In 2002, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported legislative development in 51 countries. Key UNDP partners in this area include the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU); the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance; the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) in the United States; the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in the United Kingdom; the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Germany; the Parliamentary Centre in Canada; the Forum for Women in Democracy in Uganda and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum.

Electoral Assistance
UNDP provided electoral assistance in 24 countries in 2002. In Sierra Leone, the institution played a significant role in the May 2002 parliamentary and presidential elections, which constituted a major step toward peace in that war-torn country. UNDP helped organize the National Consultative Conference that charted the way forward for the elections. It then aided the National Electoral Commission to organize them; launched civic education programmes to promote participation and enable citizens to better understand the issues; and supported the National Democratic Institute and the Westminster Foundation in training and deploying more than 2,000 election observers and agents of political parties.

UNDP also supported the first democratic election of a Constituent Assembly in Timor-Leste, in August 2001, through a comprehensive programme of technical assistance including civic education, support to the independent electoral commission, and the creation of a political party resource centre that helped put all electoral contenders on a level playing field. In 2002, UNDP offered training on the roles and responsibilities of legislators for members of the country’s Parliamentary Secretariat and other parliamentarians.

Technical advice offered in 2002 by UNDP in Cambodia helped establish a national electoral commission and led to a major reform of the laws governing the national Assembly. Ongoing technical assistance is expected to lead to further improvements in the Cambodian electoral system.

Constitutional Reform
UNDP assists in drafting constitutions and parliamentary, basic and organic laws, and it supports consultations with civil society on reform of legal frameworks. For instance, UNDP supported the Constituent Assembly of Timor-Leste, by working with the IPU to conduct an orientation programme for the newly elected members and providing ongoing technical assistance to the assembly members as they drafted their country’s new constitution, which was ratified in March 2002. In Tajikistan, following a cease-fire in civil war and subsequent elections, UNDP assisted the new parliament in drafting its charter and parliamentary rules.

Strengthening Legislatures’ Internal Organization
UNDP assists in drafting rules of procedure, developing law making processes, improving parliamentary libraries and information systems, and professionalizing the parliamentary civil service. For example, in Peru, UNDP helped create an electronic mail system and intranet that connects all congressional offices, as well as a database for congress. These changes allow the Congress to maintain a better tracking system of draft laws, improve the research mechanisms for drafting of laws and strengthen the institutional history of the Congress.

In other countries such as Benin, Kazakhstan and Mozambique, UNDP’s assistance focuses on improving parliamentary oversight, internal organization and strengthening the committee system.

Training for Legislators and Staff
Provides orientation programmes for new parliamentari-
ans and targeted training for parliamentarians and their staff on topics such as legislative drafting. In several countries in Africa, UNDP and the IPU have been conducting national and regional seminars for parliamentarians and their staff on the budget process. In Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam, UNDP has provided advice on the legislative process, including seminars for members, staff and representatives of all branches of government on the oversight role of the legislature. In Rwanda, UNDP, in collaboration with the IPU, has provided leadership training for women parliamentarians.

Support for Civil Society and the Media
UNDP focuses on outside actors, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the media, that can impact the legislative process. For example, in Uganda, UNDP is working with the Forum for Women in Democracy to strengthen the involvement of grassroots women in the budget process. In Indonesia, UNDP supported the establishment of a Media Centre inside the National Assembly and helped journalists and politicians establish a code of conduct for interaction. In Tajikistan, UNDP has trained political party representatives on their role in a democratic society and on the role and function of a professional parliament.

Constituency Relations
UNDP works in countries including Niger (with NDI) and Zimbabwe to train legislators and their staff to communicate more effectively with their constituents, including through the involvement of civil society in public hearings and televised debates. For instance, the new UNDP-supported Web site for the Parliament of Zimbabwe allows everybody with Internet access to contact their Parliamentarians and to study committee reports, bills and parliamentary debates.

Policy Development
In several countries, UNDP is assisting in the development of human rights legislation and parliamentary human rights commissions. The institution also offers technical assistance on designing policies that enable effective governance. In Paraguay, amid the political and economic upheaval of last year, UNDP helped develop a “White Book” that made recommendations for the improvement of the legal and regulatory framework for democratic governance. The project brought together diverse stakeholders—between whom communication had broken down—including parliamentarians, political parties, NGOs, scholars and journalists, reinforcing UNDP’s comparative advantage as a neutral broker for dialogue. UNDP also helped develop the country’s National Strategy to Fight Poverty.

UNDP at the Regional Level
At the regional level, UNDP is an advocate for a greater appreciation for the role of parliaments in governance processes. UNDP is working in partnership with other organizations to develop tools for parliaments to become involved in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Process and to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective in budgetary processes. In 2001, UNDP organized a forum for representatives from 14 national legislatures from Pacific Island States; at the Forum those legislators agreed on Guiding Principles of Best Practice for Legislatures; those Principles were subsequently endorsed by their Heads of Government.

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