
**LEGISLATURES IN PURSUIT OF
THE MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS:
A KEY PART OF
NATIONAL MDG STRATEGIES**

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**AT THE REQUEST OF—AND WITH SUPPORT FROM—
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1. INTRODUCTION

There is universal agreement that effective global pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) requires a strong commitment from national governments. At a domestic level committing to the MDGs builds a set of reference points that enables countries to tailor or adjust policies and initiatives to consistently address domestic development needs. The goals can provide an effective way to coordinate policy priorities, implementation efforts, and the effective use of resources across ministries, bureaucracies, branches and levels of government, and civil society. To date, resources that outline effective strategies or describe best practices have focused primarily on the executive branches of national and local government, and on their attendant administrative and technical bureaus. For national commitment to MDGs to be wholly effective however, some attention must also be given to a countries most representative branch of government: the legislature.

<p style="text-align: center;">MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS</p> <p>At the turn of the Millennium, all 191 UN Member States adopted and pledged to pursue eight Millennium Development Goals. They are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger 2. Achieve universal primary education 3. Promote gender equality and empower women 4. Reduce child mortality 5. Improve maternal health 6. Combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases 7. Ensure environmental sustainability 8. Develop a global partnership for development

Directly elected legislatures are constitutionally intended to represent the geographic and ethnic diversity of a country. In many cases, even if there is significant social distance between elected leaders and the citizenry at large, the assembly remains the branch of government that is closest to the people. Geographic constituencies link MPs to a specific portion of the public in a way that executive officials do not encounter. Because of this, the actions taken by a national or state assembly could contribute substantially to bridging the gap between stated national commitment and public

understanding of the steps taken to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It may also help to promote popular understanding of how the MDGs themselves reflect critical domestic issues such as poverty, health, and education.

<p style="text-align: center;">LOCALIZATION OF MDGS ENABLES COUNTRIES TO TAILOR DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS</p> <p>The Millennium Development Goals are designed to be universal. This enables global focus on eight key areas, while leaving room for individual countries to tailor development efforts to national priorities. Several countries, including Vietnam, have already localized the goals by reviewing progress to date and setting specific targets and deadlines for each goal. While this makes it easier for policy makers to focus resources on national priorities within the MDGs, localization of the goals also informs legislators how the government has planned to pursue each goal. In some cases, this can serve as a sort of announcement regarding the government’s policy agenda. Legislatures with such information on the government’s policy or reform agenda are often better prepared to review proposed laws and to conduct oversight more effectively. In such cases, legislatures may find it useful to ensure that members of the relevant committees are briefed on the content of the MDG localization effort and the most recent MDG country report in advance of each legislative session.</p>
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Consequently, the purpose of this document is to provide an overview of actions taken by various legislatures to support national pursuit of MDGs. However, the paper must recognize the diversity of legislative rights and practices across countries. In an effort to delineate the range of activities that may be undertaken, while still highlighting best practices, this document has been organized according to the *effect* intended.

2. THE ROLE OF LEGISLATURES IN PURSUIT OF MDGS

The technical authority and capacity of a legislature varies tremendously from country to country. Despite this diversity, all legislative bodies are assigned three main constitutional responsibilities:

- *Legislation:* In addition to the act of approving new laws or resolutions, the legislative function includes the introduction of new bills; debate, review and/or amendment of legislation proposed by the executive; and review and passage of the national budget.
- *Representation:* As the directly elected representatives of a geographic constituency, legislative assemblies are also responsible for ensuring that the needs and concerns of a specific portion of the population are included in the policy making process. Consequently, activities that fall under the representation function range from direct communication with citizens to the incorporation of local issues into national policy debates or legislation.
- *Oversight:* Legislatures are also intended to serve as built in mechanisms to monitor and evaluate executive implementation of national policy. In this capacity, national or regional assemblies seek out information on the prioritization of specific policies or issues, the allocation and use of funds, and the effectiveness of specific initiatives. To do this, legislatures rely on such mechanisms as committee investigations, requests for regular briefings or testimony from ministerial representatives, and public hearings to gather information from non-government sources on a specific issue.

Although easy to separate conceptually, these responsibilities are substantially intertwined in practice. It is, in some ways, easier to think about the role of legislatures in pursuing the Millennium Development Goals if assembly actions are categorized by their effect instead. There are three potential outcomes of legislative efforts to support national MDG efforts.

- *Demonstration of national commitment:* While all UN member states have already pledged their commitment to pursue the MDGs, reinforcing legislative actions demonstrate that support for the goals extends deeper than executive government offices. In addition to making an international statement about commitment to the MDGs, such legislative action as passing resolutions, hosting high profile events or meetings, or participation in MDG networks or working groups may also demonstrate to the general public that the MDGs are a priority for all branches of government.
- *Raising national awareness:* As a directly elected representative body, legislatures can also take effective action to increase public understanding of the MDGs. Whether an assembly chooses to promote awareness of the MDGs as a group, or to increase public knowledge about what must be done to address a specific goal, public education is an important potential impact of legislative action.

- *Enabling (or directly pursuing) progress toward specific goals:* Although the implementation of MDG related initiatives is the mandate of the executive branch, legislative action to adjust current policies or budgets is often needed. In countries where issue committees are expected to review all legislation relevant to their issue area, an assembly is particularly well situated to evaluate newly proposed legislation in the context of national commitments to the MDGs. Furthermore, the right of legislative investigation enables legislators to consider current issues or concerns even when there is no pending legislation on the issue.

From here forward, this paper is organized around these three potential impacts. One useful feature of conceptualizing the best MDG practices of legislatures in these terms is that they flow logically from the three core responsibilities of a legislative assembly. As illustrated in the figure below (figure 1), legislative contributions to national achievement of the MDGs stems directly from the conduct of basic legislative functions. Parliamentary activity to demonstrate national commitment to the goals invariably uses the tools of legislation or public outreach (representation) to make commitment publicly known. Awareness raising similarly brings together communication with the public and the use of oversight mechanisms to draw information on implementation into the public sphere. Finally, legislators are themselves often in a position to enable or pursue the Millennium Development Goals directly through the strategic use of enabling legislation or application of oversight practices to MDG relevant programs or budget expenditure.

