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Committee

**Parliamentary
Strengthening**

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International Development Committee

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Summary

The UK Government has rightly put increasing stress on the importance of governance. Parliaments are a key part of this and are essential to meeting many of DFID's ambitions for post-2015, including increasing the accountability of Governments, reducing poverty, tackling corruption and preventing conflicts. Many parliaments in developing countries can benefit from parliamentary strengthening, but working with parliaments is difficult and set-backs are common, especially, in Fragile and Conflict Affected Countries. A representative, accountable and effective parliament is an asset in any state, and no less necessary in fragile and challenging countries. A strong parliament which has sufficient resources to scrutinise its government will inevitably ensure greater transparency and better use of state revenues including official development assistance.

We estimate that very roughly about £250 million is spent globally on parliamentary strengthening. DFID is a major contributor, spending approximately £22.5 million from its bilateral programmes and according to DFID a further £3.5 million can be attributed as its share of multilaterals' expenditure.

In the past DFID staff have not always felt comfortable working with parliaments, but there have been improvements, including DFID's use of political economy analysis. There have been a number of recent Government initiatives to improve UK parliamentary strengthening, including a review of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the appointment of a new CEO for the organisation. The Committee welcomes the Government's and DFID's efforts, but believes they should do more. We recommend that:

- DFID put parliaments at the heart of its governance work; in countries where DFID has an office, parliamentary strengthening should be a standard feature of DFID's work and of ensuring long term that aid is spent effectively
- in particular, DFID support the relevant parliamentary oversight Committee where DFID has a major programme, e.g. on health or education; we welcome the Minister's support for this.
- DFID recognise that multi-party politics gives voters greater choice and therefore greater leverage over their MPs and governments. This, of course, makes inter-party rivalry a common and welcome feature of a healthy parliament. DFID's parliamentary strengthening work should not shy away from working with political parties.

These recommendations are likely to involve an increase in expenditure on parliamentary strengthening relative to other programmes to promote democracy—albeit a relatively small one as parliamentary strengthening programmes are not expensive.

There is increasing recognition by practitioners and donors, including DFID, of the characteristics of best practice in parliamentary strengthening programmes. We particularly commend

- long term programmes with the ability to respond quickly and flexibly when opportunities arise

- combining parliamentary strengthening with associated relevant work, particularly with the media; however, combined work it is not a necessary part of parliamentary programmes and such work should not be a substitute for them
- political and party political awareness in the design and execution of programmes- it cannot be a simple technocratic exercise.

DFID is proud of its political economy analysis, but we were told that this does not always carry through into the implementation of programmes, in part because of DFID's commissioning processes; the DFID logframe and the results agenda, which emphasise short term, tangible results are the subject of particular criticism. We recommend that DFID develop a long term, sensitive and realistic approach to evaluating parliamentary strengthening programmes. We further recommend that DFID and FCO jointly undertake an assessment of what parliamentary strengthening programmes they have funded and what has worked.

In its commissioning, DFID puts a higher value on good project management skills than specialist expertise and prefers to commission large governance projects of which parliamentary strengthening is a part. Thus it provides large contracts to big sometimes non-specialist organisations which subcontract to others. We see the advantages of using large organisations such as the UNDP in some circumstances, e.g. where a several donors are involved or in some Fragile and Conflict Affected states (FCAs). We were surprised to discover the extent to which DFID uses large US organisations for its parliamentary strengthening work, running the risk of a switch from a parliamentary to a less accountable, Presidential system.

We recommend that DFID commission more expert organisations; and take a more hands-on approach to managing parliamentary work. We recommend that

- a joint DFID/FCO fund be established to commission expert organisations; this would also enable work to be commissioned at short notice when opportunities arise. A joint fund would combine the differing and important skills of the two departments. The fund could be on a similar scale to the £21.4 million which BBC Media Action received as a global grant from DFID in 2013–14
- when DFID has to commission larger suppliers, it nominate expert organisations to which larger suppliers should sub-contract; we welcome UNDPs willingness to do this, but DFID needs to ensure that too much is not top-sliced by the larger supplier.
- DFID improve its ability to act as an intelligent commissioner of parliamentary strengthening both in country and centrally; it should increase the number of specialist experts at the centre and ensure its governance advisers are aware of the importance of parliaments and develop closer links with the UK Parliament.

The 'Westminster brand' is often well regarded overseas and Westminster-based organisations have undertaken some excellent work. Many parliaments in developing, especially Commonwealth, countries are keen to work with Westminster-based organisations; this can involve a Westminster institution working with a 'southern' partner

in a third country. However, DFID is used to working with large contractors on a scale which tends to exclude Westminster; the average programme budget for the 37 DFID programmes with parliamentary strengthening (these are large governance programmes which include a part on parliamentary strengthening) is £14.1 million, which is larger than the total annual budgets of the House of Commons Overseas Office, UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Westminster Foundation for Democracy combined.

We recommend that DFID make more use of Westminster organisations, especially where there is a demand for their expertise. But changes should be made at Westminster. DFID and the FCO are confronted by a host of institutions at Westminster. We recommend that

- the organisations at the Houses of Parliament be better coordinated with a single point of contact.
- consideration be given to the establishment of a stronger Westminster 'hub' which would bring together UK institutions with different kinds of expertise, enable them to cooperate rather than compete, and would be able to undertake larger projects

We welcome the changes which Westminster Foundation for Democracy is undertaking under its new CEO. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy should continue to develop its parliamentary strengthening work in combination with political parties. This should be encouraged and funded by DFID and FCO. To assist WFD's reforms we recommend WFD form closer links with the Houses of Parliament; and that staff be seconded from the House of Commons to WFD and vice versa.

1 Introduction

Parliamentary Strengthening

1. It is now widely believed that good governance is essential to effective development. The Report of the UN High Level panel on the post 2015 development agenda sets out 12 goals to end poverty by 2030; one of these is ‘good governance and effective institutions’. DFID itself has given increasing prominence to good governance. It spends £724 million on governance and security projects¹, one of its largest areas of spending. The Golden Thread of Development, “enabling states to function for their citizens”, was one of DFID’s six policy priorities in 2013–14.² An effective parliament is the key effective institution for good governance:

From first principles, it is difficult to imagine what kind of effective democracy can be built without an effective Parliament. And Parliament, as with other central institutions of governance, is an area where an improvement at the centre can have a multiplier effect on the country as a whole.³

2. Many donors, including DFID, recognise that parliaments are important and fund parliamentary strengthening programmes. However, over recent years serious questions have been raised about such work, including its value, the priority given to it, the way projects are designed, how they are monitored and evaluated and how they are commissioned and who they are commissioned from, in particular whether adequate use is made of specialist expertise.

3. 2015 is an ideal time to undertake this inquiry. It is the 800th Anniversary of the document which symbolises the importance of the rule of law, Magna Carta, and the 750th anniversary of the Simon de Montfort Parliament.⁴ We made a number of conclusions and recommendations about parliamentary strengthening in our report on Burma to which the Government responded in May 2014 to feed into the Triennial Review of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). In this inquiry we examine the subject in detail.

4. We had an excellent response to our request for evidence with a wide range of responses from multilaterals, including the UNDP and the World Bank; European institutions, including the French Assemblée Nationale and the EU; Westminster-based organisations as well as other organisations which have undertaken work for DFID and a range of experts. We took oral evidence from the Minister of State and DFID officials, the Overseas office of the House of Commons and the international parliamentary networks based in the House, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, other specialist practitioners, multilaterals and academics.⁵ We have also drawn on our meetings with developing

1 [DFID Annual Report and Accounts 2013–14](#), page 56

2 [DFID Annual Report](#), p13

3 [House of Commons Overseas Office Submission](#), paragraph 9

4 There are also other reasons: DFID is publishing a new “How to Note” on Strengthening Parliaments; the Triennial Review of the Westminster foundation for Democracy was undertaken in 2014; and its new Chief Executive has been appointed.

5 We also saw a copy of the draft report for WFD’s Triennial Review and discussed it with witnesses. The report is not yet published, and so we do not quote from it here.

country MPs at Westminster and on our overseas visits abroad, most recently in Burma, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. We held a videoconference with DFID governance advisers based in several countries in Africa and Asia. We would like to thank all those who have provided evidence and assisted us in other ways.

5. The report focuses on DFID, but also looks at other UK departments and other bodies which carry out parliamentary strengthening work. Chapter two looks at the value of parliaments and of working with them even in difficult circumstances, chapter three at spending on parliamentary strengthening and chapter four at parliamentary strengthening programmes and how far DFID's implementation of those programmes follows best practice. Chapter five examines commissioning, noting DFID's preference for large suppliers, including US suppliers, rather than smaller specialist organisations. Finally, chapter six, considers whether more use should be made of Westminster-based institutions, and what has to change at Westminster if this is to happen.

2 The Importance of Parliamentary Strengthening

Development, Democracy and Parliaments

6. Good governance has become an increasing focus for international development.⁶ Since the 1990s there has been a global interest in promoting democracy, which has gradually become a key part of international development as well as international relations. Ideas about development have changed with theories of “development as freedom” and enabling environments for growth⁷, and a shift to more “risk-based” approaches to development, which emphasise accountability, the risks of corruption and insecurity, and responding to the challenges of Fragile and Conflict-Affected states (FCAs). WFD argued that the links between poor governance and conflict is gradually shifting the international debate in favour of addressing the underlying political drivers of poverty⁸ and the World Bank that good governance is increasingly recognised as a necessary condition for development to be effective and to move beyond aid and social welfare. With this focus DFID’s work on governance has grown. Since 2011–12, it has spent over £700 million on annually governance and security, often its largest area of bilateral spending.⁹

7. Promoting democracy is a key part of governance work; the initial focus of this was ensuring free and fair elections as the cornerstone of democracy. While parliaments were relatively neglected apart from women’s representation in them, which was a Millennium Development Goal (MDG)¹⁰, the number of parliaments has grown and almost every national political system (190 of 193 countries) now has some form of representative assembly, accounting for over 46,000 representatives.¹¹ As WFD noted, the fall of the Berlin Wall led to an increase in the number of countries with effective democracies from about 50 in the 1980s to almost 90 today although the trend has not been consistent.¹²

8. While small sums have been spent compared with other aspects of governance, strengthening parliaments has become an increasingly prominent part of development work, both in the number and type of organisations that provide support and also in the amount of funding and number of parliaments being supported.¹³ After 1990 the initial

6 Thomas Carothers and Diane de Gramont term this the “almost revolution.” See: Thomas Carothers & Diane de Gramont (2013) *Development Aid Confronts Politics: The Almost Revolution*, Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

7 Amartya Sen (2001), *Development as Freedom*, Oxford: OUP

8 [Westminster Foundation for Democracy Submission](#), paragraph 3

9 DFID spent £752 million on governance and security (governance is not reported separately) in 2011–12, out of a total of £4.22 billion (17.8%). This was its largest area of bilateral spending. In 2012–13 it similarly spent £711 million, out of a total of £4.28 billion, and £723 million in 2013–14. Chapter 2 analyses DFID’s spending in detail. See: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67353/Annual-report-accounts-2011-12.pdf

10 MDG 3.3 on the “Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament” See also: [DFID Submission](#), paragraphs 3, 9. DFID notes that progress has been slow with women holding 19.3% of seats in single/lower houses worldwide in 2011, up from 12% in 1997.

11 [DFID Submission](#), paragraph 5

12 [WFD Submission](#), paragraph 2

13 Submission from [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O’Neil, ODI](#), paragraph 8

geographical focus for parliamentary strengthening was in Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁴ In the past decade, as more and more European countries have joined the EU, OECD and NATO, there has been a shift to the Middle East, Africa and Asia.¹⁵ There has been growing support to parliaments in fragile and post-conflict states—with some of the largest single programmes in Afghanistan and Iraq and more recently in countries affected by the Arab Spring.¹⁶

9. The focus of parliamentary strengthening initially tended to be on expanding formal powers and using them more effectively to enhance the capacity of parliaments to perform core functions; this included modernising rules of procedure and organisational practices, and improving communications with the public.¹⁷ There have been successes: WFD argued that compared with 50 years ago, parliaments have become more accessible, more professionally-run and better-resourced. There is also evidence of emerging parliaments acting more independently, rejecting bills and appointments proposed by the executive.¹⁸ This is particularly the case in areas of budgetary and fiscal oversight, where parliaments have come to be regarded as pivotal institutions for scrutinising government spending.

10. However, the existence of parliaments and participation and representation in elections has not proved to be a panacea. It is argued that the quality of democracy in poor countries has stagnated for the past 15 years.¹⁹ Parliaments and MPs are themselves the object of much criticism. While the past two decades have seen expectations about what parliaments should deliver increase tremendously, in many countries parliaments remain weak and mistrusted.²⁰ Alina Rocha Menocal of Birmingham University and ODI told us that parliaments and political parties, were consistently ranked around the world as the institutions that people trust the least, while the military was the institution that enjoys most public confidence.²¹

11. Political parties and parliaments are often the weakest link in promoting democracy²² largely because many parliaments are unable or unwilling to counter powerful executives. This results in parliaments not acting as independent power bases beholden to the

14 The recent wave of UK parliamentary strengthening work can be marked by the establishment of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in 1992, which had a regional focus in Eastern Europe. The end of the Cold War saw the growth of a number of groups promoting the transition to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and parts of the former Soviet Union, both private sector groups, like Adam Smith International, and large NGOs like Open Society. This transition has been broadly successful, with many former communist countries, the focus of initial strengthening efforts, now members of the EU and more applicant countries, notably in the Balkans, waiting in the wings. See: [WFD Submission](#), [Adam Smith International Submission](#), paragraph 1.1

15 Regular Afrobarometer studies all show extremely wide support for democracy. See: Demand for Democracy Is Rising in Africa, But Most Political Leaders Fail to Deliver, Michael Bratton and Richard Houessou, 23 April 2014, Policy Paper #11 See also: [Adam Smith International Submission](#), paragraph 1.1. http://www.afrobarometer.org/files/documents/policy_brief/ab_r5_policypaper11.pdf

16 Submission from [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O'Neil, ODI](#), paragraph 8

17 [World Bank Submission](#), Section 1

18 Draft How To Note (November 2013) page 10.

19 [WFD Submission](#), paragraph 2

20 Submission from [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O'Neil, ODI](#), paragraph 2

21 Submission from [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O'Neil, ODI](#), paragraph 3

22 [Greg Power submission](#), see also Thomas Carothers (2006) *Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies*, Washington

electorate, but themselves beholden to their governments.²³ Parliaments are often characterised by factions and opportunism, with weak mechanisms for compromise.

12. These complications have meant that development agencies, including DFID, have been wary of engaging with parliaments.²⁴ Yet these complications are an argument for rather than against strengthening parliaments. As Lord Norton highlighted, there is a growing range of states with elections but without effective democratic systems.²⁵ There is recognition that work to promote democracy focused solely on ensuring free and fair elections is of little value without effective parliaments. As the International Republican Institute told us:²⁶

While free and fair elections embody the ideals of democracy, what happens between elections—the act of governing—is equally important to ensuring the long-term success of democracy. Citizen confidence in government institutions is critical for a strong, sustainable democracy. This is especially true with regard to legislative bodies, the members of which are elected as direct representatives of their constituents. Where parliaments are unable or unwilling to fulfil citizen needs, the democratic process is undermined and risks becoming a democratic façade.

The Importance of Parliament

13. Strengthening parliaments is recognised as important to international development in 4 key ways.

Poverty reduction and economic growth: The World Bank notes that parliaments are a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for socio-economic development and hence for reducing poverty.²⁷ “More stable, open, responsive and inclusive political systems, driven by high levels of transparency, accountability, participation and competition” are thought to better promote and sustain economic development.²⁸ Greg Power informed us:

An effective parliament should be amplifying the public voice. It provides the connective tissue between people and power, and should ensure that government priorities reflect and respond to the needs of the people.²⁹

23 [Adam Smith International Submission](#), paragraphs 3.2–3.3

24 This is changing. Carothers and De Gramont note that more recently a new lens on development has begun to change the world of international aid, as the recognition that development in all sectors is an inherently political process is driving aid providers to try to learn how to think and act politically. See: Thomas Carothers & Diane de Gramont (2013) *Development Aid Confronts Politics: The Almost Revolution*, Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

25 [Lord Norton submission](#) paragraph 9: “There is little point in creating what LeDuc, Niemi and Norris have categorised as electoral democracies without establishing a culture of rights and the protection of rights through the legislature and the courts. There is still a considerable way to go. According to LeDuc et al., there were only 88 liberal-democracies in 2009, compared to 32 electoral democracies (free elections, limited rights) and 65 electoral autocracies (elections failing to meet international standards, limited rights). Examples of electoral autocracies include Bangladesh, Cameroon, and Uganda. Electoral democracies include Kenya, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.” Lord Norton cites: Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris (eds), *Comparing Democracies* (London: Sage 2010), pp. 12–16

26 Submission from the [International Republican Institute](#), paragraph 2

27 [World Bank Submission](#), Section 3

28 How To Note (November 2013), page 2

29 [Greg Power submission](#)

Security: The UK Government is committed to strengthening global democracy in the National Security Council's *Building Stability Overseas Strategy*.³⁰ Parliaments are particularly important for building a democratic culture and for managing conflict—providing a platform for different interests to express their views and preparing opposition groups for governing. Witnesses stressed how parliaments could prevent and mitigate the effects of conflict³¹, albeit that the evolution of a national political culture where all the main political players accept democracy takes time.

Parliaments are seen as particularly important for addressing the security challenges of Fragile and Conflict Affected states (FCAs). Initial work to promote democracy focused on holding elections, but this often had highly disruptive and destructive consequences in low income and post-conflict situations.³² It is essential, in addition, to build effective institutions which operate between elections.

DFID plans to devote 30% of its total spending to FCAs and acknowledges the importance of its governance work as part of this spending. The Secretary of State has stressed the key role parliaments should play in UK conflict prevention work.³³ DFID notes that the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund sees working with parliaments as a key aspect of support for building inclusive political systems affected by conflict and instability,³⁴ but there is some concern that the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund will give a higher priority to intervening in conflicts than in preventing them.

Accountability: Promoting domestic accountability and good governance is a prominent part of UK development policy, and development partnership principles.³⁵ The Prime Minister has emphasised “the golden thread of development,” which highlights the importance for international development of political institutions that serve the many; the accountability of power holders to citizens; and the ability of citizens to demand their rights and participate in decisions that affect their lives.³⁶ According to the UN My World survey, after good education, accountability, i.e. “honest and responsive government” is the highest priority for citizens in poor countries.³⁷ Strong parliaments are increasingly acknowledged as central to this golden thread. Parliamentary scrutiny is often the main means by which government is held to account for its performance, able to have a ripple effect across public spending:

30 See: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67475/Building-stability-overseas-strategy.pdf

31 Dick Toornstra of the OPPD notes that in a multipolar context parliamentary strengthening and cooperation is essential for international security and to avoid the emergence of “parliament-free zones” of international decision making. See: [Dick Toornstra, OPPD Submission](#), paragraph 5

32 Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*

33 [Beyond Aid oral evidence session](#), 11 December 2014

34 [DFID Submission](#), paragraph 28

35 DFID has four Partnership Principles, including one introduced in 2011 on government commitment to strengthen domestic accountability (enabling people to hold public authorities to account for delivering on their commitments and responsibilities). The Partnership Principles inform the overall strategy for engagement in all countries where DFID provides bilateral aid See: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/358341/how-to-partnership-principles-march2014a.pdf

36 [DFID Submission](#), paragraph 1

37 [WFD Submission](#), paragraph 3

Parliaments are the fulcrum of democratic political systems. They sit at the centre of a web of domestic accountability that links them to the executive and other branches of government, to constituents and the wider public, and to political parties.³⁸

DFID stresses the importance of parliaments in promoting accountability in its agenda for the new post-2015 Millennium Development Goals regime.³⁹ The Minister highlighted the importance of parliaments in this agenda:

We are putting enormous diplomatic resources into securing, for the post-2015 agenda, the importance of governance in institutions, the rule of law, all of which, I believe, stem ultimately from a strong, functioning Parliament. I have no doubt that the most important element is the Parliament.⁴⁰

Transparency, trust and combatting corruption: International donors have increasingly stressed the need to make public spending more transparent;⁴¹ this can help ensure the effectiveness of development spending and broad and democratic ownership of a country's development priorities.⁴² DFID has been a global leader in agreeing to make its spending transparent for this very reason⁴³ and highlights transparency as one of the top priorities of its Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department.⁴⁴ DFID currently makes available online its spending data by country,⁴⁵ but it does not currently report directly to developing countries' parliaments its spending in their countries, or to individual parliamentary committees. The Minister agreed with the Committee that it was important

38 Submission from [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O'Neil, ODI](#), paragraph 1

39 [DFID Submission](#), paragraph 2; WFD Submission, paragraph 3

40 [Oral Evidence, Minister of State Desmond Swayne MP, 25 November 2014](#), Q86

41 [Submission from Dr Rachel Kleinfeld](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, paragraphs 22–24: "One key way to strengthen parliamentary oversight is to provide parliaments—and citizens—with accurate and timely budgets of foreign assistance... Opacity enables corruption in the aid pipeline, and diminishes the ability of parliament to exercise oversight over key sectors, such as the military and law enforcement. The UK should ensure that it is transparent in its assistance, provides budget numbers in a timely manner to both local parliaments and citizens, and leads the way in advocating for partner developed nations and multilateral institutions to do the same."

42 [Bond and UK Aid Network Submission](#), paragraphs 7–8

43 [The World Bank submission](#) (Section 1) notes that commitments by the international community in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda and the Busan Partnership to use 'national systems' in order to improve country ownership of development assistance and monitor development results underscore the importance of parliaments in the development process. See also: Busan Principles (2011): "21. Parliaments and local governments play critical roles in linking citizens with government, and in ensuring broad-based and democratic ownership of countries' development agendas. To facilitate their contribution, we will: a) Accelerate and deepen the implementation of existing commitments to strengthen the role of parliaments in the oversight of development processes, including by supporting capacity development—backed by adequate resources and clear action plans. b) Further support local governments to enable them to assume more fully their roles above and beyond service delivery, enhancing participation and accountability at the sub-national levels." DFID has committed through the Busan Principles to strengthening national accountability institutions in order to monitor aid effectiveness and improve country ownership of development assistance.

