

Country: Austria & Zambia

IPU geopolitical group: African Group & Twelve Plus Group

The Austrian Parliament & the National Assembly of Zambia

Focus area: Partnerships for the SDGs.

Key highlights

- Partnerships for the SDGs between parliaments across the global can reinforce shared values and vision to influence the democratic legitimacy of the transparency and accountability parliamentary mechanisms, ensuring that the SDG implementation is inclusive.
- Explore how new technology and digital tools can create additional avenues for parliaments to engage citizens in the oversight of government activities, budgeting and law-making.
- Exchange of experiences and good practices between parliaments can help put forward “workable methods” for the education of children and youth on democratic governance and sustainable development.

Summary

The NorthSouthDialogue of Parliaments (PNSD) was an initiative funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) and implemented by the Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC) which supported collaboration between the Austrian Parliament and partner parliaments in the global south with the objective to strengthen their oversight functions and promote the foundations for democratic governance with strong institutions based on transparent, representative, accessible, effective and accountable mechanisms. Another major objective of the initiative was to foster people-centered and poverty-focused development policies and legislation to ensure that no one is left behind.

From 2017 to 2019 the PNSD facilitated a targeted partnership between the Austrian Parliament and the National Assembly of Zambia that focused on three main areas related to SDGs achievement:

- Information and communications technology (ICT) and educational programmes for the National Assembly of Zambia, including: (i) the development of a new ICT strategy that will contribute to a more efficient workflow within the parliament, as well as to enhancing communication with and engagement of citizens to encourage their participation in the legislative process in Zambia; and (ii) the development of a democratic education programme for children and adolescents to promote the principles of democratic governance and the role of parliament in the democratization process. Activities included the development of a target-group-oriented and pedagogically effective educational programme aimed at encouraging youth interest in political participation as future active players in the national democratic system.
- Through a bilateral peer-to-peer exchange coordinated by a joint parliamentary peer group consisting of Austrian and Zambian members of parliament (MPs), facilitated the creation of

appropriate national frameworks for the achievement of SDG target 4.4 (increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant technical skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship); SDG target 4.7 (enhance the knowledge of youth and adults to promote sustainable development and lifestyles); and SDG target 3.7 (promote information and education on sexual and reproductive health).

The overall objective of the partnership was to contribute to identifying policy areas or options for MPs to enable progress on the sustainable development discourse and national priorities in Zambia through the creation of relevant legal frameworks, while ensuring accountability, inclusiveness and transparency of relevant parliamentary mechanisms for the engagement of local communities.

Results and impact

The partnership contributed to the elaboration of the ICT strategic plan of the Zambian National Assembly aimed at tackling issues such as the internal data sharing infrastructure and ICTs used to engage with citizens and stakeholders and providing opportunities for citizens' active participation in parliamentary processes. A four-day multi-stakeholder workshop was organized in Lusaka, Zambia to discuss and define the process, vision, mission and goals of the prospective ICT strategy and prepare an operational workplan. This was accompanied by an exchange visit in Estonia to learn more about the e-governance framework and participatory tools applied by the Estonian Government and Parliament to ensure transparency, accountability and openness of public institutions to implement more efficiently expenditures, laws and programmes. Support was given to the development of handbooks and other materials to strengthen the capacities of MPs and parliamentary staff members on key communication techniques and development issues, including on the role of parliament in guaranteeing that the voices of marginalized populations are being considered in SDGs implementation.

One of the partnership's main contribution was the development and launch of the Education Programme for [Zambian Learners](#). The aim of the programme is to provide children and young people with a comprehensive understanding of the functions of parliament and democracy in general, including the values of democratic institutions and the opportunities for active public participation. The programme's main themes include: the open parliament; active participation; spirit of democracy; access to information; and freedom of expression. Public presentations and exhibitions were organized in parallel in the visitor center of the Zambian National Assembly.

Within the framework of the partnership, a range of thematic exchange visits, peer-to-peer learning events and consultative workshops were organized, alongside the development of specific visibility tools. An important additional focus was the engagement of the academic and scientific community in supporting fact-based and evidence-driven law-making and policy reforms. Austria and Zambia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which established a partner collaboration within the framework of the African-Austrian Research Network. The aim of the MoU is to support the engagement of academia for the identification of solutions that can accelerate progress towards inclusive sustainable development in Zambia.

Challenges

The lack of a longer-term commitment to the continuation of the partnership, insufficient resources to support additional activities, and the lack of dedicated staff members who can provide technical and organizational assistance throughout the different phases of the partnership all presented particular challenges. Other challenges are the fact that MPs change following elections and other events during the term of the project (partnership) making it hard to guarantee continuity. Also, very diverse preconditions, cultures and values within the respective countries (e.g., when it comes to vocational training, comprehensive sexual education, accessibility of parliaments) can present practical obstacles to the achievement of the partnership objectives.

Sources and links

The NorthSouthDialogue of Parliaments: <http://www.nordsueddialog.org/en/index.html>

The National Assembly of Zambia, the Educational Programme for Zambian Learners:
<https://www.parliament.gov.zm/node/8138>

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