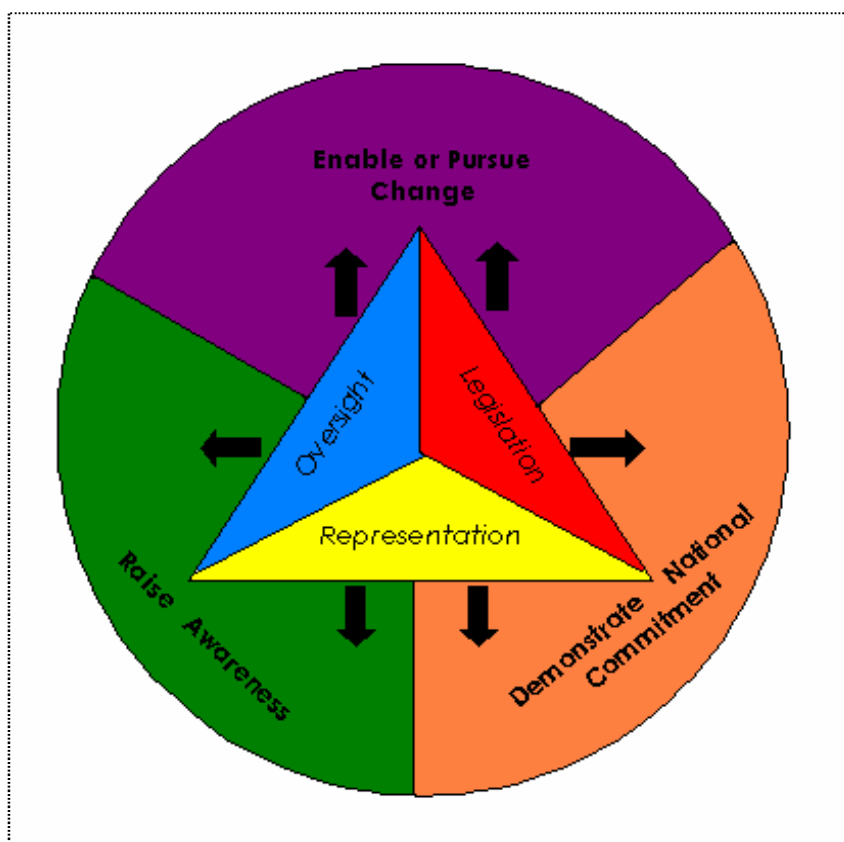


Figure 1: Legislative responsibilities and pursuit of MDGs

3. LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES THAT DEMONSTRATE NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO THE MDGS

Beginning with their initial pledge to prioritize the MDGs in 2000, the level of commitment made by each national government can be traced relatively easily. Presidents, prime ministers, and their cabinets can demonstrate senior-level commitment through the introduction of new policy initiatives, assessment of current MDG standings, localization of the MDGs themselves, or collaboration with international development organizations to implement MDG achievement strategies. While such activities indicate the government's formal commitment to these goals, complementary activities by the most representative branch of government indicates a deeper, national commitment. In countries where national politics also includes some substantial disagreement between political factions or parties, legislative efforts to demonstrate commitment to MDGs are one way of demonstrating that the goals are a priority across all faction lines.

EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS OR PUBLIC CONSULTATION AMONG SENIOR LEGISLATIVE OFFICIALS

One way to demonstrate legislative commitment to supporting the MDGs is to hold an extraordinary event that highlights one or more of the goals. While legislatures meet regularly in plenary and in committee to address issues of national importance, an atypical or less traditional event can publicly indicate specific priority issues. Whether hosted by the legislature as a whole or relevant leadership figures, such events are also an effective way to generate domestic media coverage of the issue while reinforcing parliamentary commitment to it. Such events may range from very simple working sessions to elaborate cultural or gala affairs.

It is important to note that this technique is not effective when conducted in isolation from other legislative activities in support of the MDGs. As demonstrated in the examples, the described high-profile events are either preceded or followed by concrete action to address the goal in question. Without this accompanying activity, citizens and international partners may believe that the legislature is substituting high-level events for pursuit of more difficult, concrete action.

MAURITANIAN LEGISLATORS PARTICIPATE IN A DINNER-DEBATE AND WORKING GROUPS

To launch a series of advocacy and coordination events for senior officials involved in the MDGs, the Legislature of Mauritania participated in a "dinner debate" on the MDGs in early 2003. Attended by the several ministers, senators, members of the National Assembly, and prominent civil society leaders, the evening included a discussion of the MDGs and reflection on the findings of the country's first MDG monitoring report. As an event with significant media coverage, it provided public venue in which the legislature

was also able to demonstrate its pro-poor commitment along side other key stakeholders.¹

This event was unique in that it marked the beginning of greater parliamentary involvement in debate regarding MGD strategies. Further high-level meetings were organized over the following year, including two extraordinary meetings with the National Assembly and the Senate. Following MDG presentations to the National Assembly and Senate, each chamber formed a parliamentary group to support mainstreaming of the goals. In sum, these public events helped to demonstrate that members of the Mauritanian legislature were committed to the mainstreaming of the MDGs at a policy level.²