44 "Transparency is one of the top priorities for the UK government. It helps people see where the money is going and for what purpose. It helps improve value for money and makes governments everywhere more accountable to their citizens. DFID is a world leader in aid transparency and has an ambitious vision for both DFID and its partners... GOSAC work plays a central role in embedding transparency in the governance and systems and development process of DFID bilateral partners. Clear and accessible information is essential to empower people in developing countries to hold their government to account." Operational Plan 2011–16 Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department (Updated December 2014), p19

45 Under the UK Aid Transparency Guarantee (2010), DFID publishes extensive information on UK aid donations. It publishes full financial details of all DFID projects over £500. It also publishes project information, business cases, new contracts and tender documents for new contracts over £10,000, both on the HMG website gov.uk and the International Aid Transparency Initiative website. See: <http://www.iatregistry.org/publisher/dfid>

for the UK to report UK aid and sectoral spending to parliaments and their relevant departmental committees in the countries where DFID operates.⁴⁶

Strengthening parliaments is important for challenging corruption, and can be used more in DFID's anti-corruption work. While parliaments themselves can be the source of corruption and patronage relations⁴⁷, strong parliaments are also often key to challenging corruption, as the Committee has witnessed first-hand in Tanzania. The World Bank notes that countries with parliamentary forms of government are more effective in controlling corruption than those with presidential forms and that greater parliamentary oversight is linked to lower levels of corruption:

There is substantial and growing empirical evidence that parliaments are a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for both socio-economic and democratic development... Countries with parliamentary forms of government are more effective in controlling corruption than those with presidential forms... Parliamentary forms of government (along with there being a unitary state, rather than federal arrangement, and an electoral system with proportional representation, rather than a first-past-the-post system) help reduce corruption.... The greater number of [oversight] tools available to a parliament, the greater the level of economic development and degree of democratization... Greater parliamentary oversight [is] also linked to lower levels of corruption.⁴⁸

The Minister emphasised the key role DFID saw for parliaments in combatting corruption through strengthening scrutiny of government.⁴⁹ DFID has organised its parliamentary strengthening work as part of the Department for Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption, and has developed Anti-Corruption strategies for each of its priority countries. However, of DFID's 28 anti-corruption strategies, less than half (43%) mention a role for parliament in any form, and only two of the anti-corruption strategies for the countries where DFID has its largest 10 parliamentary strengthening programmes actually give it a role.⁵⁰ Anti-corruption work and parliamentary strengthening seemingly still operate in separate silos.⁵¹

14. It was argued that in other areas too, donors should show a greater appreciation of the value of parliaments.

46 [Oral evidence from Rt Hon Desmond Swayne MP, DFID Minister of State](#), 25 November 2014; Q100

47 Submission from [Dr Rachel Kleinfeld](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, paragraphs 9–11

48 [World Bank Submission](#), Section 3

49 [Oral evidence from Rt Hon Desmond Swayne MP, DFID Minister of State](#), 25 November 2014; Q100

50 DFID largest 10 parliamentary strengthening programmes can be seen in **table 2** in chapter 5. From these 10, the anti-corruption strategies for Afghanistan and Burma mention parliament. The anti-corruption strategy for Pakistan, which accounted for almost half of DFID's spending on parliamentary strengthening in 2013–14 (and which was ranked 126 out of 175 countries for corruption in 2014 by Transparency International) does not discuss any anti-corruption role for parliament. DFID's full list of anti-corruption strategies can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/anti-corruption-strategies-by-country> The role of parliament is mentioned in a total of 12 anti-corruption strategies, those for Afghanistan, Burma, Central Asia, Ghana, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Liberia, Tanzania, Vietnam, Yemen, and Zambia.

51 ICAI recently gave [evidence to the committee on DFID's anti-corruption work](#), calling for DFID to do more to address the impact of corruption on the poor, and re-emphasising the importance of parliament and strengthening parliamentary scrutiny to address corruption. See: *DFID's Approach to Anti-Corruption and Its Impact on the Poor*, available at: <http://icai.independent.gov.uk/reports/dfids-approach-anti-corruption-impact-poor/>

Parliaments should also be playing a pivotal role in developing and tracking government targets in health and education, monitoring budgets, ensuring value for money and tackling corruption... Parliaments could be powerful partners for donors in achieving all such objectives. Yet, for the most part, they remain misunderstood and often avoided in development programmes.⁵²

Conclusions and recommendations

15. DFID is showing global leadership in different initiatives to promote better governance and address a number of the key risks in global development. Its work ranges from lobbying for goals on accountability in the post-2015 MDG framework to developing its own sophisticated country-level anti-corruption strategies. We commend DFID for these initiatives. *We urge the Government to continue to press for “accountable, inclusive governments, including strong parliaments” in the post-2015 MDG development framework.*

16. As Lord Norton points out, donors have spent great sums on programmes supporting elections, but these have limited value if they are not followed by effective parliaments. Moreover, parliaments are at the centre of a number of DFID’s priorities, including poverty reduction and economic growth, security, accountability, transparency and anti-corruption work DFID is recognising the importance of parliaments and the political context in which development operates, but we believe DFID could do more to make the most of the opportunities offered by parliamentary strengthening. *DFID needs to consider whether it has the resources, approach, and systems to maximise the value that parliamentary strengthening offers. 2015 is the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta, and 750th anniversary of the Simon de Montfort Parliament. As the Foreign and Commonwealth Office witness highlighted, this provides an opportunity to reaffirm the value of parliaments in the contemporary world, but also to reassess the UK’s role in promoting democracy and parliaments around the world.*

17. *We recommend that DFID*

- *recognise the role of parliaments in its work on poverty reduction, human rights, equality, economic growth, security, transparency, accountability and anti-corruption;*
- *in particular, include the role of the national Parliament in each of its country-level anti-corruption strategies when it next revises them*
- *report to national Parliaments and their relevant departmental committees its sectoral spending in countries where it has bilateral programmes from 2014–15 onwards, and include its intention to do so in its partnership agreements with recipient countries.*

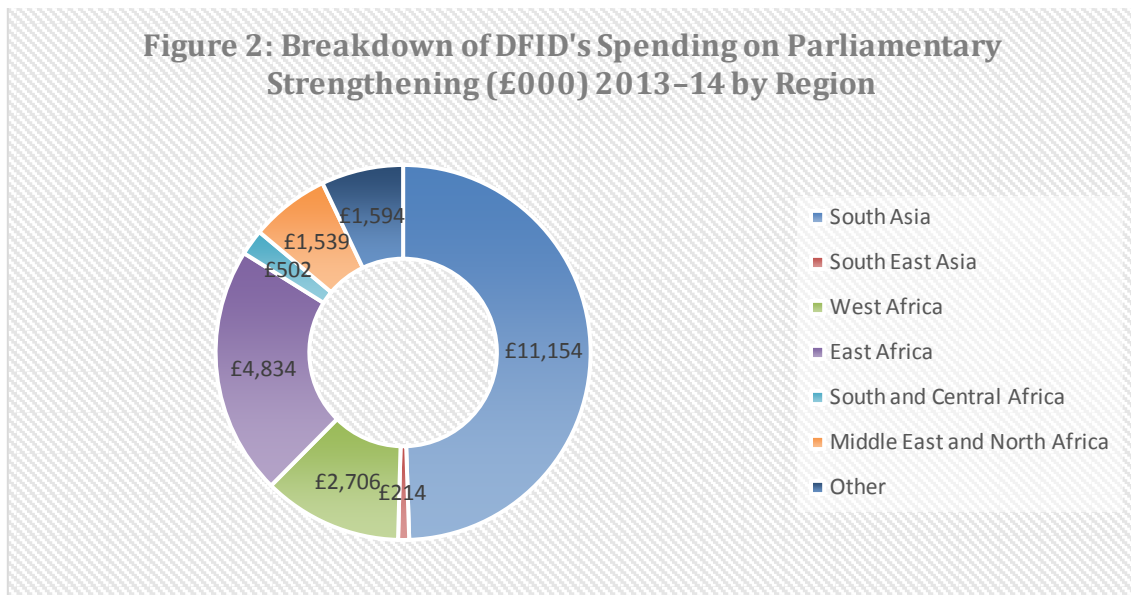
52 [Greg Power, Global Partners Governance submission](#), Conclusion

3 Expenditure

DFID Expenditure

18. Parliamentary strengthening is a small but growing proportion of DFID's overall work. DFID spent £22.5 million on parliamentary strengthening projects in 2013–14, which equates to 0.25% of DFID's total £10 billion spending.⁵³ **Figure 2** breaks down the regional balance of this spending, with the majority of spending concentrated in two areas: South Asia (£11.2 million, 49%)—the majority of which (£9.5 million) was actually spent in one country Pakistan—and East Africa (£4.8 million, 21%). Globally the overwhelming majority of spending (82%) was Fragile and Conflict Affected states (FCAs).⁵⁴ £3.1 million (14%) of this spending was via centrally managed programmes, with the remainder managed by DFID country offices.⁵⁵ DFID also provides core funding for multilaterals which undertake parliamentary strengthening programmes; while this is hard for DFID to assess precisely the UK taxpayer may be providing £3.5 million to such multilateral projects.⁵⁶ In addition, DFID provides other funds, like the global grant to BBC Media Action (£21.4 million in 2013–14), which are partly used for parliamentary strengthening.

Figure 2: Breakdown of Spending by Region



19. Spending on parliamentary strengthening projects is a small proportion (3%) of the £724 million DFID spends on governance and security projects⁵⁷ (see **Table 1** overleaf).

53 IDC analysis of figures provided in [DFID submission, Annex B](#).

54 [DFID submission, Annex B](#). £18.5 million was spent in FCAs with identified parliamentary strengthening programmes: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

55 See: [DFID submission](#), paragraph 9

56 DFID publishes data showing the imputed share of UK multilateral contributions that is spent on 'legislatures and political parties', drawing on data published to the OECD's Development Assistance Committee by multilateral organisations directly. The relevant imputed UK share of all multilateral reporting to OECD DAC in 2011 (latest data sent by DFID) is £2.5 million and £0.7 million

57 [DFID Annual Report and Accounts 2013–14](#), page 56

DFID's spending on parliamentary strengthening is approximately half of what it spent supporting elections (£46 million in 2013–14).⁵⁸ **Table 1** shows spending on parliamentary strengthening in the 10 programmes with the largest proportion of their spending on governance and security in 2013–14; in all countries spending on parliaments was less than 10% of total governance spending.⁵⁹ We do note that in a number of these countries UK institutions are working with parliaments (e.g. in Sierra Leone) but they are funded from non-DFID sources. According to the World Bank DFID's spending patterns are typical: historically, donors have given a higher priority to elections than parliaments.⁶⁰

Table 1: Top 10 Governance and Security Programmes in 2013–14: Significance of DFID parliamentary strengthening spending⁶¹

Programme	Country Spending 2013–14 (£m)	Amount spent on governance & security 2013–14 (£m)	Amount spent on parliamentary strengthening 2013–14 (£m)	Parliamentary strengthening as % governance & security	Parliamentary Strengthening as % country spending
Afghanistan	182.3	40.8	0	0%	0%
DRC	162.2	39.3	0.05	0.1%	0%
Mozambique	77.4	17.6	0	0%	0%
Nepal	104.7	25.5	0	0%	0%
Nigeria	266.2	71.6	1.32	1.8%	0.5%
OPT	93.9	47.7	0	0%	0%
Sierra Leone	68.6	18.0	0	0%	0%
Somalia	83.6	20.6	1.78	8.6%	2.1%
Tanzania	175.2	42.6	0.51	1.2%	0.3%
MENA regional programme	48	29.7	1.54	5.2%	3.2%

20. Witnesses called on DFID to prioritise parliamentary strengthening more in its governance work, but DFID stressed that its relatively low level of spending on parliamentary strengthening did not indicate that it saw this work as a low priority:

The volume of expenditure is not necessarily representative of the status of parliamentary strengthening work. Whether through core parliamentary programmes or as part of larger sector programmes, support to Parliaments is not typically a high cost intervention. Small volumes of funds supporting democratic

58 DFID supported elections in four countries in 2013–14: Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. DFID Annual Report and Accounts 2013–14, page 54; Table 2.3: Latest data on DFID Business Plan results indicators; DFID reports spending £39 million on elections through bilateral programmes, and £7 million through multilateral programmes in 2013–14. See: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/331591/annual-report-accounts-2013-14a.pdf

59 DFID clarified that some of these country programmes have parliamentary strengthening programmes which did not spend anything in 2013–14 (e.g. Afghanistan), that some had other programmes where it was not able to identify accurately the amount spent on parliamentary strengthening and so recorded this as zero (e.g. DRC), and some are in countries where there is no parliament to work with. See: DFID Submission, Annex B

60 The World Bank cites a 2012 study which noted that in sub-Saharan Africa in 2010 donors reported spending six times more on funding elections and 11 times more funding civil society than they did funding parliamentary strengthening. The World Bank notes that: "The legitimacy that comes from conducting election processes that reflect the will of the people needs to be reinforced by institutions that can deliver open, responsive, and accountable governance." See: [World Bank Submission](#), Section 4

61 Table 1 figures refer to 2013–14 expenditure. IDC sample of 10 governance and security programmes were selected from DFID Annual Report and Accounts (governance & security accounted for more than 20% of the country programme, and total programme spend was more than £10 million). Figures for governance and security spending and total country budgets taken from DFID 2013–14 Annual Report and Accounts. Figures on parliamentary strengthening provided in DFID submission, Annex B (DFID Project Summary)

oversight can potentially have a multiplying effect across the wider programme, which is also not captured by expenditure figures alone.⁶²

The Minister also observed that DFID spends more on elections because elections are more expensive. This does not mean that parliaments are less important.

Elections are an awful lot more expensive; that is undoubtedly the case, so that would certainly account for much of the extra spend... However, I am prejudiced; I am a Member of a Parliament. I do believe that overwhelmingly the most important thing is the Parliament. It is vitally important. A properly working Parliament informs so many other expectations within a society about what they can expect from their government.⁶³

It is undeniable that in some circumstances spending small sums of money can be very effective, as we saw on our visit to Burma.

21. DFID has few staff specialising in parliamentary strengthening: it has one full time staff member specifically responsible for its parliamentary strengthening work in London, plus a cadre of 120 general governance advisers who manage different aspects of parliamentary strengthening projects in different country offices or centrally.⁶⁴ Few are specialists in parliamentary strengthening, though some have worked in parliament.⁶⁵ The Minister highlighted that governance staff are kept up to date though acknowledged that staff obviously do not have the direct experience of being parliamentarians themselves.⁶⁶ DFID noted that: "Many Governance Advisers have significant direct experience of working on political systems and accountable governance such as support to electoral processes, parliaments and political parties in developing countries." In particular, it highlighted that all Governance Advisers are required to demonstrate their capabilities in political analysis.⁶⁷

22. DFID identifies and uses key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor and report on the performance of its most important areas of operations, including its governance work.⁶⁸ Though it has governance indicators relating to elections (where it reports the

62 [DFID Submission](#), paragraph 11

63 [Oral Evidence from Minister of State Desmond Swayne MP](#), 25 November 2014, Q86

64 [DFID submission](#), paragraph 13. 88 of this network of governance advisers are based in country offices.

65 [Oral Evidence from Shiona Ruhemann, DFID](#), 25 November 2014, Q127: "To get through the door either as a governance adviser or a social development adviser you are tested on your social and political analysis, and a lot of people work directly with political systems. The majority would have first-hand experience in overseas countries and some of us, including me, have worked in this Parliament. I was not elected, but I was an adviser to a frontbench MP, so a lot of us know a lot about the House of Commons as well. You do not even get through the door if you do not have that experience."

66 [Oral Evidence from Minister of State Desmond Swayne](#), 25 November 2014, Q125: "They are all required to have a thorough understanding of governance issues. We provide an online library of the latest evidence and learning abilities. We have just had the professional development conference, one of the sessions of which was largely based around your own findings in Burma. We are alive to the need to keep our people up to speed all the time. However, what they do not have is what we have in this room here: that direct experience of having been a Member of Parliament, being involved and that is a key element of the mix."

67 "All Governance Advisers are required to demonstrate understanding of governance evidence, policy and practice in a range of settings, including use of political and institutional analysis." [DFID submission](#), paragraph 13

68 For governance and security its KPIs relate to: 30% of its budget to be spent in Fragile and Conflict Affected States, to support elections in 13 countries, to empower 40 million people to hold their decision makers to account [which is primarily achieved through media work], and to help 10 million women have access to justice. There is one MDG

amount spent supporting elections each year), and on its support for accountability in general (the number of people it has reached and supported to hold decision makers to account)—which it then tracks through its business plan results indicators, DFID does not have any key performance indicators specifically focused on parliaments. This suggests parliamentary strengthening is less central to DFID’s governance ambitions. For instance, there is only one mention of parliament in DFID’s Operational Plan for its governance pillar.⁶⁹ Similarly, the Annual Report and Accounts has little to say about parliamentary strengthening.⁷⁰ A previous indicator committing budgetary support to accountability institutions has been discontinued.⁷¹ The GOSAC operational plan has no results referring to parliamentary strengthening.

23. DFID Governance Department does not monitor its spending on parliamentary strengthening centrally through its account codes, and was only able to identify its spending for 2013–14 by a one-off manual exercise with each country office (see chapter 5 for discussion of this exercise for commissioning). It felt this exercise was too time consuming to repeat to establish spending in 2012–13. The risk with one-off exercises is inconsistency and error since some country offices were unable to identify the amount in a project that should be apportioned to parliamentary strengthening activities, and offices identified projects differently.⁷² This gives some uncertainty to the spending figures DFID has provided us. Moreover, DFID was not able to estimate the amount of staff time devoted to parliamentary strengthening work. The Minister acknowledged that this is a problem:

I had spotted the difficulty that you clearly have about how you know exactly what you have spent, because the only way that we could get that figure of £22.5 million, as I understand it, is by going to each of our country teams and saying, “Exactly how much have you spent?” Many of the projects do span Parliament and other aspects of governance, and it is quite difficult, certainly with accounting codes, to determine

KPI related to parliaments—on the Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments—which guides DFID’s Results Framework. However, DFID does not have any of its own KPIs on parliamentary strengthening.

- 69 The updated Operational Plan for DFID’s Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department mentions supporting the role of parliament once as potential activity for the indicator on supporting domestic accountability and citizen empowerment See: Operational Plan 2011–16 Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department (Updated December 2014) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389494/GOSAC_Operational_Plan.pdf p.10
- 70 For instance, in the 2013–14 Annual Report and Accounts, strengthening parliaments is noted only in two country programme discussions (Burma and Kyrgyz Republic), neither of which actually had any spending on them in 2013–14.
- 71 DFID did make a commitment in 2011–12 that 5% of all bilateral budget support would go to supporting accountability institutions, such as parliaments. The 2011–12 DFID annual report and accounts includes as part of the DFID Structural Reform Plan mention of a commitment for 5% of budgetary support to go to accountability institutions. “The last year has seen an enhanced focus on accountability and empowering people to hold their governments to account on how money is spent. This included new guidance to ensure that up to 5% of all budget support goes to accountability institutions.” https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67353/Annual-report-accounts-2011-12.pdf; p 33. The Commitment from the 2011–12 Strategic Reform Plan was subsequently revised to an Additional Departmental Action, and is no longer required to be reported to the Cabinet Office. DFID informs the Committee that it internally tracks this commitment, and for November 2014 it spent 11.2% of budget support on accountability institutions. It is unable to analyse how much of this relates to parliamentary strengthening. See: Additional DFID evidence following 25 November hearing.
- 72 It also risks inconsistency in how country offices classify projects. For instance, the Aawaz Programme was treated by Pakistan country office as a parliamentary strengthening project, whereas the State Accountability and Voice Initiative project was not by the Nigeria country office, despite both primarily working to empower local citizens to engage with regional authorities and assemblies

precisely how much has been spent on any particular element. I appreciate that is a problem, but it is one that we have to wrestle with.⁷³

24. In practical terms, this limited understanding means that DFID is unable to assess how its spending on parliamentary strengthening has changed over time, or how it is sustaining work over the long term. It also means DFID does not have the information needed to check how its balance of spending compares to its intended priorities (whether regionally, e.g. whether 40% of its spending should be in Pakistan; or compared to other areas of governance e.g. parliamentary strengthening vs. elections; or by type of state, e.g. spending on FCAs vs. developing middle income countries).

Other UK Spending

25. DFID is not the only part of HM Government that funds parliamentary strengthening. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office spent just over £7 million in 2013–14, including its contribution to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, which is less than one third of the sum spent by DFID.⁷⁴ Like DFID, the FCO struggles to identify exactly how much it spends on parliamentary strengthening, needing to identify projects manually and unable to identify the staff resources devoted to parliamentary strengthening.⁷⁵

26. Of other UK bodies, WFD has a budget of approximately £6 million, largely funded by the FCO and DFID.⁷⁶ Parliament spends approximately £3–4 million⁷⁷, divided between the budgets of the Overseas Offices of the House of Commons and House of Lords, UK branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Overseas Office of the House of Commons notes that it is also hard for Parliament to meaningfully estimate the staff resources devoted by Parliament to parliamentary strengthening.⁷⁸ There is also spending on parliamentary strengthening by other parliaments in the UK, for example the Scottish Parliament. The National Audit Office spends approximately £1.5 million on parliamentary strengthening the majority of which it recovers from funders.⁷⁹ The British Council also does parliamentary strengthening work as part of its development programme.⁸⁰

73 [Oral Evidence from Minister of State Desmond Swayne MP](#), 25 November 2014, Q87

74 According to its submission, the FCO provided almost £4 million in parliamentary strengthening grants in 2013–14. In addition it provided £3.5 million grant in aid to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. FCO Submission (unpublished), plus WFD 2013–14 Annual Report and Accounts. See: <http://www.wfd.org/upload/docs/WFD%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Accounts%202013-14%20.pdf>

75 FCO Submission (unpublished)

76 See: <http://www.wfd.org/upload/docs/WFD%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Accounts%202013-14%20.pdf>

77 The 2013–14 House of Commons Administration Accounts and House of Lords Resource Accounts record grants of £1.2 million and £0.5 million to CPA UK, £0.8 million and £0.3 million to BG-IPU. The House of Commons Overseas Office has a budget of £3.7 million, though this includes its grants to CPA UK and BGIPU, and its parliamentary diplomacy work as well as its parliamentary strengthening work. See accounts of House of Commons: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/Admin-accounts-2013.pdf> (Note 7); House of Lords <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/lldresource/24/24.pdf> (Note 1.12)

78 [House of Commons Overseas Office submission, paragraph 16](#): “Overall, because it is largely officials’ time that is provided, it is not possible meaningfully to estimate the resources which have been devoted by the House Service to parliamentary strengthening.”

79 See: <http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/NAO-annual-report-2013-141.pdf> Note 6, page 90

80 Parliamentary Strengthening forms part of the British Council’s Building Capacity for Social Change pillar of work.

27. While DFID spends significantly more on parliamentary strengthening than all other UK bodies combined, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is the lead Government department for parliamentary strengthening and promoting democracy. It is also the parent department for the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. Lead responsibility for promoting democracy in HMG sits within the FCO's Human Rights and Democracy Department. The FCO produces an annual report about its work promoting human rights and democracy, which includes a discussion of its work on parliamentary strengthening, including that funded by DFID, though focuses on the FCO's work.⁸¹

Parliamentary Strengthening Worldwide

28. It is impossible to get an accurate figure, but based on information from the UNDP and others we estimate that globally approximately £250 million is spent annually on parliamentary strengthening by taxpayers around the world.⁸² The UK's share of this (including its contribution to multilaterals work) is very approximately 15%. DFID is thus a significant player in global parliamentary strengthening work, but it is not the largest.

29. The largest providers are multilaterals such as UNDP (£80 million)⁸³ and the World Bank. Charles Chauvel told us that the UNDP is, by a significant margin, the world's largest implementer of parliamentary strengthening programming, and that its programming has grown significantly over the past two decades to match the demands for the global spread of democracy.⁸⁴ The European Commission informed us that it spent on average £8 million a year, though this is not all its spending.⁸⁵ DFID is a significant contributor to all three of these multilateral institutions, and ought to be able to significantly influence their work. There are a number of other key national agencies, particularly the US institutions, such as the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, the French Assemblée Nationale, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, and German political foundations (Stiftungen). A number of submissions argued that DFID should consider its role in parliamentary strengthening in the context of this global effort.

81 <http://www.hrdreport.fco.gov.uk>

82 This estimate aims to give a sense of the scale of parliamentary strengthening worldwide. It is necessarily a rough estimate as few agencies directly report their spending specifically on parliamentary strengthening, and vary in how they define what constitutes parliamentary strengthening. The estimate is based on the UK and non-UK spending figures we received from UK providers, the UNDP and the EC, plus the public accounts available for bodies whose activities we have entirely classed as parliamentary strengthening (e.g. the Netherlands Institute for Multi-party Democracy (£8 million), and estimates for bodies who promote democracy where only a proportion of their activities are parliamentary strengthening (such as the German political foundations (approximately £300 million combined, or the US National Endowment for Democracy budget allocation [\$104 million in 2014], plus estimates for smaller provider. We have tested the reasonableness of this figure with a number of witnesses. However, it remains an estimate.

