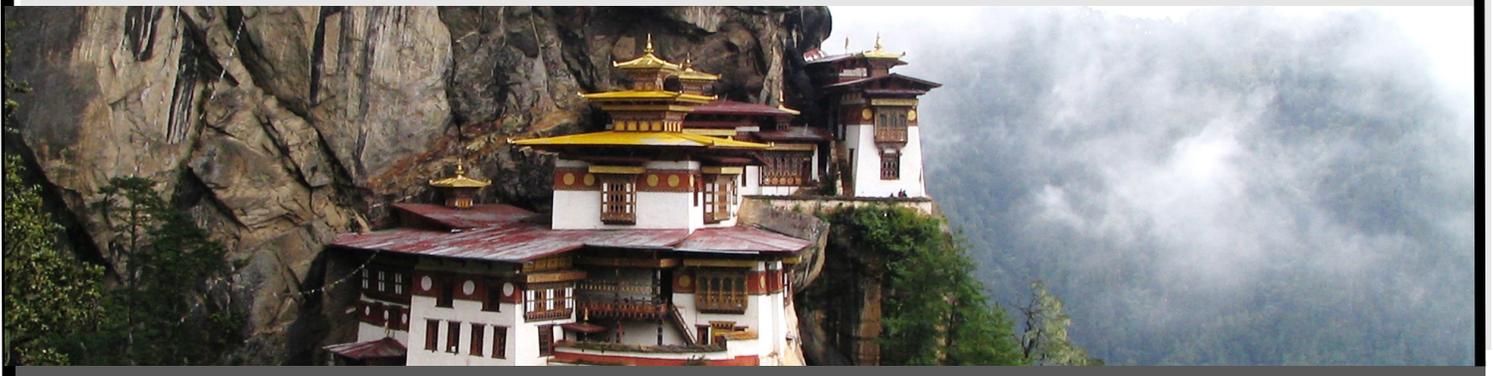
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The first **step** is to help our clients assess their strengths and weaknesses, identify their unique needs, and provide the necessary tools that help build a **stronger** democratic future.



The Centre also supported the democratic transition process in Bhutan. In March 2008, the small Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan held its first parliamentary elections becoming one of the youngest members of the club of democratic nations. A bicameral parliament was set in place; consisting of the National Council and the National Assembly. The National Council's mandate is to fulfill the needs and aspirations of the people through review of public policies, legislation, and scrutiny of state affairs. Relative to other new democracies, Bhutan's transition has been peaceful and effective. However the electorate, elected members, parliamentary staff and other institutions interacting with parliament are still very new to the system, and need support in learning how to better perform their roles. In February 2013, at the invitation of the National Council and through support from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the Parliamentary Centre conducted a needs assessment of the institution, which allowed for concrete ideas for projects supporting the National Council to be formulated. Following the assessment, the Parliamentary Centre proceeded with targeted assistance to the National Council. This included feedback in the development of orientation materials for the new cohort of members who started work following the 2013 elections.

In December 2013, in partnership with International IDEA, the Centre expanded the reach of its assistance to include the National Assembly. Trainings on legislative research techniques for members and staff of both chambers of parliament were implemented using a hands-on practical approach that allowed for the training outputs to be immediately applicable to the work of the elected members. A variety of other activities were contemplated following the assessment, and the Parliamentary Centre continues to help the Parliament of Bhutan in developing and institutionalizing its capacity to serve the citizens of the country. The project serves as yet another example of the importance of first steps – of identifying the need before the action, and how careful process and planning leads to long-term sustainability.





the Parliamentary Centre
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Delivery and Excellence

Representative institutions benefit
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3 Visibility & Positioning

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2 Sustainability &
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PC plays a leading role in supporting
legislative

4 Organizational Capacity
and Performance

Improved internal communication and
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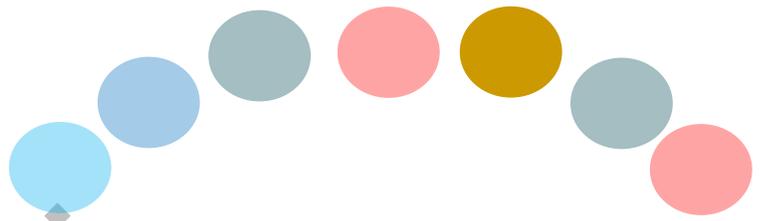
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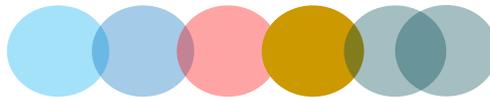
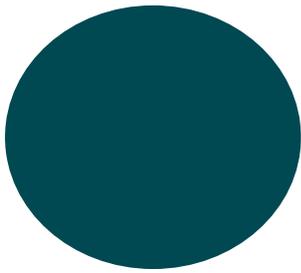
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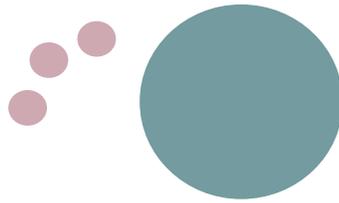
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