IN NIGERIA, GALA EVENT AND 'POSTER OF CONCERN' MARK COMMITMENT TO FIGHT HIV-AIDS

In 2003 in Nigeria, the National Assembly relied on a gala evening and the unveiling of a “poster of concern” to draw national attention to legislators’ ongoing efforts to address the spread of AIDS. This was particularly notable because the disease still carries a stigma through much of West Africa, and is therefore very rarely publicly discussed. To counter the perception of HIV/AIDS as a taboo topic, the dinner gala was attended by the leadership of the National Assembly, both House and Senate standing committees on HIV/AIDS, the President of Nigeria, and several members of the diplomatic community. Even more notable, the event was used to unveil a billboard sized poster expressing political leaders’ concern about the spread of AIDS. Attending leadership demonstrated their public commitment by signing the poster, which was then replicated and posted all over the country.³

This event was a particularly effective way of demonstrating commitment to MDG number six for two reasons. First, it broke the political silence of HIV/AIDS by involving leadership from all political parties and branches of government in a very public expression of concern about the spread of a previously unacknowledged disease. The poster campaign further ensured that citizens all over the country would be made aware of this commitment. More importantly, the fact that Members of the

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF NIGERIA CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO HIV/AIDS

Since 2001, Members of the Nigerian House and Senate have been preparing for and participating in constituency outreach designed to educate Nigerian citizens about HIV and AIDS. Following a series of NGO-organized briefing sessions for the Members themselves, they began participating in health fairs, local public rallies, meetings with traditional leaders, and other constituency outreach efforts. These events not only inform Nigerians about methods of preventing HIV/AIDS, they also provide the Legislators with effective ways of interacting with their constituents.

1 “Mauritania launches campaign network with songs.” 1 April 2004. [What's New?](http://mirror.undp.org/africa2015/news_archive/1apr04.html) December 2004
<http://mirror.undp.org/africa2015/news_archive/1apr04.html>

2 “UNDP MDGNet/DGPN Consolidated Reply to Vietnam/Comparative Experiences & Consultants /Engaging Parliaments in the Millennium Development Goals.” ed. Elham Seyedsayamdost, 18 August 2004. [The Web-page of the UNDP Project to support the legislature of Vietnam](http://www.undp.org.vn/projects/vie02007/MDGs/engaging_parliaments_mdgs.htm). November 2004. http://www.undp.org.vn/projects/vie02007/MDGs/engaging_parliaments_mdgs.htm (“Mauritania” entry)

3 “Rep begins hearing on proposed agency for HIV/AIDS” [The Guardian](http://www.theguardian.com). Lagos, Nigeria. November 19, 2002.

National Assembly had been actively promoting HIV awareness since 2001 lent a factual basis to an otherwise very social event. Heavy media coverage and attendance by senior officials also re-energized the legislative staff who had been coordinating HIV-related constituency outreach.

IN SERBIA, PARLIAMENTARY POVERTY REDUCTION COMMITTEE HOLDS PUBLIC MEETING

Public demonstrations of legislative commitment to the MDGs do not have to be elaborate or formal events - nor must they be attended by all parliamentary leaders. In some cases, hosting and attendance by the relevant committee demonstrates recognition of the need for specific action in addition to general parliamentary commitment. In Serbia on World Poverty Day 2004, the Poverty Reduction Committee of the National Assembly held a public working meeting with representatives of the UN and UNICEF. Hosted by the committee chairperson, participants and speakers included the Chairman of the National Assembly; the Deputy Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Issues; and the UNICEF Director for Serbia and Montenegro.

While this event stressed the need for the parliament to keep the MDGs consistently in mind as they consider all forms of legislation, it particularly highlighted the Assembly's commitment to addressing issues of youth and poverty. Noting that 30% of Serbia's children live below the poverty line, the Poverty Reduction Committee chair announced the formation of a sub-committee to deal specifically with children's issues. In conclusion, participants agreed to continue collaboration among parliament, ministries, and the international community with regard to the MDGs. Following the meeting, the parliament issued a press release detailing its outcome.⁵

RESOLUTIONS

A formal legislative resolution, passed by the national legislature can also be a tremendously effective way of demonstrating commitment to the MDGs across multiple political factions. Although they are non-binding in terms of government action, resolutions serve as a public statement of intent or concern on the part of legislators. The formality of the measure also makes national commitment visible to both domestic and international actors. In addition to reinforcing government intentions to address prioritized MDGs, a resolution can also inform citizens that both branches of the national government see the goals as critical to national progress.

4 Nigeria Page, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. 2004 <http://www.ndi.org/worldwide/cewa/nigeria/nigeria.asp>; Mike Egbo, "Partnership with legislators in the fight against HIV and AIDS." Pathfinder International presentation at the 131st meeting and Exposition of the American Public Health Association; San Francisco, CA. Nov 18, 2003. <<http://www.pathfind.org/site/DocServer/256,1>>

5 "PRESS STATEMENT: WORKING MEETING TO MARK WORLD POVERTY DAY." October 19, 2004. [Web site of the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia. http://www.parlament.sr.gov.yu/content/eng/aktivnosti/skupstinske_detalji.asp?Id=304&t=I](http://www.parlament.sr.gov.yu/content/eng/aktivnosti/skupstinske_detalji.asp?Id=304&t=I)

Legislative resolutions require different procedures in different countries, but can almost universally be introduced by the legislature itself. Even assemblies with very limited parliamentary authority have the right to publicly resolve to take a position on specific issues. With regard to the MDGs, legislators may choose to pass a resolution supporting the MDGs as an entire set of development objectives, or they may wish to focus on specific goals. If for example, a country was on track to meet many of the goals by 2015, but found that maternal and child mortality ratios were not declining sufficiently, the legislature may wish to pass a resolution expressing concern and resolving to support prenatal care initiatives.

PARLIAMENT OF ALBANIA RESOLVES TO SUPPORT THE MDGS

In July of 2003, the Parliament of Albania approved a resolution expressing support for the Millennium Development Goals as development tools. In addition to pledging parliamentary support and assistance for government efforts to achieve the goals by 2015, the resolution acknowledged that responsibility for success rests with both branches of national government, local administrative structures, and civil society.