83 [Charles Chauvel submission](#): UNDP spent over \$127 million in 2012 on parliamentary strengthening projects, in 68 countries.

84 [Charles Chauvel, UNDP Submission](#), Introduction

85 [European Commission Submission](#), paragraph 5.1 notes that: "EC funding specifically earmarked for PSPs [parliamentary strengthening programmes] has been a total of approximately EUR 135 between 2000 and 2014." This does not include all the governance programmes where parliamentary strengthening is part of a wider democratic governance intervention.

Conclusions and recommendations

30. We welcome DFID's increased commitment to parliamentary strengthening. We agree with DFID that its relatively low levels of spending on parliamentary strengthening do not necessarily mean it is a low priority; we are aware that inexpensive projects can be very effective. However, the fact that DFID does not have any governance performance indicators specifically focused on Parliament and that its Annual Report does not refer to parliamentary strengthening suggest this area of work is not a priority. *We recommend that DFID:*

- *develop a Key Performance Indicator for parliamentary strengthening in its governance pillar for its Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Operational Plan, as it has for elections and for accountability institutions more generally, that reflects its ambitions for parliamentary strengthening, particularly for its work with parliamentary committees.*
- *conduct an annual analysis of its global spending on parliamentary strengthening and other areas governance and its performance to ensure its spending and programmes reflect its priorities.*
- *include an analysis of its parliamentary strengthening work in its Annual Report*
- *ensure that the resources devoted to parliamentary strengthening compared to elections and other areas of governance reflect its assessment of their respective importance.*

31. *We recommend that DFID develop a better understanding of the total resources it is using in its parliamentary strengthening and other governance work, including staff time, and that it assess the viability of improving its systems to allow this, rather than relying on time-consuming manual exercises with country offices. While it requires a better understanding of the resources it devotes to parliamentary strengthening it is clear that DFID is one the largest spenders in this area in the world. We recommend that DFID have more than one specialist working full-time on parliamentary strengthening and that DFID ensure that all its governance advisers improve their knowledge of parliaments and improve their links with the UK Parliament and other Westminster-based institutions.*

4 DFID's parliamentary strengthening programmes

Number and types of DFID's programmes

32. DFID makes a significant contribution to parliamentary strengthening. DFID's reports that it has, has had, or will have parliamentary strengthening projects in 37 countries, 75% of DFID offices (21 out of 28) have funded work in this area since 2012, and over £90 million is committed for future years. In 2013–14, 11 of DFID's 28 country offices funded some parliamentary work.

33. On the other hand, as this shows, the majority of country offices were not funding parliamentary work in 2013-14. Even the new draft How to Note for staff guidance on working with parliaments merely suggests parliamentary strengthening should be considered as an option by Country programmes. In part, this is because failure is common. Francois Duluc from the Assemblée Nationale told us "It is always a huge task and sometimes it is very frustrating."⁸⁶ But this is not a reason not to engage.⁸⁷

34. DFID funds a variety of types of parliamentary strengthening work. DFID informed us that this includes:⁸⁸

- Democratic governance programmes that support parliaments directly, usually working with one or more parliamentary bodies or groups to address capacity challenges such as parliamentary process and management
- Public Financial Management projects which work with Public Accounts Committees (PACs) to strengthen parliament's oversight of the budget
- Sectoral projects on, for example, health or education that include work with parliaments—e.g, security or health sector reform with relevant parliamentary committees
- Citizen empowerment and public accountability projects, which include components designed to incentivise parliaments to improve their effectiveness—for example work with advocacy groups, which pressure relevant parliamentary caucuses to deliver
- Increasing women's political participation and women's role in parliament

35. The types of programmes inevitably vary from country to country. In most countries where DFID has supported elections it also has a parliamentary strengthening programme.

86 [Oral Evidence from Francois Duluc, 18 November 2014](#); Q38

87 "That is not a reason for not doing them in the first place, because if the situation changes slightly in a month or six months, they will work. You can try and fail and try and fail and try and fail, and then the fourth time you try it will work because something has changed within the political context to make it work." [Oral evidence from Greg Power, Global Partners Governance](#), 18 November, Q9

88 [DFID Submission](#), paragraph 9; This range of work is consistent with that of other international agencies, such as UNDP. See [Submission from Charles Chauvel, UNDP](#), Introduction

DFID has parliamentary strengthening projects in 9 out of 11 of the countries in which it has supported elections since 2011–12.⁸⁹

36. DFID does a considerable amount of work on increasing women’s participation in parliaments, and highlights this as a continued focus for its post-2015 agenda.⁹⁰ A number of witnesses highlighted the importance of this work.⁹¹ The Committee has met with the Women’s Caucus in the Tanzanian Parliament, and been very impressed by them.

37. Work on Committees, described as sectoral projects above, is not a standard part of DFID parliamentary programmes, though there are occasional examples—such as DFID’s work with the Health Committee in South Africa where committee work in a particular sector has been very effective.⁹² Currently only half of DFID’s 10 largest specific parliamentary strengthening projects in 2013–14 (see chapter 5) include a component specifically focused on strengthening parliamentary committees.⁹³

38. Witnesses agreed that parliamentary committees can be used to increase accountability where DFID has major programmes (for example on health or education).⁹⁴ Similarly, the draft How To Note acknowledges that it can be particularly effective to take an issue-based approach, and engage particular parliamentary committees through sectoral programmes.⁹⁵ Moreover, focusing on strengthening parliament on an issue of particular concern, like health or education provision, or corruption, can help make the importance of parliament tangible in the public’s mind. The Minister agreed that a parliamentary strengthening component as part of all of DFID’s key programmes, such as working with the education committee for an education programme, would be “a very good idea”.⁹⁶

Key Characteristics of good Parliamentary Strengthening

39. A key theme of the submissions to the inquiry is that Parliaments are hard to deal with. They are difficult for development organisations, which may partly explain why Parliamentary strengthening has remained a relatively small part of DFID’s work to promote democracy. Working with Parliaments is inevitably politically sensitive.⁹⁷ No one is in charge, and their makeup is often complex and shifting.⁹⁸ Parliaments do not actually

89 The exceptions are Yemen and Mozambique, though Mozambique has a small WFD programme which receives a small amount of DFID funding. Elections support was provided in: DRC, Nigeria, Yemen, Zambia (2011–12); Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone (2012–13); Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Zimbabwe (2013–14)

90 [DFID Submission](#), paragraph 3

91 [Womankind Worldwide submission](#), paragraphs 4-11; [Hansard Society and SOAS submission](#), paragraph 4.10-4.12

92 [DFID Submission](#), paragraph 9(c); See also: Oral Evidence from [Shiona Ruhemann, DFID](#), 25 November 2014, Q93: “There is a programme in South Africa that was working with a health committee, a high-performing programme, and it is a good example of the difficulty of disaggregating parliamentary work, because often a sectoral programme will link up with a sectoral committee, and then it is hard for us to check it.”

93 See: Chapter 4 for list of 10 projects. Projects in Bangladesh, Kenya and Nigeria work with Select Committees, with work likely in the Afghanistan and Burma projects. The inclusion of a Select Committee focus in Nigeria followed an explicit recommendation of the Annual Review of the Deepening Democracy in Nigeria programme.

94 [Oral evidence from Charles Chauvel, UNDP, 18 November 2014](#), Q3 [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O’Neil, ODI submission](#), paragraph 24

95 How to Note, page 12

96 [Minister’s oral evidence, 25 November 2014](#), Q93

97 [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O’Neil, ODI submission](#), paragraph 9

98 [Oral evidence from Greg Power, Global Partners Governance, 18 November 2014](#), Q4 “Unlike any other organisation or institution, there is no one person in charge of a parliament. The speaker will control certain elements of

implement anything.⁹⁹ If anything, they are more likely to get in the way of grand new initiatives. We were informed:

Parliamentary development is different because parliaments are unique institutions. Parliaments are political bodies, complex institutions whose rules and procedures have been designed to help manage the competing priorities of society and ensure that laws are made in the public interest. Appropriate and effective parliamentary development must be tailored to take account of this but also the specificity of each country and legislature. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Parliamentary development involves sharing different models and helping parliaments to make their own choices, bearing in mind the relevant historical, cultural and political context.¹⁰⁰

40. Many submissions reflected on the key characteristics of good parliamentary strengthening programmes. Those set out by the World Bank are shown in **Figure 2**. The IPU has formulated these common understandings as Common Principles for Support to Parliaments to guide practitioners. (see **Figure 3**). Alistair Burt MP, the Chair of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (BGIPU) told us that the Common Principles are:

Trying to find a series of norms around which we can all agree about how parliaments might be supported and strengthened. The principles that the IPU have come up with draw on more than 40 years of experience in the area of parliamentary development. Devised by a group of parliaments and parliamentary strengthening organisations and co-ordinated by the IPU, they will offer clear guidelines that will be of interest to anyone involved in receiving or providing support to parliaments.¹⁰¹

41. Below we look at number of the characteristics which witnesses particularly emphasised although in a slightly different grouping from those listed in the boxes. DFID, as its submission and Draft How to Note indicate, supports all these characteristics in principle.

parliamentary procedure; the leader of the dominant party will have a certain role; but there is never any one person in charge. Parliaments are complex and they represent shifting coalitions of interests, so therefore they are more difficult to deal with than the executive."

99 [Oral evidence from Greg Power, Global Partners Governance, 18 November 2014](#), Q4

100 [Submission from Dick Toornstra, OPPD, European Parliament](#), paragraph 7

101 [Oral evidence from Alistair Burt MP, 18 November 2014](#), Q26

Figure 2: Key Characteristics of Stronger Parliamentary Strengthening

The World Bank undertook a stocktaking exercise of its parliamentary support activities in 2009 and in 2014. Its findings support many of the lessons also identified by other submissions.¹⁰² These include:

- Parliamentary strengthening is a long-term process
- Parliamentary strengthening projects should be anchored in national and regional political economy analyses, to ensure that interventions are context-specific
- Parliamentary reform efforts need to recognize the fact that parliaments consist of multiple intersecting institutions and this should be reflected in project design
- Parliamentary strengthening should be part of wider governance reforms (i.e. systems based approach)
- Sequencing is important and parliamentary strengthening should be undertaken in parallel to other governance system reforms, rather than as part of subsequent waves of governance reforms
- Parliamentary strengthening programs should be demand-driven and the design and delivery should be strictly non-partisan
- Due to the high turnover of Members of Parliament, staff act as the corporate memory of the institution; therefore, it is critical for sustainability of parliamentary reform efforts that parliamentary staff are included as an explicit stakeholder
- South-south exchange of knowledge and experience is more important than similar north-south exchanges; and
- Better donor co-ordination and collaboration is needed.

¹⁰² [World Bank Submission](#), Section 6. These are resonant with the lessons identified by Global Partners Governance from its work, and identified in the How To Note.

Figure 3: Common Principles for Support to Parliaments

The British Group of the IPU highlighted¹⁰³ the IPU's new suite of 'Common Principles for Support to Parliaments' adopted by the IPU Governing Council at its 195th session in Geneva, 16 October 2014. The Common Principles note that support available to parliaments has grown significantly in recent years. As a result, there is now extensive experience in this field shared between a range of organisations and individuals partnering with parliaments.

The Common Principles comprise of one over-arching General Principle and nine further focussed Principles, to assist those engaged in the front line of parliamentary support to work together with improved effectiveness, and enable partners and parliaments to work towards a shared fundamental approach.

General Principle of Support to Parliaments

Effective parliaments are essential to democracy, the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, and economic and social development. Parliaments require access to excellent technical support in order to contribute fully in these areas.

- PRINCIPLE 1:** Parliamentary support partners are guided by the needs of parliament.
- PRINCIPLE 2:** Parliamentary support partners are attentive to the multiple, overlapping social, economic and political contexts in which parliaments operate.
- PRINCIPLE 3:** Parliamentary support aims for sustainable outcomes.
- PRINCIPLE 4:** Parliamentary support is inclusive of all political tendencies.
- PRINCIPLE 5:** Parliamentary support is grounded in emerging international democratic parliamentary standards.
- PRINCIPLE 6:** Parliamentary support addresses the needs and potential of women and men equally in the structure, operation, methods and work of parliament.
- PRINCIPLE 7:** Parliamentary support utilizes locally and regionally available expertise.
- PRINCIPLE 8:** Parliamentary support partners and parliaments commit to excellent co-ordination and communication.
- PRINCIPLE 9:** Parliamentary support partners act ethically and responsibly.

The importance of the long term

42. Effective parliamentary strengthening is a long-term process, and needs very long term horizons. DFID governance advisers told us that in their view effective parliamentary

¹⁰³ [British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Submission](http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/195/common.pdf). Common Principles can be found here: <http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/195/common.pdf>

strengthening requires promoting change over a 20-year horizon, rather than being achievable in standard 3-year projects, or short-term visits. Other witnesses agreed,¹⁰⁴ noting the challenge in building long term culture change in a way that could accommodate the high turnover of MPs in many developing countries.¹⁰⁵ Parliamentary strengthening needs to take the long view—particularly in post-conflict and fragile states—because progress is hard:

In terms of the timescale, there is an assumption that this can happen quickly—that you can set up a party system or a parliamentary system within the space of one electoral cycle. That is not going to work. It is going to take several electoral cycles for the party system to bed down, especially when you have transitioned from an authoritarian regime with very little history of parliamentary culture... This work is highly contingent, as is all politics. It requires a degree of trying and failing.¹⁰⁶

43. Patience is important: parliamentary strengthening needs to be alive to the rhythms and limitations of the electoral cycle;¹⁰⁷ and parliamentary strengthening needs to be iterative, and mindful that grand, high profile projects can actually be counter-productive. Stronger parliaments are better built slowly over time, rather than through intensive campaigns.¹⁰⁸

Flexibility: responding to opportunities

44. As part of a long term approach, parliamentary strengthening programmes also need to be flexible to respond to opportunities and equally setbacks provided by political circumstances. While the need is to think big and see the long term picture, and the temptation is to break the long term vision down into a series of technical milestones, the task for international assistance is often to act small and flexibly¹⁰⁹ and to be agile in responding to a changing context and priorities, and the opportunities that emerge. Global Partners Governance stress:

Programmes need to be flexible enough to respond to such events, and responsive to the parliamentary needs that emerge over the project cycle, while maintaining their overarching objectives of strengthening the parliament.¹¹⁰

45. It is important that this flexibility is within a long-term strategic approach to avoid programmes becoming too reactive, which for instance was one of the criticisms initially

104 Adam Smith International noted that where there is a need to build institutions from scratch or to reinforce fragile ones, this engagement has to be planned and implemented with a view to the long term, in terms of 10–15 year horizon rather than 1–3 year programme cycles. [Adam Smith International Submission](#), paragraph 4.2

105 [Adam Smith International](#), paragraph 3.5

106 [Oral evidence from Greg Power, Global Partners Governance](#), 18 November, Q9

107 [DFID Submission](#), paragraph 15

108 For instance, see DFID's State Accountability and Voice Initiative in Nigeria. See: think piece on SAVI-Nigeria project. http://savi-nigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Thinking-and-Acting-Politically_FINAL.pdf

109 [Greg Power submission](#): Section 3

110 [Greg Power submission](#): "Parliamentary assistance has long been regarded one of the weakest parts of international governance work... Many programmes do not achieve much progress or tangible signs of improvement, let alone any lasting effect on the institution. Seeing little change, donor agencies often come to regard parliaments as hopeless causes, symptomatic of wider political problems, and instead look to work directly with the Executive and civil society in the hope of more immediate progress."

levelled at the operations of the Deepening Democracy Project in Nigeria. It is also important that this flexibility is focused on the risks of political engagement. Programmes should expect progress to vary, and be ready for both opportunities and reversals. Some failure is inevitable and it is critical to be able to quickly adapt.¹¹¹

Parliamentary development is not an orderly or linear process as changing political context, circumstances or public expectations will impact pace and progress.¹¹²

The importance of the local

46. A number of witnesses stressed that effective parliamentary strengthening needs to start with the local¹¹³—to “work with the grain” of local ways of doing things and to build on the particular political system that has evolved within that setting, and to avoid imposing models from other contexts. Donors often don’t recognise what is there already, and can have a tendency to treat countries’ parliamentary systems as effectively *terra nullius* for remapping. While parliamentary strengthening projects need to start by engaging the political forces necessary to secure a will to reform, this is often one of their critical weaknesses. This includes working with existing local institutions, since often projects set up parallel organisations rather than working through existing national institutions.¹¹⁴ It also includes supporting parliaments’ own self-assessment of its needs. Reform efforts are best built on a parliament’s own reform plans, as Dick Toornstra of the European Parliament’s OPPD told us:

Parliamentary development needs to be considered as a partnership where parliaments must be able to determine their own priorities. Democratically elected parliaments are sovereign bodies and must be treated as such.¹¹⁵

47. DFID has improved in this area. While not all of its major parliamentary strengthening projects are based on the parliaments’ own self-assessments of their needs, DFID’s newest two major parliamentary strengthening programmes—in Burma and Afghanistan—are, and we were impressed by the Burma programme which we saw on our visit in 2013.

Wide engagement across the political system, including the media and civil society.

48. Local ownership also includes support for organisations which create pressure for positive reform and demand for democracy.¹¹⁶ The functioning of parliaments is determined by the political environment in which they operate. Relationships between parliaments and the president or prime minister, government ministries, civil society groups and media can be as important for effectiveness of parliaments as the formal

111 [WFD Submission](#), paragraph 9

112 [Dick Toornstra submission, OPPD, European Parliament](#), paragraph 8

113 [Womankind Worldwide submission](#), paragraphs 4-11; [British Council submission](#), paragraph 3.3.3, [Konrad Adenauer submission](#); [DAI submission](#), paragraph 10

114 For instance, this was identified as a key failing in DFID’s DRC project. See: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-113659/>

115 [Dick Toornstra, OPPD, European Parliament Submission](#), paragraph 8

116 How To Note, page 13

capacity and resources of the parliament itself. Rachel Kleinfeld of the Carnegie Endowment argued:¹¹⁷

Donors should look for areas of interest where elements of society itself, or portions of parliament, are already organized and active. Highest priority should go to programs where there is both citizen demand and receptivity from some portion of parliament.... Where elements of the broader public are speaking on behalf of an issue, but there is a lack of parliamentary interest, it may be a good choice for allocating funds to both civil society and to parliament, in order to enable and encourage responsiveness to citizen demands. Funding to both sides is essential to ensure oversight from citizens, as well as enable parliament to act.

49. DFID agrees:¹¹⁸ piecemeal engagement with parliament is likely to struggle;¹¹⁹ parliamentary strengthening needs to recognize the fact that strong parliaments consist of and interact with many institutions¹²⁰ and should be undertaken in parallel to other governance system reforms, rather than as part of subsequent waves of governance reforms.¹²¹ This means that interventions should provide support not only to Parliaments but also to other institutions for holding the executive to account such as audit institutions, ombudsmen, anti-corruption commissions, the judiciary, a free press, active civil society and democratically accountable local institutions.¹²² Parliamentary reform efforts DFID's notes that it aims to work with political and civil society groups to make the existing political system more open and inclusive.¹²³

50. The Committee has received a number of calls for more engagement with parliaments through the media in particular.¹²⁴ BBC Media Action identified the importance of the media to connect democracy—and its many institutions—with the public, including those who may not see parliamentary politics as central to their concerns: “Work with media and communication... enable[s] people from all sections of society to better hold those in power to account. We work to ensure that people have a greater understanding of, and ability to uphold, their fundamental rights and freedoms.”¹²⁵ This engagement includes next generation approaches, such as encouraging digital democracy and use of parliaments' open data.¹²⁶

51. On our visit to the Parliament in Dodoma in Tanzania, we had discussions with parliamentarians about the Tanzanian Parliament's resolution seeking the resignation of ministers over a corruption scandal. The scandal clearly had the nation gripped and it

117 [Submission from Dr Rachel Kleinfeld](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, paragraphs 12–14

118 [DFID Submission](#), paragraph 7

119 [Adam Smith International](#), paragraph 4.10

120 [World Bank Submission](#), Section 5

121 [World Bank Submission](#), Section 5

122 [Adam Smith International](#), paragraph 4.1

123 [DFID Submission](#), paragraphs 6, 14

124 See submissions by: [Lord Norton](#), [Carnegie Endowment](#), [Hansard Society](#) and [SOAS Submission](#)

125 Submission from [BBC Media Action](#)

126 Submission from [Speaker's Commission on Digital Democracy](#). See also: [Dr Rachel Kleinfeld](#), *Advancing the Rule of Law Abroad: Next Generation Reform*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012

seemed to us that the media played a key role both in keeping the public informed and in encouraging MPs to hold Ministers to account.

52. Witnesses note that MPs in developing countries are often faced by very different demands from those in European countries.¹²⁷ For example, on our visits we hear that they are expected to help constituents financially with a variety of matters ranging from education to burials. The media has an important role to play in educating the public in reporting parliament and what might be reasonably expected of an MP. As BBC Media Action highlighted: “Strengthening parliaments’ communication with society is a vital element of parliamentary strengthening”¹²⁸ – both for parliament’s effectiveness and for society’s ability to understand and influence it. The Hansard Society and SOAS stated:

Facilitating more structured and transparent debate between parliament, government and civil society is strongly recommended by academics and civil society. They emphasis the key role played by the media. DFID should learn from its past experiences and consolidate good practices in the creation of public spaces in which political discussions can take place... There is particular scope for encouraging greater reporting on the work of MPs in their constituencies, to improve scrutiny of elected representatives and enhance public awareness and understanding of their role.¹²⁹

53. While accepting that work with the media and others was important, it was argued that it was potentially perverse for parliamentary strengthening projects to be done only as part of large programmes working across the whole political system:

There is an undoubted logic to placing parliamentary strengthening within a wider strategy of support to civil society and the media, but to suggest that it can only have an effect when combined with other measures is, quite simply, wrong.... Donor programmes designed to support multiple aspects of democracy have proved difficult to manage, and their track record is as poor, and arguably worse, than that of traditional parliamentary assistance... It would be absurd to suggest that support to civil society or the media should only ever be contemplated alongside parliamentary assistance. It would be equally damaging if parliamentary assistance was only ever undertaken as part of much bigger programme, and entirely counter-productive to believe this is the only way to operate.¹³⁰

Chapter 5 reviews DFID’s preference for commissioning parliamentary strengthening projects as a smaller part of wide programmes working across the political system.

127 Submission from [Dr Rachel Kleinfeld](#), Carnegie Endowment, paragraph 5: “For instance, in much of West Africa, the neo-patrimonial system is one in which “big men” are expected to assist their constituents by providing them with direct resources. Voters go to MPs to seek money for school fees, medical bills, and other personal goods. While some direct service of constituents is normal in all representative models, the breadth and depth of the “big man” expectation in parts of West Africa abets corruption to pay for such costs and enables vote-buying. It also requires a great deal of MP time, reducing hours left for understanding national business. Finally, it neuters the strength of opposition parties who lack access to state resources and therefore cannot provide such direct monetary benefits to individual constituents.”