(Excerpts)⁶



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA, PARLIAMENT
Tirana on 29.07.2003
RESOLUTION

The Albanian Parliament, sustaining efforts of the Albanian society towards a comprehensive and sustainable development, supports all initiatives of the country's authorities in achieving such long-term development goals.

The signature by the Albanian President of the Millennium Declaration (September 2000) represents a positive step in this direction.

The Millennium Declaration, which includes a set of Millennium Development Goals, is an important covenant of our country towards development, progress and integration.

Responsibilities undertaken before the international community under the Millennium Declaration require the total commitment of both state structures and civil society to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Albania by 2015....

Concrete Millennium Development targets and indicators are already included into the National Strategy of the Social and Economic Development, as well as into sector strategies and programs, and are in complete harmony with the reforms undertaken in the framework of the EU stabilization and association process.

Aware of the need to fulfill obligations of Albania towards the international community and to address the development priorities reflected in the Millennium Development Goals on behalf of the Albanian people, we encourage the government, other institutions and civil society to work together to achieve these objectives.

Albanian Parliament encourage these same actors to track progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals on a regular basis through national monitoring and evaluation systems and the preparation of annual progress reports that encourage public debate and offer recommendations on ways to improve national and regional development policies.

We are confident that achieving the Millennium Development Goals strengthens further the regional and international cooperation, which Albania is part thereof.

Albanian Parliament will assist in every way possible the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Albania.

In addition to the symbolic expression of support, the resolution was timed to coincide with other MDG implementation initiatives. An independent baseline report assessing implementation to date was also launched in 2002 to stimulate dialog among Albanian decision-makers for prioritizing goals and targets. At the time of the resolution, concrete millennium development targets and indicators had been incorporated into both Albania's PRSP, and its sectoral strategies. With the resolution, the Albanian Parliament asked stakeholders to track progress towards the MDGs on a regular basis through national monitoring and evaluation systems and the preparation of annual progress reports. Their demonstration of commitment encouraged public debate and offered recommendations on ways to improve national and regional development policies.⁷

RESOLUTIONS IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS DEMONSTRATE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT

In Europe, multiple parliaments have responded to *No Excuses 2015* campaigns with resolutions expressing support for global achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The *No Excuses 2015* campaigns are nationally based initiatives to pressure wealthy to countries to commit sufficient funds to make 2015 MDG targets possible. In Italy, the campaign included a demonstration of more than 100,000 marchers from the city of Perugia to Assisi, some 20 km away. Banners and props used during the march were later displayed at the Museum of Sciences and Technology in Milan, prompting several members of Parliament to sign a resolution on increasing Italy's official development assistance budget. Their actions prompted a draft resolution to be proposed and discussed in plenary later that year. In Spain, regional assemblies seized the initiative and responded to effective advocacy from several civic actors involved in the *No Excuses 2015* campaign. In Catalonia, a resolution supporting the Millennium Goals was passed in 2003, prompting the Vasque region and the Community of Madrid to propose similar resolutions.⁸ In this way, national and local level assemblies in Europe have not only voiced their concern to the government ministry responsible for administering the development budget, but have also demonstrated their own commitment to the MDGs.

6 "Albanian parliament endorses resolution on Millennium Development Goals." UNDP Albania mission website. "News and Events" –; July 29, 2003. <<http://www.undp.org.al/?news,0,12>>

7 UNDP Albania is, in the meantime supporting regional MDG reports throughout Albania, the first such report already launched in Elbasan earlier this year, with the aim of contextualizing the eight global Millennium Development Goals. Among these initiatives, a UNDP sponsored MDG capacity building project is assisting the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the reporting process towards the achievement of the MDGs.

8 United Nations Millennium Campaign. MILLENNIUM CAMPAIGN BUZZ: SETTING SIGHTS ON 2005 October 2004 Newsletter. November 2004 <<http://www.unausa.org/pdf/Millennium%20Campaign%20Buzz%20-%20October%2025%202004.pdf>>

PARTICIPATION IN NETWORKS OF PARLIAMENTARIANS THAT HAVE AN EMPHASIS ON THE MDGs

Since the Millennium Declaration in 2000, the actions of international or regional parliamentary networks have become increasingly focused on coordination for pursuit of MDGs. Whether support for achievement of the goals is explicitly stated as an objective of the network or not, participation in seminars or annual meetings of such organizations demonstrates legislative commitment to international pursuit of the MDGs, particularly the number eight, with its emphasis on global partnership for development.

AFRICA/ASIA PARLIAMENTARIAN FORUM

In March 2002, the Africa/Asia Parliamentary Forum held its first forum on Human Security and Gender in Marrakech, Morocco. Members of 24 Asian and African parliaments participated in this forum, the goal of which was to "Promote the formulation and adoption of gender responsive poverty reduction strategies and develop national capacity for the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals."⁹ The event was constructed to address both "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want," and offered parliamentarians a forum in which to discuss opportunities, challenges, experiences, and lessons learned regarding the legislative promotion of gender equality in the context of human security. In conclusion, participants called for mechanisms to strengthen and sustain cross-regional parliamentary networks, emphasizing the need for support for efforts to mainstream gender issues in the work of the legislature. Several specific recommendations were made on using the MDGs as a development framework, and attendees agreed to pursue them as effectively as possible once home.¹⁰ Additional forums have since been held in Asia.

PARLIAMENTARIANS' IMPLEMENTATION WATCH

The Parliamentarians Implementation Watch (PIW) was established by the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNOWB) in 2003. Created as a global effort to involve parliamentarians in monitoring actual progress towards achievement of the MDGs, the PIW is a unique network. While its efforts can not replace the role of individual national parliaments in monitoring a government's efforts to keep their own country on track to meet the MDGs, PIW activities are an excellent complement to legislative action at home. The network's resources may also provide useful insight for legislatures searching for ways of mainstreaming MDGs into their normal parliamentary business. PIW activities have included such events as a February 2004 video-

9 Proceedings from The First Africa/Asia Parliamentarian Forum on Human Security and Gender, March 26 2002: "The Role of the Legislature." <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/meetings/forum/AfricaAsia/Agenda%20FINAL.htm>> The first of its kind, the Forum was organized by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for the Advancement of Women (UN/DESA/DAW), in collaboration with the Moroccan Parliament and the Ministry in charge of the Promotion of Women and Protection of the Family and Childhood and Integration of Handicapped, and funded by the Japanese Government through the Japan Women in Development (JWID) Fund in UNDP.

10 *ibid*

conference on “The Role of Francophone Parliamentarians in the Struggle against HIV/AIDS,” as well as a July 2004 exchange of views on global progress towards the MDGs.

PNOWB itself was established in 2000, as a means to involve Parliamentarians in development more effectively. It serves as the World Bank's primary means of interacting with global legislative concerns. Membership is open to parliamentarians from any of the World Bank member states, and currently stands at more than 450 from over 90 countries. One interesting component of this network is that members represent themselves and their constituents, rather than their countries, parliaments or governments.¹¹ In this way, participating in the Parliamentary Implementation Watch can be a very effective way for individual legislators to demonstrate their commitment.

11 The Parliamentary Network of the World Bank. 2004. November 2004. <<http://www.pnowb.org>>

4. LEGISLATIVE ACTION TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT MDGS

In addition to demonstrating that national commitment to the MDGs extends beyond the government itself, national legislatures have a tremendously valuable role to play in raising awareness of the goals and efforts to achieve them. As the constitutional link between the population and national governing structures, Legislatures may serve as a natural communication vehicle. Even when unintended, media coverage of the MDG-related statements or activities of individual members or groups of legislators can also go a long way toward raise awareness of MDGs.

For the MDGs to be seen as a set of nationally owned development goals, there must be a level of general awareness at executive, legislative, local, and citizen levels. Legislatures have a key role to play here, as they are uniquely capable of generating public debate, educating their political or administrative colleagues, and educating the public. As can be seen in the following examples, this awareness raising may focus on the MDGs themselves, or on the implementation of specific policies that can lead to achievement of goals.

MOTIVATING PUBLIC DEBATE

Although the right to introduce or amend legislation varies from parliament to legislature, all national assemblies are intended to provide a venue in which laws, policies, and response to national situations can be debated. Consequently, legislatures are ideally positioned to generate public debate on the MDGs themselves. Ranging from plenary debate to the activities of sub-legislative bodies, a variety of legislative actions can be relied on to generate media coverage, and consequently raise awareness or the level of public debate of MDGs.

MDG WORKING GROUP IN CHILE RECOGNIZES VALUE OF REGULAR MDG DEBATE IN CONGRESS

In a 2002 effort to localize the MDGs in Chile, a working group composed of civic and official actors expressed concern that, because Chile had great achievements in many of the MDG areas, it would be difficult to generate public awareness of those goals which still remained. While statistics could be used to demonstrate the types of progress that were still needed, the working group realized that statistical information was unlikely to resonate with a majority of the public. This would make it nearly impossible for the group to meet one of its goals; enabling the kind of public debate that would educate citizens about the MDGs themselves, while still gathering information about public opinion on development priorities.

One suggestion for generating public awareness and debate was to establish a mechanism for the MDG monitoring to provide major input for regular Parliamentary discussion of the country's development goals and targets. Recognizing that the political debate likely to occur in plenary would prompt media coverage and generate public debate, the working group established a partnership with the Public Affairs Institute of the University of Chile in order to prepare the information that would be required for

such a debate. In Chile's case, preparation required a survey of existing national targets; identification of development areas in which there are no national targets or ineffective monitoring mechanisms; and construction of a national MDG template from that information.¹²

ARMENIAN MPS FORM MULTI-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON HIV/AIDS

While not as obvious as a public debate, efforts to coordinate across party lines within the parliament are another useful way of raising awareness of a specific MDG. Particularly when political factions are typically perceived to disagree strenuously over reform measures, the creation of cross-party or cross-faction committees and working-groups can generate public interest in the issue that has prompted such cooperation.

In June 2002, the National Assembly of Armenia established an inter-factional parliamentary group on HIV/AIDS. With 14 members, the group encompasses all seven parliamentary factions and includes members who sit on the parliamentary committees for social, legal, fiscal and external relations. Initiated by the parliamentary committee on social, health and environmental protection issues, the group's goal is to ensure that the national budget—and the legislative framework at large—adequately support implementation of the National Strategy on HIV/AIDS. While incidence of HIV/AIDS in Armenia is still quite low relative to other countries, the epidemic nature of the disease prompted Armenia's parliament's to place it high on the legislative agenda in an effort to prevent it from taking root. Public hearings on HIV/AIDS have been planned in an effort to increase the awareness of MDG number six, combat the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases.¹³

RAISING MDG AWARENESS AMONG PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUES

Often, even after a legislature has expressed a commitment to the MDGs, several members will find that they need more information about the goals to mainstream achievement effectively. Organizing briefing sessions or workshops is one way to ensure that legislators have access to the information or technical resources they need. When covered by the media, it may also demonstrate MDG commitment on the part of attending legislators.

MONGOLIAN PARLIAMENT HOSTS A SPECIAL SESSION ON MDGS

Some countries have opted to hold briefing sessions or seminars for their legislators immediately following the publication of new data on MDG progress. For example, Mongolia published its first national Millennium Development Goals Report in fall, 2004. That November, a special session was held for the Mongolian Parliament to talk about

12 “UNDP MDGNet/DGPN Consolidated Reply, (“Chile” entry)

13 “Armenian Legislature Supports the Implementation of the National Strategy on HIV/AIDS.” UNDP Armenia Bulletin. 2002. November 2004. <www.undpi.am/bulletin/bul_13/undp.html>

the report, and the opportunities it presented to align national development policies with the vision and strategies agreed upon in the Millennium Declaration.