128 [BBC Media Action Submission](#)

129 [Hansard Society and SOAS submission](#), paragraph 4.7

130 [Greg Power, Global Partners Addendum to Written Evidence](#)

Donor co-ordination

54. Charles Chauvel highlighted the serious challenges presented by a lack of coordination in parliamentary strengthening:

A lack of coordination amongst donors and implementers threatens the quality of parliamentary strengthening work worldwide. Many developing country parliaments lack the absorptive capacity to take on all the assistance offered to them (even if it were desirable for them to try to do so). Much duplication of effort occurs. Parliaments in jurisdictions that are momentarily popular with donors receive much attention; many that sorely need assistance miss out. UNDP is working with partners including the IPU to try to provide some remedies to this situation, including modeling the convening power (as in Myanmar and Afghanistan), evolving principles for the implementation of parliamentary strengthening work, and looking to use the <http://www.agora-parl.org/resources/atlas> platform as a coordination tool for parliamentary clerks and secretaries-general. Firm DFID support for these initiatives would no doubt be very welcome.¹³¹

Other witnesses agreed. The World Bank told us: “There is some collaboration and co-ordination among these institutions, especially at the international level, with the World Bank and DFID playing lead roles, but more could be done.”¹³² The risks of duplication were also vividly highlighted by Francois Duluc of the Assemblée Nationale for work in Burma:¹³³

What is important in the area of parliamentary strengthening is to avoid duplication, because in many countries everybody is doing the same thing at the same time, which is a huge waste of money and a waste of effort. You mentioned Burma. I met two years ago the clerk of the Burmese Parliament, who told me, “We have now 40 different organisations that want to support us. We are candy of the week, but it is very difficult because it takes a lot of time to answer all these questions and sometimes we have the feeling that we duplicate the same activities.” It is important that there is better co-ordination between the donors and the implementers. The role of UNDP and IPU in that field is essential.

Be practical

55. Much parliamentary strengthening is too technocratic, using standardised, technical approaches—focused on structures, rules and information—which are often based on idealised models of change.¹³⁴

In every parliament there is a gap between the power that it holds in theory, and the ability or willingness of MPs to use it in practice. Many parliaments may look structurally sound, with enough resources, sensible procedural rules and reasonable constitutional powers, but remain largely ineffective and rife with corruption. The

¹³¹ See: [Charles Chauvel, UNDP Additional Submission](#), paragraph 7

¹³² [World Bank Submission](#), Section 6

¹³³ [Oral Evidence from Francois Duluc, 18 November 2014](#); Q44

¹³⁴ [Hansard Society and SOAS submission](#), paragraph 1.3

key to addressing the problem is in first understanding why the gap exists. It may sometimes be for structural reasons, due to a lack of power, resources and capacity. But invariably, it's also to do with politics and political behaviour.¹³⁵

Parliamentary programmes need to be grounded in real parliamentary practices, rather than abstract plans and handbooks. According to Global Partners Governance, the focus should be on parliamentary practices, the approach should be “practice-based,” not from trying to teach MPs the theory of how to be MPs, but rather through ‘learning by doing.’¹³⁶ In practical terms, this means a programme focus on parliamentary behaviour, as the How to Note recommends.¹³⁷ This can be a particular imperative in Fragile and Conflict Affected states, where zero sum political behaviours can paralyse parliamentary systems that on paper are well designed.¹³⁸ The goal should be to help people in parliament do their jobs better, and particularly to help them become more effective at scrutinising, legislating and representing.¹³⁹ This requires focusing on more than just MPs—on the practices of all those who contribute to a parliamentarian’s ability to carry out their role effectively.¹⁴⁰ This is often most effectively grounded in concrete committees and themes, rather than attempting to impose a new parliamentary culture simultaneously across a whole institution.

Building relationships

56. Effective parliamentary strengthening needs to focus on building relationships. Effective parliamentary strengthening needs trust and subtle understanding of power and politics. Greg Power highlighted the importance of building these relationships over the long term:

It is the commitment over a number of years and the willingness to go back. We have been working in Iraq since 2008. We have one member of the Lords, a former Member of Parliament, an existing Member of Parliament and a former parliamentary clerk. Our Iraqi friends have seen the same faces over six years, time and again. That builds up a relationship of trust.¹⁴¹

57. Alina Rocha Menocal told us that this often requires changing the way donors work—parliamentary strengthening needs to be labour intensive, rather than an arms-length grant-making relationship:

DFID has been at the forefront of trying to engage more seriously with the politics and at the strategic level has done quite a bit of work. It is in translating this that it gets much more difficult, because it does really require fundamentally shifting the

135 [Greg Power, Global Partners Governance submission](#). Section 2

136 [Adam Smith International](#), paragraph 4.3

137 How To Note. Page 12

138 [Alina Rocha Menocal oral evidence](#) Q6: “You can have a very nice set-up formally that has perfect rules on paper and the perfect committees and all of that, but if you do not understand the power dynamics that drive the people who populate the organisation, you miss out.”

139 [Greg Power submission](#), Section 2 (ii)

140 [Adam Smith International](#), paragraphs 4.3, 4.15

141 [Oral evidence from Greg Power, Global Partners Governance](#), 18 November, Q17

way that donors work in these settings, concentrating really on brokering and facilitating spaces for engagement among people who may not otherwise come together rather than the donors seeing themselves as purveyors of funds and purveyors of technical assistance. It does require being comfortable with the more political nature of things and engaging with the incentive structures.

58. This requires DFID to understand the importance of relationships and think on its feet about when to seize an opportunity. It requires a sustained on the ground presence to foster institutions¹⁴² and a close level of management and to work with a wide array of actors including politicians and others outside a development agency's traditional comfort zone. One of the lessons from DFID's early closure of its DRC parliamentary strengthening project was that these relationships were not maintained directly and that DFID needed to maintain its own engagement with political stakeholders.¹⁴³

South to south working

59. Dick Toornstra from the European Parliament told us that South-South working can often help increase awareness of common institutional challenges and weaknesses:

Parliamentarians from the same region can engage more easily together than alone on sensitive or controversial issues. This policy will also support emerging international parliamentary assemblies linked to regional economic communities.¹⁴⁴

60. The Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees similarly highlighted the value of regional associations for mutual strengthening.

The experience of regional PAC associations demonstrates the value of mutual support as a key element of parliamentary strengthening. Such associations can be a highly cost-effective and appropriate way of improving standards of scrutiny and ensuring that all parliaments have the powers they need to hold government to account. We also believe that the very positive experience of regional PAC associations could be repeated with other types of parliamentary committees.¹⁴⁵

Importance of working with MPs and staff

61. Many submissions call for DFID to prioritise more working MP to MP, parliamentary staff to parliamentary staff.¹⁴⁶ Francois Duluc stressed the importance of working with parliamentary staff to ensure continuity in parliamentary strengthening programmes:

One lesson learnt is that it is very important to work with both the staff and the parliamentarians, because there is a turnover of parliamentarians in developing

142 Adam Smith International note that given the time involvement required, such advisers are more likely to be former members of parliament and former parliamentary officials than based on those currently serving. See: [Adam Smith International](#), paragraph 4.3

143 See: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-113659/>

144 [Submission from Dick Toornstra, OPPD, European Parliament](#), paragraph 11

145 Submission by Steering Committee of the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees, paragraphs 7.01–7.02

146 [CPA UK submission](#), paragraph 5.01

countries, especially in Africa. They change all the time. It is important to invest in the staff—in the permanence of the institutions.¹⁴⁷

62. Parliamentary strengthening works well when based on peer approaches, with peer parliamentarians able to mutually understand the political challenges and pressures of each other. Such an approach, which includes a discussion of mutual concerns, also help to prevent programmes from seeming like an external imposition.

The importance of political awareness

63. Finally and essential to all the characteristics described above is a clear understanding of political incentives and context¹⁴⁸ so that parliamentary strengthening programmes step into—so they can be tailored to its dynamics.¹⁴⁹

Parliaments are deeply political institutions, and so it is essential to move beyond idealised models of how parliaments ought to work in principle and develop a deeper understanding of how they work in actual practice.¹⁵⁰

64. In fragile contexts especially, parliaments are often driven much more by informal power relationships than by formal rules. It is essential to understand these relationships before determining what support is feasible. There is a need to understand who wins and who loses from establishing stronger, more democratic parliament, which paradoxically may not be parliamentarians themselves.¹⁵¹ There is also a need to understand the social norms and expectations citizens have of their MPs.

65. DFID supports the above approach as it agrees with the key characteristics of good parliamentary strengthening programmes. DFID is proud of its political approach to development, particularly in the way it uses political economy analysis. This type of analysis is now the starting point for any work with parliaments,¹⁵² as the draft How To Note stresses. The analysis is now a part of all the new parliamentary strengthening programmes we reviewed; failure to undertake the analysis was a key factor in the failure of specific programmes.¹⁵³ A number of witnesses¹⁵⁴ told us that DFID had been a pioneer in its new approach to political economy analysis.¹⁵⁵

147 [Oral evidence from Francois Duluc, Assemblée Nationale](#), 18 November 2014; Q38

148 [Greg Power, Global Partners Governance submission](#). Section 2

149 [Bond and UK Aid Network Submission](#), paragraph 10

150 [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O'Neil, ODI submission](#): "A number of donors, such as the US National Democratic Institute (NDI), or the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) are making greater attempts to understand and tailor programmes to the political context, and making more use of political economy analysis."

151 [Oral evidence from Greg Power, Global Partners Governance](#), 18 November, Q5; See also: [Dr Rachel Kleinfeld submission](#) paragraphs 9-11

152 DFID starts with a detailed analysis of the country's political system and identifying the most viable and effective entry points for strengthening it. It decides to undertake work with parliament based on analysis of the dynamics of the political system, including: assessment of local demand for and likely impact and effectiveness of support; the extent to which strengthening parliament will deliver specific programme objectives (e.g., on anti-corruption or Public Financial Management), or form part of a broad package of support to political accountability or constitutional reform processes; and the nature of other donors' support and where the UK can add specific value. See: [DFID Submission](#), paragraphs 6, 14

153 For instance the DRC evaluation partly attributes the failure of the project (begun in 2008) to not doing a political economy analysis at the outset. It makes a clear recommendation that one is done for all similar projects going

When it goes wrong

66. However, undertaking a political analysis is one thing, using it to implement programmes is more difficult.¹⁵⁶ Greg Power told us:

DFID needs to be given credit for pushing ahead on the political economy analysis work that it has done over the last 10 years.... There is a recognition that politics matters. There is still a massive gap between the strategic thinking that is being done about how to address politics and what happens on the ground. The realities of politics are difficult for all donor agencies to deal with, and time and again you see very good political analysis but a reversion to technical support because politics is difficult.¹⁵⁷

67. We were informed of a number of obstacles which hinder this from happening. First, while DFID is learning to engage politically, witnesses suggested that staff do not always have the incentives to do so. They have too often been rewarded for setting up the programmes and spending the money in line with the business case rather than for setting a politically sensitive programme. Given its particular importance, this issue is discussed in detail in chapter 5 on commissioning.

68. Secondly, DFID's monitoring processes may also not provide the right incentives.¹⁵⁸ The ambition for neat timebound projects planned from the outset and consistent progress reported against milestones, distorts the programme. As Charles Chauvel told us: "Donors are always having to report on very short timeframes... political parliamentary development work takes a much longer time."¹⁵⁹ The tendency can be for bureaucratic accountability "to focus on doing things right rather than the right things."¹⁶⁰ Some witnesses thought DFID was too focused on monitoring outputs, that its monitoring did not give sufficient weight to the fact that parliamentary strengthening is done in a complicated environment with frequent setbacks.¹⁶¹ Monitoring procedures had to take this into account and encourage DFID staff to take more risks as this is necessary in parliamentary strengthening work. Logframes have been particularly criticised for having perverse incentives in this area, their reporting requirements discouraging the flexibility needed for working politically.¹⁶²

forward. The business case for the Afghanistan parliamentary strengthening project (2014) makes the political economy analysis the project's first step.

154 [Womankind Worldwide submission](#), paragraph 20; [DAI submission](#), paragraph 14

155 Political Economy Analysis was first pioneered by DFID over 10 years ago in its Drivers for Change white paper. Its approach has developed since then. Initial analyses were broad overviews. Now they are more "action-oriented", more likely to focus on specific problems (and opportunities)—identifying key political risks and dynamics and identifies recommendations for programming. See: ODI's *Politically Smart* report

156 [Greg Power oral evidence](#): DFID is good at political theory, but the challenge is to translate that into practice

157 [Oral evidence from Greg Power, Global Partners Governance](#), 18 November, Q4

158 [Alina Rocha Menocal oral evidence](#) Q6

159 [Oral evidence from Charles Chauvel, UNDP, 18 November 2014](#), Q4

160 [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O'Neil, ODI](#) submission, paragraph 50

161 [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O'Neil, ODI](#) submission, paragraph 54

162 Crawford and Kearnton's review of governance assistance evaluations details critically the incentives produced by log frames for parliamentary strengthening projects. See: http://www.agora-parl.org/sites/default/files/evaluating_democracy_and_governance_assistance.pdf

69. DFID claims that it is moving in this direction. The DFID GOSAC operational plan acknowledges that methods of evaluation need to change to reflect more political approaches. “It is widely accepted that methodologies for measuring impact and results in governance work need further development. GOSAC in partnership with other organisations intends to be at the cutting edge of this field.”¹⁶³ DFID’s Head of Governance, Jonathan Hargreaves highlighted its new Smart Rules:

We are getting it wrong if we are providing incentives for ourselves that tend to short-term, activity-based results or at least that can only be a part of monitoring performance. We need certainly to be very smart about the kinds of results in terms of outcomes and what is really changing with regard to the objectives that we are setting ourselves about responsiveness and accountability. No one says that is easy... We need to find ways of building in both attention to what outcomes we are trying to achieve and also enough flexibility to be able to change and adapt as we go along, as things become difficult, as we hit difficult territory. Our new Smart Rules in DFID help us with that quite a lot. It is giving us a lot more flexibility to be able to focus on what we are trying to achieve in the end, how we manage the risk of getting there and to be able to adapt as we go along to being able to make sure that we adapt to circumstances and to events, so that we can get to the end goal but not necessarily by the most direct route. Our quite big emphasis on better delivery over the last few months is helping us to be more adaptive and flexible.¹⁶⁴

Better UK Government co-ordination of parliamentary strengthening programmes

70. A number of witnesses told us that DFID and the FCO had different approaches to parliamentary strengthening, and some that the FCO’s was better. WFD’s submission proposed the development of an agreed approach to parliamentary strengthening across Government. This might include agreement about what the UK was trying to achieve and how to monitor it and better communication between FCO (including Embassies), DFID and the National Security Secretariat as well as a discussion of priorities.¹⁶⁵ Currently DFID and FCO have different priority countries for parliamentary strengthening.¹⁶⁶ In 2013–14 DFID funded parliamentary strengthening projects in 11 of its 28 priority countries. The FCO had parliamentary strengthening projects in only 2 of its priority countries. The CEO of WFD told us

You take parliamentary strengthening just as part of the governance area, we are at a stage where it is clear that there is more that could be done, but there is no obvious centre of gravity within Government or a central point within Government that focuses a lot on this area. As an organisation, we are working with a particular part of the Foreign Office and a particular part of DFID and that is, between us, where the

163 Operational Plan 2011–116 for Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department (updated December 2014); p. 18

164 [Oral Evidence from Jonathan Hargreaves, DFID Head of GOSAC Department, 25 November 2014](#), Q124

165 [WFD Submission](#), paragraph 12 [Oral evidence from Antony Smith, WFD](#) Q80

166 Both DFID and FCO have each identified 28 priority countries. However, these are not the same countries.

expertise can be. It is worth us thinking through a little bit more whether or not we should promote some more formal co-ordination mechanism.¹⁶⁷

71. We discussed with witnesses the findings of the draft WFD Triennial Review that the Government does not have a common strategy for strengthening democracy across government, or even a list of projects, undertaken, ongoing or planned.¹⁶⁸ We discussed the suggestion to develop a “cross-government democracy promotion strategy” to coordinate government priorities and understand better what types of “democratisation support” are currently going on, by whom, and where democratisation sits in relation to other priorities.

72. A UK Strategy on Democracy Strengthening would be particularly helpful in Fragile and Conflict Affected states. 80% of current DFID parliamentary strengthening work occurs in these states. The new Conflict, Security and Stability Fund¹⁶⁹ requires coordination across a number of departments and expenditure needs to balance promoting democracy against other objectives. Jonathan Hargreaves, DFID’s Head of GOSAC acknowledged that there is a need for a cross-government discussion clarifying how HMG sees its role in this area, and its priorities, geographically and thematically.¹⁷⁰ Alistair Burt MP, Chair of BGIPU, argued that there was a need for a discussion to involve Government and Westminster organisations.¹⁷¹

73. We were also told that the Government should also focus on building up evidence about what works in parliamentary strengthening, how to monitor and measure results and how to ensure its practitioners learn about the evidence.¹⁷² DFID plays an important role both for the UK government and globally in strengthening the evidence base about development in general, but some argued that parliamentary strengthening was a neglected area of evaluation, and what results there were, were relatively poor. The World Bank reflected that it is hard to reliably measure the results of parliamentary strengthening work.¹⁷³ DFID’s standard processes are often accused of being slow and inflexible, perhaps even becoming more so, with elaborate reporting requirements that discourage flexible evaluation. The FCO is developing a common approach with DFID to monitoring impact. The Minister acknowledged the importance of the right measurement. Witnesses also stress the need for realism among Agencies about what is actually possible in the field, and realistically monitoring whether it is being achieved.¹⁷⁴

167 [Oral evidence from Antony Smith, WFD Q82](#)

168 [Oral Evidence from Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP and Andrew Tuggey](#), 18 November 2014, Q27; [Oral evidence from Antony Smith, WFD Q79-82](#)

169 See: <http://sclr.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/su-publications/stabilisation-series.html>

170 [Oral evidence from Jonathan Hargreaves, DFID Head of Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Q119](#)

171 [Oral Evidence from Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP](#), 18 November 2014, Q27

172 [WFD submission](#) paragraphs 10,12

173 [World Bank Submission](#): “Outside assistance is typically small, targeted and acts as a “trigger” to wider parliamentary reforms; cause and effect is difficult to demonstrate conclusively and can only be measured in terms of contribution to outcomes, rather than direct attribution.”

174 [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O’Neil, ODI](#) submission, paragraph 54: “There is also a need for a more honest conversation about what is possible—with aid agencies, other PD organisations, and the wider public in both countries that provide and countries that receive PDA... The focus on showing quick results from short-term projects makes aid less cost effective and efficient in the longer term... This highlights the acute need to work with aid agencies to find more appropriate ways to show results within complex areas of support such as parliaments, and to have a higher tolerance for risk and acceptance for setbacks.”

74. The flexible approach, which is seen as an important characteristic of good parliamentary programmes, requires management to learn quickly from experience.¹⁷⁵ Witnesses stated DFID needed to be more proactive in identifying what it has learned from its parliamentary strengthening projects, and applying these lessons.¹⁷⁶ DFID has not done a “think piece” on any parliamentary strengthening project, though it has done one on its SAVI democracy project in Nigeria that has been much praised in the sector.¹⁷⁷ Witnesses emphasised that there was often an inconsistency among DFID staff in learning lessons and changing practices; sometimes there was resistance to change.¹⁷⁸

75. Other witnesses argued that a good deal was known about what works; the priority was to act on it.¹⁷⁹ The DFID-FCO new How to Note of staff guidance in this area is seen as a good start. Though submissions observe that more can be done. DFID should work on sharing the evidence it has among all those professionals involved in parliamentary strengthening. It has begun to do this, for example implementing one of our earlier recommendations by holding a parliamentary strengthening session as part of its professional development conferences for DFID governance staff. Such conferences could be extended to others working in the field in the FCO and other public sector organisations.

Conclusions and recommendations

76. **In conclusion, while DFID has significant numbers of parliamentary strengthening programmes, in 2013–14 it only spent money on parliamentary strengthening in a minority of its bilateral programmes. We recommend that the DFID/FCO How to Note in its final form adopt a more positive tone and stress the desirability of including parliamentary strengthening programmes in all its priority countries except where there are very powerful arguments for not doing so. We welcome DFID’s recognition that political co-operation is an essential part of parliamentary strengthening; it must not shy away from working with political parties.**

77. **DFID has few Committee strengthening programmes and we welcome the Minister’s support for work in this area. We recommend that DFID include a parliamentary dimension in all major development programmes (e.g. support for the health committee in a health programme) for any programme above a certain threshold (e.g. £10 million). It should be one of DFID’s key goals to help to create effective parliamentary scrutiny of the Executive, especially in the policy areas in which UK aid is spent; this could strengthen the in-country checks on how effectively British taxpayers money contributes to the achievement of the country’s development plans.**

175 [Alina Rocha Menocal oral evidence](#). Q7 See also: Alina Rocha Menocal, Getting Real About Politics: <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8887.pdf>

176 [Oral evidence, Alina Rocha Menocal](#) Q7

177 See: http://savi-nigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Thinking-and-Acting-Politically_FINAL.pdf

178 [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O’Neil, ODI](#) submission, paragraphs 36-38

179 [Dr Rachel Kleinfeld submission](#) paragraph 19

78. There is increasing recognition by practitioners and donors, including DFID, of the characteristics of best practice in parliamentary strengthening programmes. We particularly commend:

- long term programmes with the ability to respond quickly and flexibly when opportunities arise.
- combining parliamentary strengthening with associated relevant work, particularly with the media;
- however, combined work it is not necessary part of parliamentary programmes and such work should not be a substitute for them; it can also be appropriate to do strengthening projects working just with parliaments.
- political awareness in the design and execution of programmes- it cannot be a simple technocratic exercise.
- recognition that multi-party politics gives voters greater choice and therefore greater leverage over their MPs and governments. This, of course, makes inter-party rivalry a common and welcome feature of a healthy parliament. *DFID's parliamentary strengthening work should not shy away from working with political parties.*

79. We welcome DFID's policy shift towards a more political approach to development, and the fact that it is making work with parliaments a higher priority, but we note that there is some concern that while DFID is proud of the political economy analysis it undertakes, its monitoring, results and logframe processes prevent it from making full use of the analysis in the way it implements programmes. We welcome DFID's recognition of this and recognition that it needs to make changes in the way it evaluates programmes. *We recommend that DFID ensure it has the right processes and incentives for staff to implement programmes with the characteristics described in the chapter. We recommend that DFID and the FCO develop a long term and realistic approach to evaluating parliamentary strengthening programmes. We recommend that DFID and the FCO jointly undertake a study of what they have funded and what has worked.*

80. While there can be excellent co-ordination between the FCO, DFID and others locally, as we saw in Burma, this is not always the case centrally. We welcome the Minister's recognition of the need for discussions between the FCO, DFID and others, clarifying how HMG sees its role in parliamentary strengthening and its priorities, geographically and thematically, *but we recommend that the Government go further establishing a strategy for promoting democracy and parliaments to help coordinate the wide variety of UK bodies and set priorities for those working on parliamentary strengthening. We endorse Alistair Burt's proposal that there should be more discussions between Government and practitioners about these issues.*

5 Commissioning

Bilateral Commissioning

81. DFID’s staff do not implement parliamentary strengthening projects, but commission others to implement them. While DFID works with a variety of implementing partners,¹⁸⁰ its preference is to commission large-scale multi-year projects from organisations with the capacity “to manage multiple inputs and stakeholders, and with an established track record of delivery.”¹⁸¹ DFID tends to commission multi-stranded projects working simultaneously on different aspects of the political system. They are typically large projects—the average budget for the 37 projects that DFID identified as including parliamentary strengthening work is £14.1 million—though the size of the parliamentary strengthening component can vary. **Table 2** shows for DFID’s 10 largest parliamentary projects that they are often only part of a much larger programme working across the political system. The reason for this large size, as the Minister noted, is that DFID is under pressure to manage large budgets with few staff—so their time is precious.¹⁸² However, designing programmes at this scale has implications for smaller suppliers, as discussed below.