By way of example, the session provided information about the critical role that MPs were playing in other countries, including Marutania, Morocco, Albania, Niger, Rwanda. Speakers referenced the role MPs can play as individuals—by participating in public MDG campaigns at national and provincial levels—or as members of their standing committee. Special attention was given to ways in which standing committees on Budget could use MDG costing to conduct effective budget review, oversight, and MDG monitoring.¹⁴

LEGISLATORS AROUND THE WORLD BRIEFED ON MDGS AND STRATEGIES¹⁵

Briefing sessions for legislators on MDGs has become common in many places. Where many of the legislators are new to the office—or the office itself is new—these sessions primarily introduce the MDGs in general, and touch on legislative options for demonstrating support, reviewing proposed legislation, and exercising oversight of MDG initiatives. In other countries, where legislators are already familiar with their roles, they may be briefed on localized MDG targets; specific, pending policy proposals; or progress towards specific goals to-date. In these cases, greater attention is also given to more technical legislative activity, such as budget processes, or actions by the public accounts committee. Seminars to inform legislators themselves about the MDGs or relevant technical applications have been held in Zambia, Paraguay, Sri Lanka, Georgia Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Bosnia, Ghana, Mongolia and Albania, among others.

SEMINAR ON DEVELOPMENT FOR CLERKS OF PACIFIC PARLIAMENTS MET IN FIJI

Legislators' efforts to mainstream the MDGs often require complimentary briefings for legislative staff. As technical and administrative staff support members on a day to day basis, they must also recognize opportunities to support the MDGs as they arise. For the most part, this sensitization must take place in country, as it is based on the country specific details of the MDGs. However, this in-country work can be complemented by regional seminars designed to reinforce cross-regional cooperation on MDGs. In August, 2004, the Pacific Parliamentary Association held a seminar for parliamentary clerks to brief them on population and development issues and to discuss the clerks role in promoting pacific parliamentarian involvement regional development efforts. In addition to receiving information, participating clerks had an opportunity to discuss intervention strategies and ways to mobilize resources for MDGs.¹⁶

CHINESE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES GATHER INFORMATION THROUGH PUBLIC HEARINGS

In March 2002, the National People's Congress of China passed the Law on Legislation, which formally established public hearings as a method for members and legislative drafters to gather public input on draft legislation. Although the law is not specifically

¹⁴ Mehta, Pratibha. Opening Remarks at the Special Session of Parliamentarians on Millennium Development Goals. Government House, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. 02 November, 2004 <<http://www.un-mongolia.mn/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=302>>

¹⁵ “Consolidated MDG success stories.” The Millennium Development Goal and Social Inclusion. 2003. November 2004. <http://mdgr.undp.sk>; “UNDP MDGNet/DGPN Consolidated Reply, (“Paraguay” entry).

¹⁶ “Asian Forum Newsletter.” August 2004. The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development Nov. 2004. <http://www.afppd.org/Newsletters/Issue_Jul_Aug%2704/Issue_Jul_Aug%2704.html>

intended to promote the MDG per se, Provincial Assemblies and Municipal Administrative Bureaus have both used public hearing to gather information needed to address specific environmental and health concerns. In 2002 Qinghai province held its first public hearing to discuss the environmental protection of Qinghai Lake, China's largest salt lake, which had begun evaporating at alarming rate. The same year, the Municipal People's Congress of Guiyang also conducted a public hearing to address the protection of the Naming river. Two years later, the Standing Committee of Gansu's Provincial People's Congress held the provinces first legislative public hearing to address pending changes to the province's law on provision of medical services. In all cases, witnesses representing various positions on the issue provided information through their testimony, thus increasing the information available to the assembly members who would be dealing with these MDG-related issues. In Guiyang and Gansu, media coverage of the events also helped to educate citizens who were unable to attend the hearing directly.¹⁷

While none of these hearings directly addressed the MDGs, the practice of legislative hearings to gather input on draft legislation is still new to China. As can be seen in the topics selected for the hearings, provincial and municipal bodies are making use of this new mechanism to enhance their own knowledge of different perspectives about what must be done to ultimately achieve the MDGs. Because they involve the public by requesting their input on critical MDG issues, these hearings may also strengthen national commitment to the goals as a whole.

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE MDGs

More than any other contribution, legislators who have been elected by local constituencies to represent them in national government have the ability to increase public awareness of the MDGs. Particularly in countries with great quality of life discrepancies among urban and rural residents, direct legislator to citizen communication about national MDG priorities and efforts is the single most effective method of enhancing public awareness of the goals. As these examples demonstrate, legislatures can tailor this direct communication based on the characteristics of each constituency. Literacy levels and geographic accessibility affect the method and frequency of communication, but never prevent it entirely.

Whether legislatures refer directly to the MDGs or not may depend on the audience with which they are communicating. While colleagues in administration or ministerial positions may find it useful to hear how legislative actions are related explicitly to the MDGs, this may not be the case with the general public. Citizens are indeed anxious to hear how the issues of the MDGs are being addressed, as these are the issues that most affect their lives (poverty, health, education, environmental damage, etc). However, for the most part, the poorest citizens are unconcerned with the official name of the initiatives.

¹⁷ National Democratic Institute. "Supporting Governance Reform in China: Final Report to US Department of State, Grnad no. S-LMAQM-02-H-0094." submitted September 2004.

TIMOR LESTE PARLIAMENTARIANS VISIT CONSTITUENCIES TO ANSWER CITIZEN QUESTIONS

The constitution of Timor Leste, adopted in March 2002, was heavily influenced by the goals of the millennium declaration, and includes education, gender equality, environmental security, and development as objectives of the state (see box below).¹⁸ At independence, the 88 members of the constitutional assembly became the new country's first parliament. Thus, while the new legislators had been heavily involved in drafting the new constitution and were therefore very aware of the MDGs, their position in the National assembly had been by party appointment to the electoral list. In part to address popular sentiment that there was a significant discrepancy between the activity of the new parliamentarians and the needs of the citizens—and in part to ensure that even citizens in remote rural areas understood their rights and responsibilities under the new constitution—the parliament decided to participate in a series of public meetings around the country. In agreeing to have these public meetings, parliamentary leadership had four specific goals: present and explain the new constitution; report on and explain Parliamentary activities since independence; discuss local concerns; and establish communication links which will be needed over time. While none of these goals overtly referenced the MDGs, much of the basis of the constitution was tied to MDG ideals, many of the local concerns discussed fall under one of more of MDG targets, and the established communication channels could be used in the future to monitor progress towards the goals themselves.

THE FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVES OF THE STATE
[OF TIMOR LESTE] SHALL BE:¹⁸

- a) To defend and guarantee the sovereignty of the country;
- b) To guarantee and promote fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens and the respect for the principles of the democratic State based on the rule of law;
- c) To defend and guarantee political democracy and participation of the people in the resolution of national problems;
- d) To guarantee the development of the economy and the progress of science and technology;
- e) To promote the building of a society based on social justice, by establishing material and spiritual welfare of the citizens;
- f) To protect the environment and to preserve natural resources;
- g) To assert and value the personality and the cultural heritage of the East Timorese people;
- h) To promote the establishment and the development of relations of friendship and co-operation among all Peoples and States;
- i) To promote the harmonious and integrated development of the sectors and regions and the fair distribution of the national product;
- j) To promote and guarantee the effective equality of opportunities between women and men.

Working with facilitators from civil society and international organizations, MPs attended meetings in every sub-district of East Timor; nearly all meetings were held in rural areas. Over 2 years, 80% of the MPs participated, visiting 220 villages, meeting more than 14,000 people, and distributing more than 65,000 copies of the constitution. This not only enabled legislators to explain the MDG related actions of the parliament, but also to hear directly from citizens about their immediate development concerns.

¹⁸ "The Constitution of East Timor." May 2002. [The Constitution Society](http://www.constitution.org). www.constitution.org November 2004. <http://www.constitution.org/cons/east_timor/constitution-eng.htm>

SERBIAN MOBILE PARLIAMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REFORM

Legislatures that make effective use of public consultations can also increase popular understanding of the need for specific reforms in order to achieve the MDGs. In Serbia in 2002, parliamentarians participated in a series of public meetings on draft environmental legislation. Called the "mobile parliament" these consultations allowed citizens all over Serbia to discuss a piece of draft legislation before it was considered by the parliament. Over the course of several consultations in a variety of cities with significant environmental and industrial damage, more than 3,000 environmental activists and NGO representatives commented on the draft. Several of their suggestions were integrated into the final legislation.

This outreach was conducted as a joint initiative between members of the Serbian Parliament and relevant ministerial officials. In addition to increasing citizen awareness of the environmental issues themselves, the "mobile parliament" showcased effective cooperation between legislative and executive actors. Over time, the model was also used to gather public input for legislation on educational reform.¹⁹

RADIO PROGRAMMING TO REACH INACCESSIBLE OR ILLITERATE COMMUNITIES

In Timor Leste and Niger, members of parliament used radio shows to communicate with citizens in villages that had become unreachable due to natural travel constraints (washed out roads and desertification, respectively). In Timor Leste, recordings of the public hearings described above were converted into informative radio shows and distributed to radio stations all over the country. In sum, 12 broadcasts were produced in a variety of local languages, and played by community radio stations. Citizens in areas cut off due to the heavy annual rains were received information they would otherwise not have heard. In many cases, the radio shows also explained that parliamentarians would visit their area when the rains had passed.

In Niger, the Parliamentary Committee for poverty reduction worked with theatre troupes to write and record radio plays on the role of the Parliament in reducing poverty. Although the MDGs were not explicitly mentioned, these plays marked the Parliament's first effort to communicate with highly illiterate communities in northern Niger that have been cut off due to advanced desertification in the center of the country. Played in multiple local languages, the plays parodied a conversation between a member of parliament and his wife in order to explain the different responsibilities of a parliamentarian with regard to budget oversight, legislation, and constituency outreach on poverty related issues.²⁰

19 National Democratic Institute. "Quarterly Report: October 1 to December 31, 2002. Serbia: Political Party Building and Civil Society Development. Cooperative Agreement No. 169-A-00-01-00115-00" Submitted to USAID January 2002.

20 National Democratic Institute. "Final Report: Building Legislative Capacity to Engage in the PRSP Process. UNDP Contract number GLO/99/616" submitted to UNDP July 2003.

4. ENABLE OR PURSUE GOALS

As a lawmaking and oversight body, legislatures' ability to support the MDGs is by no means limited to expressions of commitment or awareness raising. In some cases, legislative action is actually required before MDG-related reforms can occur. The assembly may need to pass enabling legislation for new development programs or to approve new budget allocations that reflect the prioritization of MDGs in national policy. Similarly, legislative oversight of government activity also provides an effective domestic monitoring system to ensure that MDG goals have been truly integrated into national policies and strategies. While it can not replace internal ministerial monitoring efforts, legislative use of oversight mechanism to evaluate the implementation of MDG-related initiatives—or to investigate obstacles to MDG achievement—can also bring to light information needed to keep goal specific efforts efficient and on track.