180 DFID notes that it works with a variety of implementing partners to strengthen parliaments, and that choices about partners are context-driven, rather than centrally determined. DFID works with: *Other donors*: such as co-financing work in Ghana with Danida, or the EU and USAID and in Kenya and Nigeria. *Other political party foundations*: especially European political foundations, such as the National Democratic Institute, the German political party organisations (Stiftungen) and Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy. *International consulting firms*: such as the State University of New York’s Centre for International Development (SUNY/CID) and Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI). See: [DFID Submission](#), paragraphs 14, 18

181 [Additional DFID evidence Annex A](#)—Parliamentary Strengthening Inquiry

182 [Oral Evidence, Minister of State Desmond Swayne MP, 25 November 2014](#), Q102

Table 2: DFID's 10 largest parliamentary strengthening projects¹⁸³

Programme	Dates	Implementing partner	Total DFID Programme Budget	DFID allocation to parliamentary strengthening	2013–14 Spending on Parliamentary Strengthening
Support to Afghanistan's Political Institutions (Afghanistan*)	2014–19	UNDP	£7.5m	£5.0m	£0
Strengthening Political Participation in Bangladesh (Bangladesh)	2009–15	The Asia Foundation, State University of New York	£26.2m	£4.9m	£1.4m
Programme for Democratic Change (Burma)	2014–19	International Foundation for Electoral Systems, others tbc	£25m	£7.5m	£0
Democracy and Accountability: (DRC*)	2008–13	UNDP	£53.0m	£5.1m	£0
Drivers of Accountability Programme: (Kenya)	2010–15	SUNY Centre for International Development	£20m	£4.7m	£1.6m
Deepening Democracy in Nigeria (Nigeria*)	2010–15	UNDP, PLAC, USAID, Open Society and other CSOs	£35m	£5.5m	£1.3m
Supporting Transparency, Accountability and Electoral Processes (Pakistan)	2010–14	The Asia Foundation & FAFEN	£11.8m	£7.6m	£2.9m
Supporting Electoral Reform in Pakistan (Pakistan)	2012–14	International Foundation for Electoral Systems	£5.7m	£5.7m	£2.0m
AAWAZ Voice and Accountability Programme: (Pakistan*)	2012–17	Development Alternatives Inc, Aurat Foundation, SUNGI, SAP-PK, SPO	£34.5m	£18.3m	£4.6m
Democratic Governance Facility (Uganda*)	2011–16	NIMD (plus 30 other partners)	£11.9m	£5.9m	£0.9m

* How these 5 programmes were commissioned is analysed in **Table 4** below.

82. Since delivery of its parliamentary strengthening programme is largely outsourced, the quality of DFID's commissioning of parliamentary strengthening is particularly important. This includes ensuring its initial procurement, subsequent monitoring, management and evaluation, is good, which is not easy. Parliamentary strengthening projects often include several donors and involve many powerful stakeholders in complicated projects on the ground. Despite these difficulties, the World Bank notes that DFID's reputation for high-quality commissioning is second-to-none among donors working in parliamentary strengthening; it argues that given the more severe weaknesses in other bilateral agencies, such strengths should be nurtured and built-upon.¹⁸⁴

83. However, DFID does not appear to have a good grasp of its overall pattern of commissioning. The Minister told us that:

183 [Source: Analysis of DFID Submission, Annex B](#)

184 [World Bank Submission](#), Section 7

- £3 million was spent via UK public sector providers (WFD and FCO);
- £5 million was spent via private contractors (UK and overseas);
- £5 million was spent via multilateral aid organisations (e.g. UNDP), other bilateral aid organisations (e.g. USAID), or multi-donor trust funds (e.g. STAR Ghana¹⁸⁵) and
- £9.5 million was spent via other organisations, including local NGOs, INGOs, research organisations and others.

84. DFID subsequently acknowledged that this analysis was based on attributing all programme expenditure to the main partner or managing agent.¹⁸⁶ This seems to indicate that DFID has only a limited understanding of its supply chain and how its money is being distributed. It was not able to provide information on what was subsequently distributed to implementing sub-contractors, even by other branches of HMG.¹⁸⁷

85. DFID does not monitor as standard how much it commissions globally from different suppliers in parliamentary strengthening.¹⁸⁸ Accordingly, DFID cannot really understand how its commissioning is affecting the market of parliamentary strengthening providers. This implies that though DFID is now a significant player in parliamentary strengthening, it does not look to leverage this commissioning power globally, or make the most of its opportunities to influence the sector.

86. There are serious concerns that DFID risks an over-reliance on familiar suppliers. A number of submissions noted that many of DFID's larger parliamentary strengthening contracts are "sole sourced" to multilaterals, or put out to tender only to a small number of pre-approved consortia; little is available to general competitive tender.¹⁸⁹ Though it should be recognised that there may be good reasons why it is not appropriate to put a contract for parliamentary strengthening out to open tender,¹⁹⁰ we found that only two out of the 10 largest parliamentary strengthening projects listed in **Table 2** above were awarded

185 STAR Ghana is a DFID-led multi-donor pooled funding mechanism, jointly funded by DFID, USAID, DANIDA and the EU. Donors' contributions are held within a trust fund, managed by Coffey. The trust fund makes grants to a wide range of actors within, and occasionally outside, Ghana, for example CSOs, CBOs, universities, research centres, state bodies and the Ghanaian parliament. The programme is overseen by a steering committee, made up of DFID (representing donors) and independent Ghanaians, which directs funding decisions.

186 And in some cases the attribution appears to be wrong. For instance, in the Kenya "Drivers of Accountability" parliamentary strengthening project, where expenditure attributed to the State University of New York, more than £2 million will be awarded to UNDP over the course of the project. See: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-200120/>

187 [DFID, Additional Written Evidence, Annex A](#) following IDC Hearing 25 November 2014

188 DFID analysis provided required detailed manual analysis with country offices, and was done as a one-off rather than being available as standard management information.

189 [Adam Smith International Submission](#), paragraph 3.5; [Hansard Society and SOAS Submission](#), paragraphs 4.16, 1.10 It has been suggested to the Committee that this has the consequence that a few large consultancy companies, not only win 60% of all projects, but also control and largely implement the pre-qualified, consortia framework agreements, such as the Professional Evidence and Applied Knowledge Services, receiving the invitations to tender first. Smaller companies are invited to those projects others pass on, or if the dominant company in the consortium chooses to bring them as sub-contractors. The DFID top eleven are: Adam Smith International; ATOS; Coffey; Crown Agents; the merged DAI and HTSPE; GRM; KPMG; Maxwell Stamp; Mott Macdonald; Options; and PWC.

190 DFID's business case process requires country offices to make an assessment of the most appropriate route to market. DFID notes this may be through joining up with other donors in an existing programme rather than setting up a parallel initiative (e.g., Afghanistan, Uganda), through direct agreement with Parliament (e.g., Uganda), or through MoU or other mechanism where there are insufficient numbers of suppliers with the scale, capability and track record to merit a competitive route (e.g. DRC). Such situations would not lead to an open tender.

through competitive open tender, and only one out the five of those whose procurement processes the Committee reviewed in detail.¹⁹¹

Table 3: DFID's Top Suppliers of Parliamentary Strengthening in 2013–14¹⁹²

Supplier	Headquarters	Category	£	% DFID Total Parliamentary Strengthening
Development Alternatives Inc	Bethesda, Maryland, USA	Private	£4,596,689	20.4%
Asia Foundation	San Francisco, CA, USA	Other	£4,255,225	18.9%
United Nations Development Programme	New York, USA	Multilateral	£2,155,000	9.6%
International Foundation for Electoral Systems	Washington DC, USA	Other	£2,031,498	9.0%
State University of New York	New York, USA	Other	£1,600,000	7.1%
Westminster Foundation for Democracy	London, UK	UK Public Sector	£1,546,210	6.9%
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 193	London, UK	UK Public Sector	£1,538,629	6.8%
STAR Ghana	Accra, Ghana	Multi-donor	£1,390,000	6.2%
United Nations Development Programme and others	New York, USA	Multilateral	£1,363,895	6.1%
Netherlands Institute for Multi-party Democracy	The Hague, Netherlands	Other	£940,836	4.2%

87. Westminster organisations are rarely commissioned directly by DFID, and only receive a small share of the £22.5 million funding DFID provided in 2013–14. Although larger projects have been commissioned in the past, such as the £5 million contract with the Westminster Consortium in 2008–2013 to fund parliamentary strengthening work in six countries,¹⁹⁴ only 3 of the 37 parliamentary strengthening projects funded by DFID in 2013–14 listed a Westminster provider as involved, with a combined expenditure of only £1.5 million. None of DFID's largest 10 projects (see **Table 2**) was awarded to a Westminster institution. In part, this is simply a mismatch of scale: the £14.1 million average budget for the 37 programmes with a parliamentary strengthening component is larger than the total annual budgets for all of the Westminster organisations combined.¹⁹⁵ In part it is due to DFID's preference for commissioning programmes and working with managing agents that can work across all aspects of the political system rather than just

191 Project Documents listed in DevTracker shows that the Aawaz Voice and Accountability Programme in Pakistan and the Drivers of Accountability Programme in Kenya were awarded through open competition. See: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/index.html> See also **Table 4** for analysis of procurement processes for a sample of 5 DFID parliamentary strengthening projects

192 Table is based on DFID's analysis of its suppliers of parliamentary strengthening, and reflects its methodology, i.e. expenditure is fully attributed to the lead partner in the absence of DFID having more detailed knowledge of subsequent distributions among the supply chain.

193 For clarification, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not actually implement any parliamentary strengthening projects. It manages awards from the Arab Partnership Fund to NGOs and others. DFID was not able to provide an analysis of who the Arab Partnership Fund grants were awarded to.

194 See: <http://www.wfd.org/where-we-work/westminster-consortium.aspx>

195 £14.1 million is larger than the annual budgets of the Overseas Offices of the House of Commons and House of Lords, the UK branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

focusing on parliament. Westminster institutions receive a larger proportion of FCO funding, though their relative proportion is declining as the FCO programme grows.¹⁹⁶

88. The UK approach is different from US and other international donors since it does not explicitly promote its national parliamentary traditions.¹⁹⁷ For instance, the UK's approach contrasts with the US, which set up the US Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) programme of funding for US institutions (including the International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems) to work together in promoting democracy in USAID country programmes.¹⁹⁸ DFID's decisions about commissioning projects are largely made in country offices. As the Minister told us: "There is no policy imposed from the centre. These decisions are all made at the country level after an analysis of the needs of the country."¹⁹⁹ This ensures projects are better attuned to the local context, but it does mean commissioning is localised with little interest in how DFID is fostering the sector more widely and sometimes little awareness of Westminster institutions.

89. Paradoxically DFID makes significantly more use of US than UK organisations. The Minister reported that of the 37 current projects, 7 went to US managing agents. The list of DFID's key suppliers highlighted in **Table 3** highlights that DFID commissions over 55% of its expenditure on parliamentary strengthening projects from US-based organisations. We were told that extensive use of US organisations risks using UK taxpayer money to promote US models of democracy in Commonwealth countries. For example in Kenya, SUNY was funded by a number of donors, including DFID and USAID to do parliamentary strengthening work. Subsequent to this work, Kenya adopted a new constitution in 2010 with a US-style Presidential model in place of its previous Westminster model. The CEPPS and National Endowment for Democracy programmes provide some US institutions with an advantage over UK institutions; they have been effectively subsidised by US taxpayers to become powerful institutions well-positioned to win DFID tenders.²⁰⁰ In contrast, Westminster institutions are largely unable to win bids

196 Approximately 18% of FCO parliamentary strengthening expenditure in 2013–14 was via Westminster institutions, down from over 60% in 2011–12. Source: FCO Submission (unpublished)

197 [Oral evidence to the Committee by Francois Duluc Assemblée Nationale](#) witness, Q38: "For us it is also an investment for French influence in the world and for French diplomacy. We have to be honest about this. With parliamentary strengthening, we invest in the future. With junior politicians, for example, in the parliament we create a network and maybe a few years after these politicians were in Paris for training or a workshop for one week, two weeks or four weeks they will be foreign affairs ministers of their countries or even prime ministers or presidents. We have had a few examples. There is a general interest and I strongly believe in it, but there is also a national interest in parliamentary strengthening that we should not forget."

198 The Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) is a cooperative agreement supervised by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Democracy and Governance made in 1995. The agreement is the principal contractor for the Office of Democracy and Government's elections and political processes program which provides technical assistance and support to USAID missions worldwide. The agreement includes the International Republican Institute (IRI), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. See: <http://www.usaid.gov/documents/1860/consortium-elections-and-political-process-strengthening-cepps>.

199 [Oral Evidence from DFID Minister of State Desmond Swayne MP, 25 November 2014](#), Q107

200 The Annual Review of the Deepening Democracy in Nigeria programme, reviewed as part of our analysis in **Table 4**, noted the superior capacity of US organisations. Paragraph 6.2.2: "In the run-up to the 2011 elections, heavy reliance was placed by the DFID/USAID Partnership Agreement on NDI, IRI and IFES. These huge US based organisations played a very valuable part in preparation and election delivery and to a lesser extent are continuing to do so. They exhibit high standards of professionalism and are vastly experienced." The report notes in a footnote that by contrast UK organisations have more limited capacity: "Unfortunately the UK simply has no equivalents. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy is useful but for the specific purpose of deploying British politicians and party managers. Electoral Reform International Services has an unrivalled reservoir of election specialists but does

for US money spent on promoting democracy since much of the money is reserved for core US institutions.²⁰¹ DFID's failure to use Westminster as a national asset is discussed in chapter 5.

Skills and Expertise: Managers or Specialists

90. Given the pressure to spend money efficiently and keep administration costs low, in its commissioning of parliamentary strengthening DFID gives priority to partners' skills in management and planning rather than specific parliamentary skills. Large suppliers tend to have strong management capacity and development experience²⁰² capable of "providing context analysis, developing strategic plans and implementing large programmes with long-term technical engagement."²⁰³ Though this approach to commissioning can seem efficient, Greg Power told us that the premium on management experience can come at the expense of political knowledge:

In terms of the procurement process that DFID runs itself, again, it is the political economy—the incentives of the aid organisation itself. They have a lot of money to spend and a limited number of people to spend it, so therefore they tend to contract out very large projects to people who can take that management burden off DFID. The problem is you end up with large organisations that do not necessarily have any innate parliamentary expertise running the programmes, and they therefore replicate all the problems that we have described about running technical programmes and not engaging with politics. Despite the fact that the analysis might be excellent, their ability to deliver it is limited by the fact that they are a large organisation and you have layers of bureaucracy and you do not get that nimbleness or that innate political understanding.²⁰⁴

91. As a result, we were told, DFID and its implementing agencies tend to choose large, safe, technical suppliers familiar to field staff, though not necessarily parliamentary specialists.²⁰⁵ This has two risks: first, that the consultancies subcontract the actual work to specialists taking large margins²⁰⁶—our review of annual reviews noted instances of DFID

not have the management capacity to deliver large programmes." See: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-200274/>

201 US taxpayer funding is via two main sources, both of which prioritise core US institutions: US Government funding via USAID's CEPPS programme, which is a cooperative agreement to provide technical assistance and support to USAID missions worldwide, such as in Somalia, Serbia or Uganda, and includes the International Republican Institute (IRI), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the National Democratic Institute; and US Congressional funding via the US National Endowment for Democracy, which provides over \$100 million a year to four core grantees (National Democratic Institute for , International Republican Institute, Center for International Private Enterprise and Solidarity Center). While it does provide grants to non-US organisations, these must be non-governmental, making Westminster institutions ineligible. See: <http://www.ned.org/>

202 The draft How To Note highlights a preference for using development specialists. "Increasingly donors are using the 'technical approach' (using a private sector service provider) which has some benefits in terms of the delivery agent being more able and likely to have broader developmental expertise."

203 [DFID Submission](#), paragraph 20

204 [Oral evidence from Greg Power, Global Partners Governance, 18 November 2014](#), Q11

205 [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O'Neil Submission \(ODI\)](#), paragraph 51

206 [Oral evidence from Greg Power, Global Partners Governance, 18 November 2014](#), Q11

country offices attempting to address high management costs or inefficiencies;²⁰⁷ and, secondly, that those implementing the programmes lack the necessary expertise.

92. Witnesses told us that commissioning large projects has greater risk of being unsuccessful, and of being more likely to provoke resistance, as the project completion report of the DRC programme indicates.²⁰⁸ We were informed:

The temptation when faced with a large-scale problem is to increase the budget and seek to implement a wide range of activities simultaneously. However, when donor agencies land heavily in a parliamentary institution they frequently remove any sense of local control. The arrival of a large programme can often either simply maximise political resistance to outside ‘experts’ telling them what to do, or increase dependency on external support as international implementers end up doing work instead of parliamentary staff.

93. **Table 4** (overleaf) looks at²⁰⁹ the commissioning of 5 DFID parliamentary strengthening programmes, including their procurement and monitoring.²¹⁰ Our review of these 5 projects²¹¹ found a long delay in the publication of DFID’s annual reviews, with the most recent evaluation available 18 months old from June 2013 and one project not having published an annual review since September 2011. DFID will be publishing more recent reviews.²¹² The reviews potentially suggest DFID’s work with parliaments may be getting more effective, since more recent reviews to be published give the projects higher ratings than earlier reviews. (see **Table 4**) However, the one project completion report we looked at also highlights a potential risk of optimism bias in DFID’s internal monitoring, with the project rated more highly during its progress in annual reviews than in the following completion report.²¹³ Also annual reviews for three of these projects highlighted aspects of procurement as a particular weakness.²¹⁴ The Table shows that there is some tendency for

207 The Project Completion Report for the DRC programme reviewed noted that it was able to keep management costs below 25%, but was unable to prevent UNDP’s practice of setting up parallel offices despite interventions. See: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-113659/>The annual review of the Aawaz Pakistan programme highlighted DFID’s work in renegotiating management costs and finding savings with DAI. See: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-114433/documents/>

208 See: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-113659/>

209 The table is based on the additional information provided, plus an analysis of the relevant project documents found on DevTracker. See: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/index.html>

210 DFID annual reviews rating for project performance are defined as follows: Outputs substantially exceeded expectation (A++); Outputs moderately exceeded expectation (A+); Outputs met expectation (A); Outputs moderately did not meet expectation (B); Outputs substantially did not meet expectation (C)

211 In the IDC sample of 5 projects only one completion report has been done to date, for the project in DRC that was closed early. Across the 10 main parliamentary strengthening projects, there have been 2 evaluation reports published. One was also done jointly for two projects in Pakistan (Supporting Transparency, Accountability and Electoral Processes and Supporting Electoral Reform in Pakistan). See: http://iati.dfid.gov.uk/iati_documents/4750255.pdf

212 Subsequent to our analysis, DFID told us that it will publish more recent reviews for Pakistan (May 2014) and Nigeria (2013 and 2014). It told us that it conducted an annual review of the Uganda project in 2014 which could not be published due to its sensitivity. DFID also told us that external evaluations are being considered for Pakistan and Uganda and will be done for Afghanistan. We also investigated the latest reviews available for the other 5 major parliamentary strengthening projects. This was more up to date: Bangladesh (Sept 2012—1 available); Burma (N/A—new project); Kenya (Dec 2013—2 available); Pakistan [FAFEN] (Jan 2014—3 available, plus joint completion report); Pakistan [IFES] (June 2014—2 available, plus joint completion report).

213 It should be noted our sample only contained one project completion report, for the Democracy and Accountability project in DRC. See: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-113659/>

214 See annual reviews for Pakistan, DRC and Nigeria projects sampled

DFID to commission familiar faces. This is in part because of their track record, and the ability DFID has to influence them based on previous working relationships.²¹⁵

215 For instance, this was the rationale for the choice of partner in the Afghanistan project. See: [DFID Additional Evidence](#)

Table 4: IDC analysis of DFID's commissioning of 5 parliamentary strengthening projects

Country	Project	Period	Implementing Partner	Procurement Process	Open Tender?	Performance Monitoring	Date last available annual review	Key Findings (from published review)
Afghanistan	Support to Afghanistan's Political Institutions and Processes: Help improve the capability & responsiveness of parliament, based on Afghan parliament's self-assessment	2014-2019	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - joint fund with other donors	Options assessed through business case appraisal. No competitive tender required.	X	Overseen by project management board, technical working group, project donors group. UNDP quarterly reporting and annual reviews, plus UNDP to commission mid-term review and final evaluation. DFID annual reviews and project completion report	N/A	N/A
DRC	Democracy and Accountability: Strengthening parliament through training on oversight, representation and drafting legislation	2008-2013	UNDP - joint fund with other donors	MOU with UNDP. No competitive tender required	X	Detailed results framework: areas for improvement monitored through MOU. Programme monitoring committee: field visits (increased from annual to six monthly). UNDP 6-monthly reports: annual reviews increased to mid-year reviews; UNDP mid-term & final project evaluation online. DFID annual reviews, additional mid-year reviews, project completion report	Completion: June 2013 Annual Review: Feb 2012 (1 available)	Rating - B Project closed early following discredited elections strengthening parliament strongest component, work with political and improving women's participation the weakest Recommends DFID doing political economy analysis before similar DFID needs to finalise its governance and political engagement strategy and not rely on UNDP VFM concerns over management costs & setting up parallel institution
Nigeria	Deepening Democracy in Nigeria 1 (DDN1): Output 2: A better functioning National Assembly. Other outputs to strengthen the Election Management Bodies, CSOs and political parties.	2010-2015	PLAC (local NGO) on Output 2 Rest of programme: UNDP, USAID, Open Society & CSOs	Accountable Grant with PLAC and Agreement with UNDP. No competitive tender required.	X	Standard DFID project arrangements for accountable grant: quarterly progress reports from PLAC plus DFID Annual Review of DDN1	Sept 2011 (1 available) [Others to be added by DFID]	No Rating given (A in review to be published) Recommends DFID expands its strategic fund for small, flexible pilot lack of strategy in joint donor basket fund - UNDP too reactive & unquestioning of Electoral Commission demands Political party work and women's participation work unsuccessful
Pakistan	AAWAZ Voice and Accountability Programme: Increasing local level engagement with government representatives across 4,500 villages. Lobbying for improved gender legislation	2012-2017	Management: Development Alternatives Inc. Implementing Partners: local CSOs (Aurat Foundation, SUNGL, SAP-PK and SPO)	OIEU competitive tender process	✓	DFID Annual Reviews, beneficiary monitoring, external financial auditing, independent evaluation being considered	March 2013 (1 available) [Others to be added by DFID]	Rating - B (A in review to be published) Lots of activity, good progress and capable implementing partner Significant delays in procurement, need for close coordination in supply chain Poor forecasting of costs
Uganda	Democratic Governance Facility: Deepening Democracy Component covering parliamentary strengthening and inter-party dialogue	2011-2016	Approx 30 implementing partners (local NGOs, media, Parliament). Parliamentary strengthening implemented by NIMD.	MOU with the Ugandan Parliament DCF Project Management Unit directly contracted NIMD, following review of NIMD's previous work.	N/A	Regular bi-annual review meetings, term reviews, DFID annual reviews of DCF-DD	March 2013 (1 available) [Others not published for sensitivity]	Rating - A (A in unpublished review) Very good progress

94. Several witnesses argued that changes were required and that DFID gave too little emphasis to the role of commissioning in parliamentary strengthening; for instance, the draft DFID-FCO How to Note on parliaments and political party strengthening does not explicitly mention commissioning.²¹⁶ While DFID is a leader among development agencies in calling for more politically aware approach to development (see chapter 4), DFID has not yet stated whether this has implications for its commissioning of parliamentary strengthening projects. We were told that there should be more involvement of parliamentary organisations in commissioning bids for parliamentary strengthening work.²¹⁷ Witnesses called for changes in commissioning arrangements:

DFID is effectively denying itself access to a pool of experts that could run more effective, innovative and impactful projects. A better procurement process which encourages greater variety, including smaller, more flexible projects, run directly by UK organisations, would be better able to provide quality assurance, access to genuine political expertise and better use of direct peer to peer engagement with international MPs.²¹⁸

Work with Multilaterals

95. DFID uses multilaterals extensively in parliamentary strengthening, as the breakdown of its suppliers shows (see **table 3**). The Committee discussed two of the multilaterals with witnesses in more detail, UNDP and EU. According to the DFID Annual Report, the EU accounts for 26% of all DFID's expenditure on multilaterals, largely core funding over which DFID has little control. DFID provided almost £250 million to UNDP in 2013–14; this figure includes core funding and projects which DFID offices or centrally managed programmes have commissioned.

96. There are clear advantages in using multilateral agencies in parliamentary strengthening work:

Range and Reach: UNDP has a global network of over 160 countries, and operates in some country contexts where it is the only body active. Working with multilaterals allows DFID to reach places and support parliamentary strengthening in countries where DFID does not have bilateral programmes.²¹⁹ The EU gives a high priority to parliamentary

216 The Summary note does not discuss commissioning. However, it does mention that monitoring will be discussed in the later full note

217 [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch submission](#) paragraph 11.02

218 [Global Partners Governance Submission](#) Section 3 (v)

219 For instance, DFID and UNDP have a number of agreements for UNDP to implement parliamentary strengthening programmes on DFID's behalf or as part of 'basket fund' arrangements where DFID is one of the contributing donors. Many are implemented in crisis or post-crisis countries where UNDP is one of the few (and may be the only) agencies present and capable—whether by reason of host government permission, generally acknowledged lack of partiality, the security situation, or by virtue of the fact that it has deployed capacity—of programme implementation. Charles Chauvel notes that: "It is difficult to imagine how DFID—or other donors—could procure parliamentary strengthening work in such jurisdictions in any other way. It is also difficult to imagine how anything other than the basic promotion of dialogue, and the basic (re)building of the parliamentary institution, could be the focus of such programming." See: [Charles Chauvel, UNDP Supplementary Evidence](#), paragraphs 3–4. UNDP has a global network of 166 country offices through which it can implement programming. No other donor or implementing agency has the benefit of such ubiquity. USAID, for example, at present has active projects in 60 countries. See: [Charles Chauvel, UNDP Submission](#), Bilateral Section

strengthening and in recent years has been active in 4 regions and 24 individual countries.²²⁰

Efficiency: Supporting the efforts of a multilateral agency implementing widespread parliamentary strengthening—and using that support to influence the shape and quality of its programming—is likely to be more cost-effective even for a large donor.²²¹

Neutrality: Multilateral bodies are also better able to claim political neutrality for access and avoid charges of political interference.²²² Thus the UNDP is particularly useful for coordinating a multi-donor approach. The organisation is politically acceptable in countries where the UK might not be, and is able to work in those contexts where more political organisations would not be granted access. As Charles Chauvel told us:

In this area there is the ideal and there is what is do-able. It would be great to see a whole lot of small, nimble players working politically in a number of different environments. The reality is in a lot of partner countries it simply would not be permitted by the government in power, and so you have got to have a negotiated relationship. We try to maintain a reasonable relationship with host governments, and that tends to give us some space to be able to work, for example, in the parliamentary area. We do subcontract a lot of our work to small, nimble players, as it happens, and we tend to be very pleased with the results. To posit the possibility, though, that they could simply go into certain difficult political environments and contract directly, given the political realities, would be, as I think DFID knows, a fantasy.²²³

Coordination: Most importantly, multilateral organisations can coordinate interventions jointly funded by a number of donors. Multilaterals can reduce the fragmentation of unaligned and even contradictory interventions which can overwhelm parliaments when many bilateral agencies are involved.²²⁴

Quality: The volume of work done by UNDP gives its governance work a depth of experience that has been acknowledged by ICAI.²²⁵

97. However, we also received evidence about the disadvantages of multilaterals for being slow and risk averse. The Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (NIMD) told us:

Funding through multilateral agencies offers valuable leverage in some instances but also comes with several restrictions that are unhelpful in the case of political systems and institutions support. The result is that these support programmes focus on technical fixes and take a risk averse approach. Because they require government

220 [European Commission submission](#), paragraph 4.1

221 [Charles Chauvel, UNDP Submission](#), Bilateral Section

222 [WFD Submission](#), paragraph 13

223 [Charles Chauvel, oral evidence](#) Q12

224 [BOND and UK Aid Network Submission](#), paragraphs 15–16

225 ICAI's report on UNDP's electoral work found it well-designed. See: ICAI, (2012) Evaluation of DFID's Electoral Support through UNDP, April 2012. See: <http://www.oecd.org/derec/50360055.pdf>

consultation and consent, they often take long to negotiate and due to their size and set up, cannot respond flexibly to changing circumstances and demands.²²⁶

98. We received criticisms of both UNDP's and the EU's work on parliamentary strengthening, particularly about their programme management, bureaucratic processes²²⁷ and expense. For instance, Adam Smith reported their strong concerns about UNDP's "consistently poor performance record."²²⁸ In 2013 and 2014 the UN Board of Auditors criticised UNDP across the board (not just for parliamentary strengthening programmes) for its poor project management and delays in projects, and for failing to make donor refunds of unspent monies in a timely fashion.²²⁹ While we were impressed by UNDP's parliamentary programme in Tanzania, which we examined on a recent visit, we found its processes added to delays which had serious consequences in that the programme began too late in the Parliament.²³⁰

99. Savage criticisms were made of EU programmes: project teams did not know how to spend all the funds, even when they double up the numbers of people they send. Francois Duluc from the Assemblée Nationale told us:

I know you have a debate in the UK about the European budget. I must say that there is too much money in these European projects. Sometimes we do not know how to spend it. For example, in twinnings sometimes we have €3.5 million for two years. Parliamentary development is not expensive... It is difficult to spend €3.5 million in Albania or in Moldova or in Bosnia. Sometimes you have to make sure that the activities will be five days instead of two days, with four experts instead of two that could be able to do the same job. If you do not spend everything the European Commission says, "You are not delivering properly on the ground" so you have to extend the length of the project. I could tell you stories for hours about European funding in terms of parliamentary assistance. I could do the same and have the same

226 [Submission from Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy](#); paragraph V.0

227 [House of Commons Overseas Office submission](#), paragraph 17: "*Multilateral agencies can be very bureaucratic (for example in contracting processes, which means that parliamentary practitioners—who may well, as indicated in the next section, be the most appropriate deliverers of programmes—may not put themselves forward to run programmes). They can perhaps also appear to over-emphasise planning over delivery.*"

228 [Adam Smith Submission](#), paragraphs 2.6. 5.2: "DFID needs to be very careful about this approach in working with parliaments. UNDP have a large presence in the field of support to democratic governance, and our experience here as in other fields in which they engage, is that they are rarely effective. In South Sudan, the impact of their support to parliament was not very clear, despite significant funding" A similar point was made in its May 2013 evidence on the Multilateral Aid Review

229 The June 2014 UN BOA Report (on 2013 financial statements) found lots of delays in many UNDP projects, a need to improve the monitoring of implementing partners, that workplans often lacked defined targets or performance indicators, and that there was no review by UNDP of closed projects to pay donor refunds. The BOA report on the 2012 financial statements expressed similar concerns over the delays in conducting project audits, the high level of modified audit opinions (i.e. that the accounting records were not completely reliable), and that a number of UNDP projects had recurring modified opinions (i.e. issues were not being addressed). It also raised concerns around UNDP's own contracting, with projects awarded without following UN procurement rules. See: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Transparency/UNDP_Audited_Financial_Statements_2013.pdf and http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Transparency/UNDP_2012_Financial_Report_and_audited_Fin_statements_%20and_Report_of_Board_of_auditors%20A_68_5_add1.pdf

230 Similarly, ICAI's 2012 report looking at DFID's electoral support through UNDP gave DFID an amber red for programme delivery and for monitoring and learning, stating: "UNDP has demonstrated an ability to deliver technically sound assistance but design processes are often rushed and budgets unrealistic. UNDP does not have a strong culture of cost control and tends to support over-complex solutions... There is a need for more real-time monitoring of UNDP-led electoral assistance around a broader set of outcome-based metrics." See: <http://www.oecd.org/derec/50360055.pdf>

results—or sometimes absence of results—with half of the funding they provide every year to parliamentary assistance projects. If it is the same in the whole area of international development, there is a huge way of finding money and budgets to support other activities.²³¹

Similarly, Charles Chauvel, UNDP explained:

The other problem, outlined during the hearing, is the practice adopted of late by the European Commission and others of contracting ‘for profit’ entities with variable levels of expertise to implement parliamentary strengthening programming. Because of the scale of EC funds available, this is having a material impact on quality of implementation. This was raised as a concern by several secretaries-general of parliaments in EU jurisdictions during the meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament (ASGP) held in conjunction with the IPU Assemblies in March and October 2014.²³²

The European Court of Auditors has found the EC’s recent governance work to be “well-intentioned but ineffective.”²³³

Small and Flexible Commissioning

100. Chapter 4 highlighted the importance of long term, flexible, often small-scale work in parliamentary strengthening. The most effective parliamentary strengthening organisations are often small specialists with stable funding:

“We have found that the organisations that can most easily adopt lessons learnt and act on them tend to be organisations that are smaller, more nimble and also have longer term prospects for funding and do not have to function on the basis of two-year or three-year projects, project by project by project, which demands constant relaying of results.”²³⁴

Some DFID evaluations support this view.²³⁵ Moreover, it is argued that small scale programmes are likely to have an increased chance of local ownership, increasing the chances of effective long term reform.

101. In view of their effectiveness, witnesses argued that DFID should do more to encourage small suppliers in its supply chain, and make its business more accessible. Both Bond and the Hansard Society recommended that DFID do more to commission smaller providers, particularly national groups,²³⁶ and do more to encourage the use of small

231 [Oral evidence to the Committee by Francois Duluc Assemblée Nationale](#) witness, Q46

232 See: [Charles Chauvel, UNDP, Supplementary Evidence](#), paragraph 8

233 European Court of Auditors (2013) EU Cooperation with Egypt in the Field of Governance, Special Report No. 4. The report reviewed 1 billion Euros provided in aid by the EU to Egypt for various projects to improve governance between 2007-2013. See: [EU Cooperation with Egypt in the Field of Governance](#)

234 [Oral evidence from Alina Rocha Menocal, ODI](#) and Birmingham University, 18 November 2014; Q7

235 See: http://savi-nigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Thinking-and-Acting-Politically_FINAL.pdf

236 [Hansard Society and SOAS Submission](#), paragraph 1.10, [BOND and UK Aid Network Submission](#), Section D

providers in the supply chain of its larger contracts. DFID's Procurement Group has been criticised by ICAI for focusing on large providers at the expense of smaller ones.²³⁷

102. Charles Chauvel suggested that UNDP would be willing to subcontract more to UK implementing partners if asked.²³⁸ He also thought that DFID could use smaller parliamentary strengthening specialists to do more openly political work in middle income countries.²³⁹ Using small suppliers is something all of government has to do.²⁴⁰

103. We were also informed that DFID should commission more projects from organisations in the developing world. In particular, DFID should do more to encourage its implementers to work with experienced MPs and staff from developing country parliaments to work on neighbouring country parliaments. As we have seen, linking local parliamentarians regionally helps increase awareness of common challenges, particularly on sensitive or controversial issues²⁴¹ The draft How To Note also highlights the growing role of regional and global networks in driving reform. These allow for peer review and are a route for greater regional ownership, peer-pressure for responsible behaviour and (often South-South) peer learning. Examples like the Africa Liberal Network have proved effective.²⁴² Peer networks, like the Commonwealth Association of PACs, are being established and are likely to be a valuable resource.²⁴³ The Committee was informed in Tanzania of the effective combination of a former member of staff from the Kenyan Parliament working with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in a programme for the East African Legislative Assembly.

104. As we found in our report on Burma, funding mechanisms are required to support flexible, small-scale parliamentary strengthening projects undertaken by smaller specialist organisations.²⁴⁴ This was one of the key findings from the annual review of the Deepening Democracy in Nigeria project analysed in **Table 4**.²⁴⁵ The FCO does provide grants for

237 ICAI, DFID's Use of Contractors to Deliver Aid Programmes, May 2013; paragraph 2.28: "Small providers, in particular, report a significant distancing by PrG, which is now concentrating on managing relationships with its larger contractors. It is often the small suppliers which, working in consortia with the larger suppliers, write or contribute to the technical proposals underpinning the major bids."

238 [Charles Chauvel, oral evidence](#) Q16

239 "In many middle-income countries... there is greater scope to engage in more openly political work because of the greater maturity and stability of the political economy of the jurisdictions. These are the countries, as I understand matters, where many of the large US-based providers that DFID funds tend to operate. They are also those where there is more opportunity for smaller niche democracy-builders. It is important not to confuse two very different operating environments [middle income countries and fragile states] and the providers with whom DFID contracts for implementation in each." [Charles Chauvel, UNDP Additional Evidence](#), paragraph 6

240 Using small suppliers more is a challenge across government and the Cabinet Office has set new requirements to make government contracts more accessible to SMEs by simplifying procurement processes and making contracts the right size to encourage more bidders. Requirements by the Crown Commercial Service.

241 See also: [Dick Toornstra Submission](#), paragraph 11

242 Draft How To Note (November 2013), page 8, "The Africa Liberal Network includes 34 political parties from 23 countries. It enables better reach, value for money and sustainability for capacity building events, supports the ongoing sharing best practice and, perhaps most importantly, through peer-encouragement is able to drive up the standards expected of African liberal parties."

243 [CAPAC Submission](#)

244 [CPA UK Submission](#) and [WFD submission](#). "WFD's experience, echoed by many others including in British Embassies, is that annual budgets in a single country in the thousands of pounds are more likely to be appropriate and effective than budgets in the millions, not least because of the political risks involved. It will be important to balance the ambition to scale up work with the reality of the programming constraints on the ground."

245 Paragraphs 11.2.1–2 of the most recent available Annual Review [at the time of our analysis] note: "The Strategic Fund was used on a comparatively small scale for specific innovatory projects relevant to the elections. It was based on the assessment that the UK comparative advantage lay in specialist technical and (occasionally) political inputs,

small parliamentary strengthening projects, but these must often be spent in-year, and applications can be approved often quite late in the year.²⁴⁶

105. We discussed with Sir Alan Haselhurst the value of flexible funding and of a standing, flexible fund for governance advisers to draw on for parliamentary strengthening.²⁴⁷ Witnesses also addressed the suggestion of the draft WFD Triennial Review that HMG establish a ‘flexibility fund’ for democracy projects to provide for innovation, and reactive work to the politically unexpected and to allow Government to support emerging priorities. DFID has previously funded the Arab Partnership Fund along such lines, and the Minister of State has expressed openness to responding to specific requests in the past.²⁴⁸

Conclusions and recommendations

106. DFID puts a high value on good project management skills and prefers to commission large governance projects of which parliamentary strengthening is a part. As a result it tends not to commission small specialist organisations, but provides large contracts to big sometimes non-specialist organisations which subcontract to others.

107. We see the advantages of using large organisations such as the UNDP for its parliamentary strengthening work in some circumstances, e.g. where a several donors are involved or in some FCAs. We were, however, surprised to discover the extent to which DFID uses large US organisations, which are alleged to have an unfair advantage because of the CEPPs system; this runs the risk that UK taxpayers’ money is being used to promote a switch from parliamentary to less accountable, US-style Presidential systems. *We recommend that DFID support the development of world-class suppliers in the UK, and over a five year period substantially increase its use of UK suppliers where there is a clear demand for them.*

108. *DFID does not know how its commissioning is affecting providers in the parliamentary strengthening sector; we recommend that it acquires this information and tracks which subcontractors are receiving its funds.*

109. The EU spends significant sums on parliamentary strengthening; the UK taxpayer contributes about 15% of this. We are seriously concerned by the criticisms we heard of the EU commissioning in this area, including the use of non-specialist contractors which are adept at navigating the institutions labyrinthine procurement procedures and its willingness to pay far more than is needed. DFID points out that the Multilateral Aid Review gave the EU a good rating, but this does not mean that it is

provided in the right form at the right time. These were of varying size, but usually involved comparatively small financial amounts even if they added up to a significant total. The suggestion here is that the Strategic Fund be enlarged and used during the next three years of DDIN.” See: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-200274/>

246 For instance, according to the evidence provided by the FCO, as at October 2014, 7 months into the current financial year, only one parliamentary strengthening programme has been approved for 2014–15.

247 [Sir Alan Hazelhurst oral evidence](#) Q29; See also: [Oral Evidence from Crispin Poyser, House of Commons Overseas Office Clerk](#) Q41

248 A flexibility fund was previously discussed by the Minister of State, Alan Duncan MP in the [Committee’s oral evidence session on its Burma Inquiry](#), Q146 where he stated that: “My door is always open to any such supplication and we are always fair-minded.”

good across the board. *We recommend that DFID examine the allegations and in the light of its findings press for reform.*

110. *We recommend that DFID commission more expert organisations; and take a more hands-on approach to managing parliamentary work. We recommend that*

- *a joint DFID/FCO fund be established to commission expert organisations; this would also enable work to be commissioned at short notice when opportunities arise. A joint fund would combine the differing and important skills of the two departments. The fund could be on a similar scale to the £21.4 million which BBC Media Action received as a global grant from DFID in 2013–14.*
- *when DFID has to commission larger suppliers, it nominate expert organisations to which larger suppliers should sub-contract; we welcome UNDPs willingness to do this, but DFID needs to ensure that too much is not top-sliced by the larger supplier.*
- *DFID improve its ability to act as an intelligent commissioner of parliamentary strengthening both in country and centrally; it should increase the number of specialist experts at the centre and ensure its governance advisers are aware of the importance of parliaments and develop closer links with the UK Parliament.*
- *DFID support the development of world class suppliers in the UK.*

6 Strengthening Westminster and UK Institutions

Strength of the Westminster Brand

111. The Westminster brand of parliamentary strengthening is powerful. Anthony Smith, the new Chief Executive of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, noted that the Westminster brand is trusted around the world,²⁴⁹ partly because it is, as Bond noted, the oldest major parliament in the world, which serves “as an example and useful case study for other parliaments”.²⁵⁰ The UK branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association highlighted the considerable demand for Westminster activities, referring to “the pulling power of the Portcullis.”²⁵¹ It added that as parliamentary development has emerged as a distinct field Westminster is increasingly recognised for its contributions, past and present.²⁵² UNDP said that there is “great unrealized value in the Westminster brand”²⁵³ and the World Bank that the Westminster ‘model’ of parliamentary governance is recognized and valued around the globe. This model has been adopted and adapted by parliaments across the Commonwealth and beyond.²⁵⁴ As the UNDP noted, the depth of the UK’s parliamentary tradition is of particular importance for Anglophone countries and those that have adopted Westminster parliamentary practice.²⁵⁵

112. Westminster-based organisations have a long history of parliamentary diplomacy—hosting visits from international parliamentarians, responding to enquiries from peer parliaments and championing international parliamentary networks. There are long-standing institutional links with overseas parliaments and inter-parliamentary organisations.²⁵⁶ More recently, more extensive programmes strengthening parliaments around the world have been established. Westminster’s capacity-building work for developing parliaments has grown significantly since the 1990s, particularly following the establishment of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.²⁵⁷

249 [Oral Evidence, Anthony Smith](#) Q63

250 [Bond and UK Aid Network Submission](#), paragraph 18

251 [Oral Evidence, Andrew Tuggey, UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association](#) Q23

252 [UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Submission](#), paragraph 9.03

253 [Charles Chauvel, UNDP submission](#) Section on Westminster Value

254 [World Bank Submission](#), Section 8

255 [Charles Chauvel, UNDP submission](#), Section on the Priority of Parliamentary Strengthening

256 There have been a number of waves to this work: The Inter-Parliamentary Union was established in 1889 by the British MP William Randal Cremer and French MP Frederic Passey to help foster international peace. Westminster MPs developed the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in 1911 (initially as the Empire Parliamentary Association, becoming the CPA in 1948) to support parliamentary links and development across the Commonwealth. The House of Commons established its Overseas Office in 1967 to manage the House’s official relations with overseas parliaments and parliamentary assemblies which had grown in scale.

257 The UK’s main delivery body of parliamentary strengthening, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) was founded in 1992 after the fall of the Berlin Wall, initially to support the creation of new political parties and civil society organisations among former communist countries transitioning to pluralist democracies. Though its board largely comprises of parliamentarians, it was formalised as a non-departmental public body of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Its initial delivery method was for UK political parties to provide direct assistance to like-minded parties, which subsequently evolving to provide a wider “democracy offer” to foster inter-party as well as sister-party relations and help build effective Parliaments.

113. In this chapter we use the term Westminster and Westminster-based organisations broadly. One key characteristic of UK parliamentary strengthening work is the diversity of organisations involved. Compared to many counterparts like France, where the Assemblée Nationale is the sole provider of parliamentary strengthening,²⁵⁸ the UK has a wide range of specialist institutions; the World Bank notes that the UK has several world-class parliamentary organizations.²⁵⁹ There is range and depth of experience, covering the full range of parliamentary business. This range of providers includes:

- Departments of the two House administrations (the Overseas Offices of the House of Commons and the House of Lords)²⁶⁰;
- The National Audit Office which reports directly to Parliament and works with audit offices and PACs abroad;
- inter-parliamentary networks (the UK branches of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Inter-Parliamentary Union (CPA UK, BGIPU));
- UK public sector specialists (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, ERIS);
- UK public sector bodies working on development or relevant international capacity building (the British Council);
- private sector parliamentary specialists (e.g. Global Partners Governance);
- private sector development agencies with a focus on governance (e.g. Adam Smith International);
- developmental charities (BBC Media Action, Thomson Reuters Foundation, the International Bar Association); and
- academic centres and thinktanks (Centre for Legislative Studies University of Hull, Overseas Development Institute, Hansard Society, Department of Government University of Essex²⁶¹)

114. Several of these organisations, including the Overseas Offices, CPA UK, BGIPU, WFD and Global Partners draw on a similar pool of personnel, including MPs and former MPs and parliamentary staff.

115. This diversity means that the UK's strength is not in a narrow "Westminster model" or a particular institutional blueprint to lecture on, but in its variety of different approaches, knowledge and lessons to share.²⁶² WFD observed that the UK has a rich, heterogeneous experience of parliamentary systems, with Westminster, devolved assemblies, and powerful municipal assemblies. Westminster institutions are able to draw on a range of UK political parties and institutions, including the devolved assemblies, to

258 [Oral evidence from Francois Duluc, Assemblée Nationale, 18 November 2014](#); Q38

259 [World Bank Submission](#), Section 8

260 There are also active international offices of the different Devolved Assemblies. Also parliamentary organisations like the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) are also active in parliamentary strengthening.

261 University of Essex were members of The Westminster Consortium, though it did not submit evidence to this Inquiry

262 [Bond and UK Aid Network Submission](#), paragraph 19; [WFD Submission](#), paragraph 14

find appropriate counterparts to the institutions they work with in other countries.²⁶³ The World Bank observes that focusing on specific practices implemented by the UK and Scottish Parliaments and the National Assembly of Wales enhances the relevance of the UK experience beyond Commonwealth parliaments.²⁶⁴ Moreover, the UK has world-class media and legal expertise which can be used to support its parliamentary strengthening work.

116. The submissions we received suggest that the UK strengths in parliamentary strengthening can be divided into four main areas.

Parliamentary Culture: the UK has a strongly inclusive parliamentary culture, with members from different parties working together effectively across a variety of committee and legislative tasks. Lord Norton of Louth told us:

The most significant contribution that the Westminster Parliament can make is not in offering a particular structure, but in facilitating the emergence of a strong and continuing civic culture, with strong links between citizens and their representatives in Parliament... in creating a rules-based structure within which parties can compete and, concomitantly, a neutral organisational framework, including research resources available to all members.”²⁶⁵

WFD’s submission notes that UK democratic culture has enabled us to manage internal and external conflict, represent the wishes and ambitions of separate nations within a single state, and develop one of the most successful economies in the world.²⁶⁶ Antony Smith highlighted the way in which Westminster culture includes political opposition:

We have huge strengths in this area as a country: our own democratic traditions, obviously, the Westminster tradition, but also the way in which the country has managed the political ambitions of four nations, has dealt with internal and external conflict and managed that.²⁶⁷

This culture is continually evolving, with new Assemblies, the Scottish Independence Referendum, and the Speakers Commission for Digital Democracy. UK expertise is in continually building democracy and rethinking parliament’s role. Alistair Burt MP told us:

We have been here for 1,000 years. In the last few years we have had a referendum on the shape of our country; we have had a referendum on our voting system; and at the beginning of this Parliament we re-organised the election of senior members of the House on our major committees. After 1,000 years we keep making changes. We are dealing with developing institutions as well.²⁶⁸

263 [WFD Submission](#), paragraph 14

264 [World Bank Submission](#), Section 8

265 [Submission from Lord Norton of Louth](#), paragraph 17

266 [WFD Submission](#), paragraph 14

267 [Oral evidence from Antony Smith, Chief Executive Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#), 25 November 2014, Q57

268 [Oral Evidence from Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP](#), 18 November 2014, Q30

Where Commonwealth parliaments founded on the Westminster system look to the UK as a point of reference, the variety of UK experience results in a variety of responses.²⁶⁹

Peer Working: as Greg Power observed: “Parliamentary support needs to engage with the daily challenges of being an MP, and be based around the practical problems that MPs and staff need help solving.”²⁷⁰ Westminster institutions are able to draw on experienced members, clerks and committee staff, the people who actually “do” the democracy promoted. Antony Smith, Chief Executive of WFD told us:

Clearly, the thing that people like in the area of parliamentary strengthening when they work with British institutions is the peer-to-peer contact, the ability to hear about those experiences first hand and to get long-term relationships of support, which they can use to adapt in their own ways in their own countries. That is the most effective thing that I have seen.²⁷¹

The strength of peer working allows for the benefits of “mutual recognition”, and a shared background engendering relationships founded on a common experience and understanding of “what it is really like” to deal with a certain aspect of political business.

Public Reporting and Engagement: the BBC and Thomson Reuters are global brands, and can demonstrate how good journalism can strengthen parliaments. Tim Fenton told us of the positive role played by Westminster organisations using BBC and Reuters journalists to help journalists in Fiji²⁷² better report on their parliament’s proceedings and improve public awareness and engagement. BBC Media Action identified the importance of the media to connect democracy—and its many democratic institutions—with the public, including those who may not see parliamentary politics as central to their concerns: “Strengthening parliaments’ communication with society is a vital element of parliamentary strengthening.”²⁷³ BBC Media Action notes this has four dimensions: communicating what is happening in parliament; improving media access to and transparency of parliaments; engaging mass audiences in the political process; and covering key events in the political calendar. This strength in engagement also includes digital engagement with parliament; we were informed that the Speaker’s Commission for Digital Democracy was attracting significant global interest.²⁷⁴

Scrutiny and Accountability: Westminster is seen having a real strength in its select committee system, and scrutiny its committees provide of the executive—as Antony Smith described it us: “We have huge strengths in... the way in which our system delivers strong

269 [CPA UK Submission](#), paragraph 9.01

270 [Greg Power submission](#), paragraph 2 (ii)

271 [Oral Evidence from Antony Smith, Chief Executive Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#), 25 November 2014; Q57

272 [Submission from Tim Fenton](#)

273 [Submission from BBC Media Action](#)

274 The Commission notes: “We appear to have struck a chord internationally with a considerable number of parliamentary bodies as well as individuals and organisations in civil society who are working on parliamentary openness and innovation... The work of the DDC has also provided a point of contact for academics, businesses and interested individuals with ideas, expertise, tools and platforms for digital democracy that they are interested in sharing or developing in partnership with Parliament and Members. As a result the DDC has been able to pilot various technologies for use within Parliament, which we have or will be able to share with others in the field.” See: [Submission from Speakers Commission on Digital Democracy](#), Paragraphs 5 and 6 (vii)

oversight of the executive but also enables the executive to deliver policies effectively.”²⁷⁵ The Commons Committees are entirely focused on oversight whereas in other parliaments’ committees often concentrate on legislation. A particular strength of scrutiny work is in financial accountability, and the strong relationship between its Public Accounts Committee and the UK National Audit Office. CAPAC highlighted the importance of initiatives to share the UK’s experience through peer networks, such as peer networks for PACs, which could be replicated for other types of parliamentary committee.²⁷⁶

117. These four “Westminster” strengths reflect DFID’s priorities for its parliamentary strengthening, which are focused on building a democratic culture, effective institutions of scrutiny and legislation, public engagement and representation, and financial oversight and propriety.

Failure to Use Westminster as a National Asset

118. However, many witnesses note that the Westminster brand is an under-used asset in the UK’s work strengthening parliaments and promoting democracy. DFID’s failure to use Westminster is considered a missed opportunity. Anthony Smith told us that the UK was “*under-promising and underperforming*” in this area, reflecting: “*I have been surprised at the low profile that we have as a country in dealing with these issues.*”²⁷⁷ Charles Chauvel of the UNDP highlighted:

Significant reservoirs of knowledge... exist across the existing and former personnel of the Westminster Parliament, both on the elected side and with officials. The potential to add value to parliamentary strengthening work in any number of countries on procedural and substantive matters is vast, and there remains much untapped potential.²⁷⁸

119. Other witnesses from CPA UK and BGIPU stated:

It is... seeing us in modern parliaments as a resource. We are a resource. Who knows better how to do this work than we do?... I see us being available to the Government here and governments elsewhere as a resource for the work they need to do, sometimes in quite touchy and difficult places.²⁷⁹

From my experience, parliamentarians talking to other parliamentarians is often a better way of advancing causes, even though it may take time, than heads of government talking to heads of government, because they are much more in the spotlight. The role of parliamentarians is undervalued at the moment.²⁸⁰

275 [Oral Evidence from Antony Smith, Chief Executive Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#), 25 November 2014, Q57

276 [Submission by Steering Committee of the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees](#), paragraphs 3.03–3.04, 4.02, 7.02

277 [Oral Evidence from Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#) 25 November 2014; Q57. See also: <http://www.wfd.org/wfd-news/latest/news.aspx?p=109776>

278 [Charles Chauvel, UNDP Submission](#), Section on Westminster Value

279 [Oral Evidence from Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP](#), 18 November 2014, Q31

280 [Oral Evidence from Rt Hon Sir Alan Haselhurst MP](#), 18 November 2014, Q21

The soft power of Westminster, as both parliamentary colleagues have mentioned, is immense, but I do not think it is understood. The Foreign Office probably understands it; I am not sure that DFID does... The soft power that this place emits is immense and we should use that.²⁸¹

120. Witnesses, and not just those based in Westminster, argued that HMG would benefit greatly from treating Westminster as an asset and building up its capacity to deliver parliamentary strengthening programmes. This would enable DFID to provide better the type of long-term and flexible ways of working described in chapter 4 rather than rely on the outsourced capacity of foreign multinational providers. As Charles Chauvel told us, it would also reflect the practices of other countries:

A number of donors have expressly made parliamentary strengthening a flagship part of their overseas development assistance, gaining significant kudos in partner countries as a result. Examples include Belgium, Japan, and the Nordic countries for the extensive assistance they provided to governance programming in the wake of the “Arab Spring”, including most notably to the successful constitutional, parliamentary, and elections programming implemented by UNDP in Tunisia. Others—such as France and India—appear to have been very successful at marrying ODA effort with the work of their domestic parliamentary institutions. The former offers significant outreach—mainly, but not exclusively—to francophone countries, via the Assemblée Nationale and the Senate, and through support to the Association Parlementaire de la Francophonie. The latter’s lower house—the Lok Sabha—operates a training centre for parliamentary staff and MPs whose programmes are increasingly well-regarded internationally. On the basis of this experience, opportunities for better branding by, and coordination between, DFID; Westminster; and Commonwealth Institutions based in London; seem apparent.²⁸²

121. However, while DFID noted that: “*UK expertise is a valued part of the range of tools available to DFID in supporting parliaments*”, it also makes clear that the value of Westminster institutions from DFID’s current perspective, is rather narrow, as sub-contractors for small scale peer-to-peer technical assistance or peer support networks.²⁸³ DFID has been cautious of using Westminster institutions to build up a UK strategic capacity and influence, noting that building UK influence and “soft power” is not a development goal.²⁸⁴ On the other hand, the new Operational Plan for DFID’s Governance Department encourages sharing the “Best of British” practice and experience in promoting good governance.²⁸⁵ The FCO acknowledged that more could be done to raise the profile of

281 [Oral Evidence from Andrew Tuggey, CPA UK](#), 18 November 2014, Q33

282 [Submission from Charles Chauvel, UNDP](#), Section on What DFID can learn from other donors

283 [DFID Submission](#), paragraphs 19, 21

284 How to Note: “We may consider working with key political organisations, such as parliaments and political parties, in order to promote the UK’s soft power. For example to promote understanding, influence, attraction (toward the UK) build international capacity (around democratic systems). Whilst an important consideration, this should not be the overriding consideration (and cannot be when considering UK-AID expenditure).”

285 Operational Plan 2011–116 for Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department (updated December 2014); p. 13

the Westminster brand,²⁸⁶ adding that there was a particular opportunity with the Magna Carta celebrations for DFID to increase the profile of the British brand of democracy.

What DFID Needs to Strengthen

122. Witnesses argued that to make better use of Westminster, DFID needed to address the following shortcomings:

Funding and Commissioning: We were told by Alina Rocha Menocal that small specialist institutions with stable and secure funding are the most effective providers of parliamentary strengthening.²⁸⁷ DFID does not provide any grant in aid for specialist UK institutions (the FCO does for WFD), though it does provide organisational grants to two UK organisations involved in parliamentary strengthening, of £1.9 million to WFD and £21.4 million to BBC Media Action in 2013–14,²⁸⁸ the former of which is included in the figures DFID reported on parliamentary strengthening and the latter not. Its commissioning of parliamentary strengthening favours large projects and large international suppliers. DFID’s limited awareness of its overall commissioning of parliamentary strengthening and the impact this has on the parliamentary strengthening sector means that it is likely to miss this fact. In response to our concerns expressed in our report on Burma, DFID has included a reference to the Westminster institutions in its How to Note providing guidance to country office staff on possible suppliers, but there has not been enough thinking by the DFID governance team centrally about how to use Westminster or an attempt to build a UK strategic capacity around Westminster, as the CEPPS programme has done in the US. This strategic aspect of commissioning Westminster-based institutions is not something that can be simply delegated to country offices—as DFID’s current approach to commissioning does.²⁸⁹

Coordination: Better coordination between DFID’s central governance team and Westminster’s international parliamentary organisations would ensure a better-informed network of parliamentary strengthening stakeholders.²⁹⁰ Submissions also highlighted the need for stronger coordination between Westminster and embassies and DFID country offices.²⁹¹ WFD told the Committee that it needed to improve its links with Embassies so that they are more aware of Westminster’s capacity.²⁹² We were also told that there are no structures for involving Westminster or keeping them aware of what DFID is up to

286 [Oral evidence from Rob Fenn](#), Head of Human Rights and Democracy Department, FCO, 25 November 2014, Q119: “The second big opportunity... is next year’s Magna Carta celebrations, which I think are going to raise the profile of the British brand. What the Palace of Westminster is doing is going to be extremely empowering for the Foreign Office itself in our soft power and public diplomacy, and we are certainly already planning to make sure that WFD benefits from that.”

287 [Alina Rocha Menocal and Tam O’Neil, ODI submission](#) paragraph 35

288 WFD’s 2013–14 Annual Report and Accounts report WFD received an accountable grant of £1.9 million from DFID. BBC Media Action’s 2013–14 Accounts report that BBC Media Action received £21.4 million from DFID’s global grant. See WFD Accounts: <http://www.wfd.org/upload/docs/WFD%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Accounts%202013-14%20.pdf> (Note 2) See BBC Media Action accounts: http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends35/0001076235_AC_20140331_E_C.pdf (Note 16)

289 [Oral Evidence, Minister of State Desmond Swayne MP, 25 November 2014](#) Q107

290 [UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Submission](#), paragraph 11.03

291 [WFD submission](#) paragraph 12

292 [Oral Evidence from Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#) Q69

globally, apart from general online resources. Yet as discussed chapter 5, 80% of parliamentary projects have been awarded by the time they are published online.

Knowledge of Parliament: The IDC has previously noted the limited direct experience of parliament and parliamentary skills amongst DFID’s governance advisers or those contractors implementing technical programmes.²⁹³ While DFID governance advisers handle a variety of projects and are necessarily drawn from a variety of specialisms, none of the DFID governance advisers in the countries with the 10 biggest parliamentary strengthening programmes have a parliamentary background.²⁹⁴ The UK branch of CPA argued that DFID should be better informed of the UK network or community of parliamentary strengthening practitioners.²⁹⁵ DFID appreciates the need for change and the new Operational Plan for DFID’s Governance Department talks about developing communities of practice to encourage sharing practices and lessons in areas like parliamentary strengthening.²⁹⁶

What Westminster Needs to Strengthen

123. Despite the fact that DFID funding for parliamentary strengthening has increased hugely in recent years, Westminster organisations have not yet been entrusted with very much of it. DFID has reservations over Westminster organisations’ capacity to manage major projects. All of the DFID parliamentary projects we reviewed in chapter 5 have a budget larger than the annual turnover of each of the Westminster providers. DFID has also identified reservations over the effectiveness of implementation of Westminster institutions²⁹⁷ and their lack of “development” experience, as compared to private sector suppliers.²⁹⁸

124. Nonetheless, DFID expressed support for strengthening the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. WFD told us that it accepted the recommendations of the draft Triennial Review and DFID welcomed WFD’s new approach.²⁹⁹

293 [Democracy and Development in Burma](#) HC821

294 While some governance advisers are long term DFID employees who have worked in a variety of sectors, a number are specific governance specialists with backgrounds in public audit or public sector reform, rule of law and human rights, or elections monitoring and promotion.

295 CPA UK identified the need for better coordination between DFID’s central governance team and Westminster’s international parliamentary organisations to ensure a better-informed network of parliamentary strengthening stakeholders. [UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Submission](#), paragraph 11.03

296 Operational Plan 2011–116 for Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department (updated December 2014); p. 17

297 When discussing the possible use of Westminster institutions, the How to Note states: “We are unlikely to promote soft power when working with an organisation that is unable to perform effectively (in terms of supporting democracy) or influence the broader system in that country. We are likely to best support soft power, by providing effective international cooperation (for example, it is the UK’s effectiveness as a development actor that is seen as a key soft power asset, not its size). As a result it is worth ensuring we are confident of positive change when providing support. We should also be confident that we are providing the most effective means of support.”

298 The How To Note highlights a preference for using development specialists. “Increasingly donors are using the ‘technical approach’ (using a private sector service provider) which has some benefits in terms of the delivery agent being more able and likely to have broader developmental expertise.”

299 [Oral Evidence from Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#) Q69 [Oral evidence from Jonathan Hargreaves, DFID Head of GOSAC](#), Q108: “I was listening, as the Minister was, very carefully to what Anthony Smith said earlier in terms of the plans to improve the Westminster offer overall through the improvements to the offer of WFD itself, which we very much welcome, and we are looking forward to seeing the outcome of the Triennial Review and the response to that come through, and what kind of improved offer by WFD itself may emerge. That is very encouraging for us, but we are also interested in whether it is possible to link up

125. Different witnesses suggested that Westminster needs to strengthen in the following ways:

Coordination: A number of submissions and witnesses argued that it would strengthen “Westminster’s offer” if the organisations were better coordinated.³⁰⁰ Poor coordination limits Westminster’s capacity to take on major projects and carries a risk of rivalries between organisations. WFD noted that acting together, the UK could offer expertise and programme experience as strong as that of any other country. In 2011, the Houses considered consolidating their international work, but in the end decided not to proceed with consolidating at that time; this puts a premium on effective coordination. Crispin Poyser of the Overseas Office informed us:³⁰¹

It has some advantages in that we can let 1,000 flowers bloom. The fact that we have a CPA UK, a BGIPU, a Commons Overseas Office, a Lords Overseas Office and a Westminster Foundation means that they can all do their different things in a way quite flexibly and quite imaginatively, but it does lack a certain cohesion as a result. I do sometimes wonder how it looks to the outside world when they do not really know who they are interacting with when it comes to trying to get hold of the UK Parliament.

What can we do in the absence of what would have been an international relations department? It does come down to more systematic co-ordination and good personal relations between all the players involved. We have over the last few years tried to develop a more systematic, regular set of meetings... We are putting in place such structures as we can to try to make sure that we do all know what each other is doing and we are contributing as effectively as we can within that.

CPA UK also thought that in recent months the coordination mechanisms between Westminster organisations have been improved. The WFD is looking to rebuild the Westminster Consortium as an established network of organisations that collectively can provide a stronger breadth of experience and expertise, and so UK providers can better access external funding. It argued that better coordination would also ensure a more coherent UK approach.³⁰² DFID informed us that a Westminster network, including coordination with the devolved assemblies, would allow it to raise the profile of

better with other UK-based organisations and provide a more united and combined offer. That will be tremendously interesting to people in country offices who are looking for the best providers. We do need providers who can provide, as we have discussed, both long-term and flexible provision of assistance. That is just the reality of the kind of work that we need to do and the kind of work that we think is going to be effective. If there is a stronger offer coming from the UK... that will be satisfying both a development outcome and possibly the more diplomatic win that is potentially there.”

300 [WFD submission](#) paragraph 15: “If the range of relevant British official organisations—such as WFD, CPA, BGIPU, Overseas Office of the House of Commons, British Council, the NAO, the BBC and others - can collaborate effectively, then the UK’s contribution to democracy-strengthening work internationally could increase significantly.”

301 [Crispin Poyser, Clerk of the House of Commons Overseas Office oral evidence](#), Q52. See also: Overseas Office submission, paragraph 24: “Although the House recently decided (for the time being) not to centralise its various international units, this is one of the areas where a more centralised approach to international work might have delivered particular benefits. The absence of a combined capacity-building body places an added premium on effective cooperation and coordination between the House administration and CPA UK and BGIPU, as well as with WFD and NAO; in addition to our day-to-day contacts, we have in place an informal but structured programme of contact group meetings between the two Overseas Offices and CPA UK/BGIPU and are seeking to extend this to include WFD and NAO.”

302 [Oral Evidence from Antony Smith, Chief Executive, Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#), 25 November 2014; Q74; See also: WFD Submission, paragraph 15

Westminster and UK institutions across its network of governance advisers, and would help DFID draw more effectively on the resources in Westminster.³⁰³

Skills and capacities: Westminster organisations need to strengthen their specialist skills and capacities in key areas—the different organisations have different strengths and weaknesses. First, programme management: Westminster organisations need to ensure they have sufficient project management skills for larger, long-term development projects rather than just short term visits. WFD recognises it needs to strengthen its project management skills, since its shift from being a funding organisation to an organisation implementing programmes in 2009.³⁰⁴ Secondly, WFD indicated that Westminster organisations needed to “build up UK expertise to be more coherent and better co-ordinated”;³⁰⁵ currently UK expertise is dispersed across government and across the variety of Westminster organisations. Similarly, structures for learning knowledge sharing and professional development should be improved. WFD thought a revived Westminster Consortium could help achieve this, and help strengthen Westminster’s parliamentary strengthening community. Thirdly, WFD have no permanent staff who have worked in a UK Parliament. The House of Commons Overseas Offices told the Committee that Parliament would be willing to consider whether it would be possible to assist WFD in strengthening its parliamentary skills, including possible secondments.³⁰⁶

Capacity: Westminster organisations will need to ensure they have sufficient capacity to meet expanded demand. Much of the work of Westminster organisations requires working with current or recent parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, and draws on the same body of practitioners, many of whom also have a day job. This capacity would be further stretched by significant expansion of DFID’s use of Westminster. As Antony Smith told us:³⁰⁷

It certainly is right that there is very strong pressure on Members of Parliament. We have still seen ourselves, but CPA and IPU say the same thing, a strong interest from many Members in doing this type of work, but it has to be rationed very carefully. That means ensuring that we have not just kept drawing on the same individuals who have done this work in the past, but also ensure that others who might have an interest and time have an opportunity to do it. It means looking at politicians from the other assemblies, because sometimes that works quite well with some of the countries that we are in; the Scottish Parliament has had strong relationships with certain countries that we work with. We are looking a bit at former Members of Parliament as well.

The House of Commons Overseas Office stressed that while parliamentary strengthening is a priority for the House of Commons, having been identified in its new Corporate

303 [Oral evidence from Jonathan Hargreaves, DFID Head of GOSAC](#), Q108

304 WFD began implementing programmes rather than just funding them in 2009.

305 [Oral Evidence from Antony Smith, Chief Executive, Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#) November 2014; Q81

306 [Oral Evidence from Clerk of the Overseas Office](#), 18 November 2014; Q39

307 [Oral Evidence from Antony Smith, Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#), 25 November 2014; Q72

Plan,³⁰⁸ ambitions to increase Westminster’s parliamentary strengthening work are limited by its current capacities.³⁰⁹ It might be necessary for the House to increase its current headcount if required to staff additional parliamentary strengthening work with the additional costs offset by project funding. Other key UK bodies, such as the NAO, might also need to be resourced to have adequate capacity to support an increased UK offer.

Impact: Westminster needs to improve its ability to monitor and demonstrate its impact if DFID is to make more use of it. DFID prides itself on commissioning based on evidence and Value for Money and insists its partners monitor their impact. With DFID planning to move its funding to a Payment By Results model, the need for parliamentary strengthening practitioners to demonstrate their impact and results is likely to become more and more pressing. This means Westminster organisations need to work with DFID to find appropriate measures for the outcomes of its parliamentary strengthening work. The new Operational Plan for DFID Governance Department talks about encouraging implementing organisations like WFD to have an increased results focus.³¹⁰ This is a challenging task—since genuine impact in strengthening parliaments takes many years. Moreover, this is an area where different areas of government evaluate impact quite differently.³¹¹ Global Partners Governance note that the standard approaches to evaluating parliamentary strengthening work often:

Over-emphasise quantitative measures, such as whether an implementer has spent the money they said they would, trained the requisite number of people or produced the estimated number of publications. These measures tell us something about activity, but very little about impact. Compared with other parts of government, business or the public sector, the development field is still reliant on some fairly rudimentary measurement techniques that reveal very little about impact or effect.³¹²

Similarly, CPA UK observed that the credibility of Inter-Parliamentary bodies currently suffers because of the difficulties in evaluating the impact of small-scale programmes.³¹³ There needs to be flexibility in setting evaluation criteria, and realism in recognising the limitations and difficulties in assessing parliamentary development work. UK organisations are attempting to meet this challenge. The UK branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and British Group of the Inter Parliamentary Union have been closely involved in the development of the IPU’s Common Principles (see Figure 3 in chapter 4) which among other things aim to help provide assurance over the quality of parliamentary strengthening programmes.³¹⁴ The CPA has also developed its ‘Benchmarks

308 The Corporate Plan for 2014/15–2016/17 commits to “supporting other parliaments, especially those in transition to democracy” See: [House of Commons Overseas Office Submission](#), paragraph 2 and [House of Commons Corporate Plan 2014/15 to 2016/17](#)

309 [Oral evidence from Clerk of Overseas Office](#), 18 November 2014; Q39

310 Operational Plan 2011–116 for Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department (updated December 2014); p. 18

311 This may be changing. The FCO and DFID reported to the Committee that they are coordinating better across government how they monitor the outcomes of their projects. [FCO oral evidence](#) 25 November 2015. Q120

312 [Greg Power submission](#), paragraph 3(iv)

313 [CPA UK submission](#) paragraph 9.04

314 [Oral Evidence from Alistair Burt MP](#), Chair of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and [Sir Alan Haselhurst MP](#), Chair of the UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, 18 November 2014, Q24–25

for Democratic Legislatures' which allow parliaments to self-assess against regional benchmarks and monitor their progress against these benchmarks over time.³¹⁵ Global Partners Governance is developing its own new measures that capture political and behavioural change.³¹⁶

Conclusions and Recommendations

126. The Westminster 'brand' is a national asset and Westminster institutions are in demand, especially, but not only, in countries with a Westminster-style parliamentary system. Moreover, Westminster institutions are well placed to work with 'southern' partners. However, DFID is failing to make adequate use of Westminster-based institutions. This is largely a matter of scale. DFID is used to working with large contractors; the average budget for the 37 DFID programmes which include a parliamentary strengthening component is £14.1 million, which is far larger than the total annual budgets for all of the Westminster organisations combined. In addition, sometimes its governance advisers' rarely have a parliamentary background and lack knowledge of Westminster. We believe that DFID has failed to support the development of a world beating UK capacity to strengthen parliamentary institutions abroad, and have failed to capitalise on the global respect and demand for the Westminster brand. We believe that DFID should address these failings. We recommend that

- *DFID and the FCO recognise that the Westminster brand is a national asset for its parliamentary strengthening work and make this clear in advice to its governance advisers, particularly in their joint How to Note.*
- *DFID make more use of Westminster organisations, especially where there is a demand for their expertise.*
- *DFID should set a goal for the delivering a significantly greater proportion of its parliamentary strengthening work by UK-based institutions within 5 years*

127. However, changes should also be made at Westminster. DFID and the FCO are confronted by a host of institutions at Westminster. We recommend that

- *the organisations at the Houses of Parliament be better coordinated with a single point of contact. Consideration should be given to revisiting the establishment of an International Relations Directorate*
- *the Houses of Parliament and other UK institutions ensure that they have adequate capacity to undertake parliamentary strengthening work as this grows. The Public Accounts Commission consider whether the NAO has adequate capacity to do parliamentary strengthening as Parliament directs*

315 [CPA UK Submission](#), paragraph 2.03. CPA has been developing its benchmarks since 2006. Regional benchmarks have been established for regions including: Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands. See also: http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/Mem/Resources/Documents/Benchmarks_for_Democratic_Legislatures/Mem/Document%20Library/Benchmarks_for_Democratic_Legislatures/Documents%20on%20Benchmarks%20for%20Democracy.aspx?hkey=a08dbc0a-e05e-4f9e-a737-ca6a65eb95f4

316 [Greg Power submission](#), paragraph 3(iv)

- *consideration be given to the establishment of a Westminster 'hub' which would bring together UK institutions with different kinds of expertise, including the media, the law, and financial scrutiny, and enable them to cooperate rather than compete, and would be able to undertake larger projects*
- *as DFID places great emphasis on 'its suppliers' demonstrating evidence of their impact, Westminster institutions work with DFID to establish sensible non-bureaucratic ways to demonstrate the value and impact of their work.*

128. We welcome the changes which WFD is undertaking under its new CEO. To assist these reforms we recommend WFD form closer links with the Houses of Parliament; and that options be explored to second staff from Parliament to WFD and vice versa.

129. During 2015, the FCO and DFID should use the occasion of the anniversaries of the Magna Carta and the Simon De Montfort Parliament to promote the rule of law, the importance of parliaments and the value of Westminster organisations.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. DFID is showing global leadership in different initiatives to promote better governance and address a number of the key risks in global development. Its work ranges from lobbying for goals on accountability in the post-2015 MDG framework to developing its own sophisticated country-level anti-corruption strategies. We commend DFID for these initiatives. *We urge the Government to continue to press for “accountable, inclusive governments, including strong parliaments” in the post-2015 MDG development framework.* (Paragraph 15)
2. As Lord Norton points out, donors have spent great sums on programmes supporting elections, but these have limited value if they are not followed by effective parliaments. Moreover, parliaments are at the centre of a number of DFID’s priorities, including poverty reduction and economic growth, security, accountability, transparency and anti-corruption work DFID is recognising the importance of parliaments and the political context in which development operates, but we believe DFID could do more to make the most of the opportunities offered by parliamentary strengthening. *DFID needs to consider whether it has the resources, approach, and systems to maximise the value that parliamentary strengthening offers. 2015 is the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta, and 750th anniversary of the Simon de Montfort Parliament. As the Foreign and Commonwealth Office witness highlighted, this provides an opportunity to reaffirm the value of parliaments in the contemporary world, but also to reassess the UK’s role in promoting democracy and parliaments around the world.* (Paragraph 16)
3. *We recommend that DFID* (Paragraph 17)
 - *recognise the role of parliaments in its work on poverty reduction, human rights, equality, economic growth, security, transparency, accountability and anti-corruption;*
 - *in particular, include the role of the national Parliament in each of its country-level anti-corruption strategies when it next revises them*
 - *report to national Parliaments and their relevant departmental committees its sectoral spending in countries where it has bilateral programmes from 2014–15 onwards, and include its intention to do so in its partnership agreements with recipient countries.*
4. We welcome DFID’s increased commitment to parliamentary strengthening. We agree with DFID that its relatively low levels of spending on parliamentary strengthening do not necessarily mean it is a low priority; we are aware that inexpensive projects can be very effective. However, the fact that DFID does not have any governance performance indicators specifically focused on Parliament and that its Annual Report does not refer to parliamentary strengthening suggest this area of work is not a priority. *We recommend that DFID:* (Paragraph 30)
 - *develop a Key Performance Indicator for parliamentary strengthening in its governance pillar for its Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Operational Plan, as it has for elections and for accountability institutions more generally, that*

reflects its ambitions for parliamentary strengthening, particularly for its work with parliamentary committees.

- *conduct an annual analysis of its global spending on parliamentary strengthening and other areas governance and its performance to ensure its spending and programmes reflect its priorities.*
 - *include an analysis of its parliamentary strengthening work in its Annual Report.*
 - *ensure that the resources devoted to parliamentary strengthening compared to elections and other areas of governance reflect its assessment of their respective importance.*
5. *We recommend that DFID develop a better understanding of the total resources it is using in its parliamentary strengthening and other governance work, including staff time, and that it assess the viability of improving its systems to allow this, rather than relying on time-consuming manual exercises with country offices. While it requires a better understanding of the resources it devotes to parliamentary strengthening it is clear that DFID is one the largest spenders in this area in the world. We recommend that DFID have more than one specialist working full-time on parliamentary strengthening and that DFID ensure that all its governance advisers improve their knowledge of parliaments and improve their links with the UK Parliament and other Westminster-based institutions. (Paragraph 31)*
 6. *In conclusion, while DFID has significant numbers of parliamentary strengthening programmes, in 2013–14 it only spent money on parliamentary strengthening in a minority of its bilateral programmes. We recommend that the DFID/FCO How to Note in its final form adopt a more positive tone and stress the desirability of including parliamentary strengthening programmes in all its priority countries except where there are very powerful arguments for not doing so. We welcome DFID’s recognition that political co-operation is an essential part of parliamentary strengthening; it must not shy away from working with political parties. (Paragraph 76)*
 7. *DFID has few Committee strengthening programmes and we welcome the Minister’s support for work in this area. We recommend that DFID include a parliamentary dimension in all major development programmes (e.g. support for the health committee in a health programme) for any programme above a certain threshold (e.g. £10 million). It should be one of DFID’s key goals to help to create effective parliamentary scrutiny of the Executive, especially in the policy areas in which UK aid is spent; this could strengthen the in-country checks on how effectively British taxpayers money contributes to the achievement of the country’s development plans. (Paragraph 77)*
 8. *There is increasing recognition by practitioners and donors, including DFID, of the characteristics of best practice in parliamentary strengthening programmes. We particularly commend: (Paragraph 78)*
 - *long term programmes with the ability to respond quickly and flexibly when opportunities arise.*

- combining parliamentary strengthening with associated relevant work, particularly with the media;
 - however, combined work it is not necessary part of parliamentary programmes and such work should not be a substitute for them; it can also be appropriate to do strengthening projects working just with parliaments.
 - political awareness in the design and execution of programmes- it cannot be a simple technocratic exercise.
 - recognition that multi-party politics gives voters greater choice and therefore greater leverage over their MPs and governments. This, of course, makes inter-party rivalry a common and welcome feature of a healthy parliament. *DFID's parliamentary strengthening work should not shy away from working with political parties.*
9. We welcome DFID's policy shift towards a more political approach to development, and the fact that it is making work with parliaments a higher priority, but we note that there is some concern that while DFID is proud of the political economy analysis it undertakes, its monitoring, results and logframe processes prevent it from making full use of the analysis in the way it implements programmes. We welcome DFID's recognition of this and recognition that it needs to make changes in the way it evaluates programmes. *We recommend that DFID ensure it has the right processes and incentives for staff to implement programmes with the characteristics described in the chapter. We recommend that DFID and the FCO develop a long term and realistic approach to evaluating parliamentary strengthening programmes. We recommend that DFID and the FCO jointly undertake a study of what they have funded and what has worked.* (Paragraph 79)
 10. While there can be excellent co-ordination between the FCO, DFID and others locally, as we saw in Burma, this is not always the case centrally. We welcome the Minister's recognition of the need for discussions between the FCO, DFID and others, clarifying how HMG sees its role in parliamentary strengthening and its priorities, geographically and thematically, *but we recommend that the Government go further establishing a strategy for promoting democracy and parliaments to help coordinate the wide variety of UK bodies and set priorities for those working on parliamentary strengthening. We endorse Alistair Burt's proposal that there should be more discussions between Government and practitioners about these issues.* (Paragraph 80)
 11. DFID puts a high value on good project management skills and prefers to commission large governance projects of which parliamentary strengthening is a part. As a result it tends not to commission small specialist organisations, but provides large contracts to big sometimes non-specialist organisations which subcontract to others. (Paragraph 106)
 12. We see the advantages of using large organisations such as the UNDP for its parliamentary strengthening work in some circumstances, e.g. where a several donors are involved or in some FCAs. We were, however, surprised to discover the extent to which DFID uses large US organisations, which are alleged to have an

unfair advantage because of the CEPPs system; this runs the risk that UK taxpayers' money is being used to promote a switch from parliamentary to less accountable, US-style Presidential systems. *We recommend that DFID support the development of world-class suppliers in the UK, and over a five year period substantially increase its use of UK suppliers where there is a clear demand for them.* (Paragraph 107)

13. *DFID does not know how its commissioning is affecting providers in the parliamentary strengthening sector; we recommend that it acquires this information and tracks which subcontractors are receiving its funds.* (Paragraph 108)
14. The EU spends significant sums on parliamentary strengthening; the UK taxpayer contributes about 15% of this. We are seriously concerned by the criticisms we heard of the EU commissioning in this area, including the use of non-specialist contractors which are adept at navigating the institutions labyrinthine procurement procedures and its willingness to pay far more than is needed. DFID points out that the Multilateral Aid Review gave the EU a good rating, but this does not mean that it is good across the board. *We recommend that DFID examine the allegations and in the light of its findings press for reform.* (Paragraph 109)
15. *We recommend that DFID commission more expert organisations; and take a more hands-on approach to managing parliamentary work. We recommend that* (Paragraph 110)
 - *a joint DFID/FCO fund be established to commission expert organisations; this would also enable work to be commissioned at short notice when opportunities arise. A joint fund would combine the differing and important skills of the two departments. The fund could be on a similar scale to the £21.4 million which BBC Media Action received as a global grant from DFID in 2013–14.*
 - *when DFID has to commission larger suppliers, it nominate expert organisations to which larger suppliers should sub-contract; we welcome UNDPs willingness to do this, but DFID needs to ensure that too much is not top-sliced by the larger supplier.*
 - *DFID improve its ability to act as an intelligent commissioner of parliamentary strengthening both in country and centrally; it should increase the number of specialist experts at the centre and ensure its governance advisers are aware of the importance of parliaments and develop closer links with the UK Parliament.*
 - *DFID support the development of world class suppliers in the UK.*
16. The Westminster 'brand' is a national asset and Westminster institutions are in demand, especially, but not only, in countries with a Westminster-style parliamentary system. Moreover, Westminster institutions are well placed to work with 'southern' partners. However, DFID is failing to make adequate use of Westminster-based institutions. This is largely a matter of scale. DFID is used to working with large contractors; the average budget for the 37 DFID programmes which include a parliamentary strengthening component is £14.1 million, which is far larger than the total annual budgets for all of the Westminster organisations combined. In addition, sometimes its governance advisers' rarely have a parliamentary background and lack knowledge of Westminster. We believe that

DFID has failed to support the development of a world beating UK capacity to strengthen parliamentary institutions abroad, and have failed to capitalise on the global respect and demand for the Westminster brand. We believe that DFID should address these failings. *We recommend that* (Paragraph 126)

- *DFID and the FCO recognise that the Westminster brand is a national asset for its parliamentary strengthening work and make this clear in advice to its governance advisers, particularly in their joint How to Note.*
 - *DFID make more use of Westminster organisations, especially where there is a demand for their expertise.*
 - *DFID should set a goal for the delivering a significantly greater proportion of its parliamentary strengthening work by UK-based institutions within 5 years*
17. *However, changes should also be made at Westminster. DFID and the FCO are confronted by a host of institutions at Westminster. We recommend that* (Paragraph 127)
- *the organisations at the Houses of Parliament be better coordinated with a single point of contact. Consideration should be given to revisiting the establishment of an International Relations Directorate*
 - *the Houses of Parliament and other UK institutions ensure that they have adequate capacity to undertake parliamentary strengthening work as this grows. The Public Accounts Commission consider whether the NAO has adequate capacity to do parliamentary strengthening as Parliament directs*
 - *consideration be given to the establishment of a Westminster ‘hub’ which would bring together UK institutions with different kinds of expertise, including the media, the law, and financial scrutiny, and enable them to cooperate rather than compete, and would be able to undertake larger projects*
 - *as DFID places great emphasis on ‘its suppliers’ demonstrating evidence of their impact, Westminster institutions work with DFID to establish sensible non-bureaucratic ways to demonstrate the value and impact of their work.*
18. *We welcome the changes which WFD is undertaking under its new CEO. To assist these reforms we recommend WFD form closer links with the Houses of Parliament; and that options be explored to second staff from Parliament to WFD and vice versa.* (Paragraph 128)
19. *During 2015, the FCO and DFID should use the occasion of the anniversaries of the Magna Carta and the Simon De Montfort Parliament to promote the rule of law, the importance of parliaments and the value of Westminster organisations.* (Paragraph 129)

Formal Minutes

Wednesday 21 January 2015

Members present:

Sir Malcolm Bruce, in the Chair

Sir Hugh Bayley

Pauline Latham OBE

Sir Peter Luff

Mr Michael McCann

Fiona Bruce

Jeremy Lefroy

Fiona O'Donnell

Draft Report, (*Parliamentary Strengthening*) proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 130 read and agreed to.

Annex and Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Ninth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Adjourned till Monday 26 January at 3.30 pm

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry page at www.parliament.uk/indcom

Tuesday 18 November 2014

Question number

Greg Power, Director, Global Partners Governance, **Alina Rocha Menocal**, University of Birmingham and Overseas Development Institute, and **Charles Chauvel**, former New Zealand MP and United Nations Development Programme

Rt Hon Alan Haselhurst MP, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch, **Andrew Tuggey**, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch, and **Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP**, British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Crispin Poyser, Overseas Office, House of Commons, and **Francois Duluc**, Assemblée Nationale

[Q1-55](#)

Tuesday 25 November 2014

Anthony Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and **Dina Melhem**, Head of Middle East and North Africa Team, Westminster Foundation for Democracy

Rt Hon Desmond Swayne MP, Minister of State, Department for International Development, **Jonathan Hargreaves**, Head of Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department, DFID, **Shiona Ruhemann**, Senior Adviser, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department, DFID, and **Rob Fenn**, Head of the Human Rights and Democracy Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

[Q56-132](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry web page at www.parliament.uk/indcom. PAS numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Adam Smith International ([PAS0015](#))
- 2 Alina Rocha Menocal And Tam O'neil ([PAS0023](#))
- 3 BBC Media Action ([PAS0037](#))
- 4 British Council ([PAS0027](#))
- 5 British Group Of The Inter-Parliamentary Union ([PAS0008](#))
- 6 Capac Annex A ([PAS0014](#))
- 7 Charles Chauvel ([PAS0020](#))
- 8 Charles Chauvel Annex A ([PAS0033](#))
- 9 Cpa Uk ([PAS0013](#))
- 10 D. Toornstra ([PAS0007](#))
- 11 Dai ([PAS0003](#))
- 12 Department For International Development ([PAS0010](#))
- 13 Department For International Development Annex A ([PAS0031](#))
- 14 Department For International Development Annex B ([PAS0035](#))
- 15 Digital Democracy Commission, House Of Commons ([PAS0028](#))
- 16 Dr. Rachel Kleinfeld ([PAS0026](#))
- 17 Enterprise And Parliamentary Dialogue International ([PAS0016](#))
- 18 European Commission ([PAS0034](#))
- 19 Franklin De Vrieze ([PAS0039](#))
- 20 Global Partners Governance ([PAS0017](#))
- 21 Global Partners Governance Annex A ([PAS0038](#))
- 22 International Network For The Availability Of Scientific Publications ([PAS0022](#))
- 23 International Republican Institute ([PAS0029](#))
- 24 Inter-Parliamentary Union ([PAS0009](#))
- 25 Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung ([PAS0036](#))
- 26 Lord Norton Of Louth, Professor Of Government, University Of Hull ([PAS0030](#))
- 27 Netherlands Institute For Multiparty Democracy (Nimd) ([PAS0032](#))
- 28 Overseas Office of The House of Commons ([PAS0024](#))
- 29 Parliamentary Centre ([PAS0011](#))
- 30 Parliamentary Forum On Small Arms And Light Weapons ([PAS0001](#))
- 31 Scottish Parliament & Business Exchange (Spbe) ([PAS0004](#))
- 32 Simon Maxwell ([PAS0002](#))
- 33 Soas/Hansard Society ([PAS0012](#))
- 34 Tim Fenton ([PAS0025](#))
- 35 Uk Aid Network And Bond ([PAS0006](#))
- 36 Westminster Foundation For Democracy ([PAS0005](#))
- 37 Womankind Worldwide ([PAS0019](#))
- 38 World Bank ([PAS0021](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/indcom.

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2014–15

First Report	UK Support for Humanitarian Relief in the Middle East	HC 248 (673)
Second Report	Scrutiny of Government's UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2012, the Government's Quarterly Reports from October 2012 to September 2013, and the Government's policies on arms exports and international arms control issues	HC 186 (CM 8935)
Third Report	The UK's Development Work in the Occupied Palestinian Territories	HC 565 (756)
Fourth Report	The Independent Commission for Aid Impact's Performance and Annual Report 2013–14	HC 523 (812)
Fifth Report	Strengthening Health Systems in Developing Countries	HC 246 (816)
Sixth Report	Recovery and Development in Sierra Leone & Liberia	HC 247 (863)
Seventh Report	Appointment of the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact	HC 741
Eighth Report	Responses to the Ebola Crisis	HC 876

Session 2013–14

First Report	Global Food Security	HC 176 (626)
Second Report	Violence Against Women and Girls	HC 107 (624)
Third Report	Scrutiny of Arms Exports and Arms Control (2013): Scrutiny of the Government's UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2011 published in July 2012, the Government's Quarterly Reports from October 2011 to September 2012, and the government's policies on arms exports and international arms control issues	HC 205 (CM 8707)
Fourth Report	Multilateral Aid Review	HC 349 (694)
Fifth Report	ICAI's Annual Report 2012-13	HC 566 (946)
Sixth Report	Implications for development in the event of Scotland becoming an independent country	HC 692
Seventh Report	The Closure of DFID's Bilateral Aid Programmes: The Case of South Africa	HC 822
Eighth Report	The Future of UK Development Co-operation: Phase 1: Development Finance	HC 334

Ninth Report	Democracy and Development in Burma	HC 821
Tenth Report	Department for International Development's Performance in 2012–13: the Departmental Annual Report 2012–13	HC 693 (522)
Eleventh Report	Disability and Development	HC 947 (336)

Session 2012–13

First Report	DFID's contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria	HC 126 (609)
Second Report	Scrutiny of Arms Exports (2012): UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2010, Quarterly Reports for July to December 2010 and January to September 2011, The Government's Review of arms exports to the Middle East and North Africa, and wider arms control issues	HC 419 (CM 8441)
Third Report	The Development Situation in Malawi	HC 118 (641)
Fourth Report	Tax in Developing Countries: Increasing Resources for Development	HC 130 (708)
Fifth Report	DFID's programme in Zambia	HC 119 (759)
Sixth Report	Afghanistan: Development progress and prospects after 2014	HC 403 (862)
Seventh Report	UK Aid to Rwanda	HC 726 (949)
Eighth Report	Post-2015 Development Goals	HC 657 (1065)
Ninth Report	Department for International Development's Annual Report and Accounts 2011–12	HC 751(1098)
Tenth Report	Pakistan	HC 725

Session 2010–12

First Report	Appointment of the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact	HC 551
Second Report	The 2010 Millennium Development Goals Review Summit	HC 534 (HC 959)
Third Report	Department For International Development Annual Report & Resource Accounts 2009–10	HC 605 (1043)
Fourth Report	The World Bank	HC 999 (1044)
Fifth Report	The Future of CDC	HC 607 (1045)
Sixth Report	Scrutiny of Arms Export Controls (2011): UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2009, Quarterly Reports for 2010, licensing policy and review of export control legislation	HC 686 (CM 8079)
Seventh Report	The Humanitarian Response to the Pakistan Floods	HC 615 (1435)
Eighth Report	The Future of DFID's Programme in India	HC 616 (1486)
Ninth Report	DFID's Role in Building Infrastructure in Developing Countries	HC 848 (1721)

Tenth Report	The Closure of DFID's Bilateral Aid Programme in Burundi	HC 1134 (1730)
Eleventh Report	Financial Crime and Development	HC 847 (1859)
Twelfth Report	Working Effectively in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: DRC and Rwanda	HC 1133 (1872)
Thirteenth Report	Private Foundations	HC1557 (1916)
Fourteenth Report	Department for International Development Annual Report and Resource Accounts 2010-11 and Business Plan 2011-15	HC 1569 (107)
Fifteenth Report	South Sudan: Prospects for Peace and Development	HC 1570 (426)
Sixteenth Report	EU Development Assistance	HC 1680 (427)