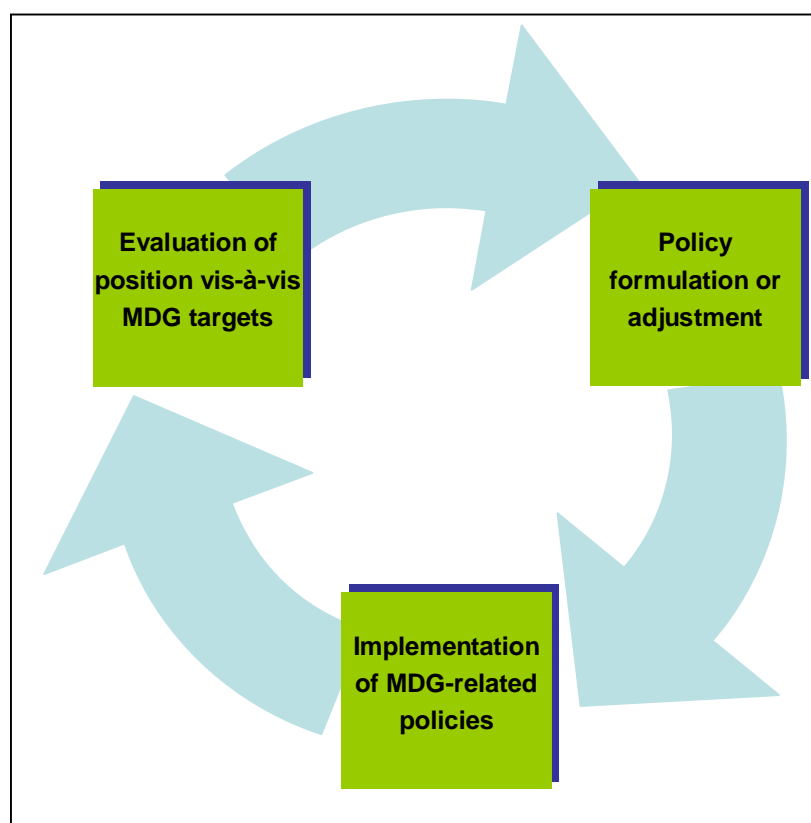


Figure 2: The policy cycle for mainstreamed MDGs

BUDGET REVIEW AND PROCESS

Though the degree of legislative budgetary authority varies tremendously from country to country, all national assemblies are ultimately responsible for approving the national budget. Since genuine efforts to achieve the millennium development goals require strategic adjustments to previous years' budgets, the budget approval process is one

point of entry for legislatures wishing to ensure national achievement of the MDGs. The mechanisms each legislature would use to ensure that MDG priorities have been embedded in the national budget are directly based directly on the constitutional and budgetary rights of the national assembly. They include such measures as:

- Requiring ministerial explanation or justification of line item allocation within ministries. This is already an official part of the budget process in many countries. Asking ministerial spokesmen also explain how MDG priorities have been reflected in the proposed budget can be an effective way of using this step to mainstream the goals.
- Including notification provisions in the budget. This can require the government to alert the legislature if funds are to be spent in a different manner than has been described in the annual budget. Such reports can help standing or sub-committees to ensure national MDG efforts remain operationally funded after the budget is passed.
- Include report-back provisions in the budget requiring ministries, sub-ministries or agencies to report on the results achieved by expenditure on specific programs. While not an option for all legislatures, building oversight measures like this into the budget itself can be a powerful way of ensuring the government regularly evaluates its MDG programs for effectiveness.

For the most part, legislative application of budget authority to support national achievement of MDGs occurs on an issue-by-issue, or goal-by-goal, basis. Particularly where sectoral budget responsibility is delegated to separate sub-committees, it can be difficult for a legislature to promote the MDGs in their entirety. This challenge could be overcome by requiring MDG analysis with ministerial budget presentation, or by inviting a MDG coordinator or liaison from the government to testify separately. In some cases, such as Morocco, technical assistance for legislators is enabling them to be a driving force for mainstreaming MDGs into national policies.

GENDER-BUDGETING AS A MODEL

The practice of evaluating national budgets to determine their gender impact has been used in many places as a way of mainstreaming gender issues into national policies. Consequently it may be a useful model for legislators to consider when determining how best to mainstream MDGs.

In May 2003, the Parliament of Sri Lanka and the Inter-Parliamentary Union held a regional seminar to promote deeper understanding of this mechanism, and to enable parliamentarians to make use of gender budgeting in pursuit of MDG number three. Entitled, "Parliament and the budgetary process, including from a gender perspective," the event was organized with support from the UNDP and the World Bank Institute, and brought together members and staff from the legislatures of Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Iran, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Parallel sessions for members and staff introduced the concept of gender budgeting and covered the tools available to conduct gender analysis of national budgets.

LEGISLATION REGARDING MDGs

Although legislation is not always necessary to initiate new programs in pursuit of priority MDGs, it is occasionally needed. Where legislators have the authority to introduce laws themselves, this can make the national assembly a powerful actor for mandating pursuit of the MDGs. Even parliaments that can only consider legislation

proposed by the government can use the legislative process to create national legislation that supports attainment of the goals.

LEGISLATION IN BANGLADESH ENABLED GREATER GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

In addition to demonstrating political will, legislation can mandate specific responses to a recognized challenge on the part of an agency or the public. In Bangladesh, legislation passed by the Parliament in 1990 has had a tremendous effect on the country's effort to eliminate gender disparity in primary education.

In 1990, the parliament of Bangladesh passed legislation making primary education compulsory. With this law, the parliament enabled the government to mandate that families in specific send all of their children to school.²² This marked a critical step in Bangladesh's progress toward both universal primary education, and gender parity in education: it prevented families from keeping their daughters out of school in order to tend the house. The law was also a catalytic first step which prepared the way for tremendous progress towards educational targets over the course of the 1990s.

BANGLADESHI MPS PARTICIPATE IN THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION.²¹

As part of the Global Campaign for Education in April 2004, Members of Parliament participated in a question and answer session with 30 school children. The children themselves included a diverse combination of working children, disabled children, ethnic children, and children from non-formal schools. Through such efforts, MPs are able to attract media attention to the need for further action on the achievement of educational goals.

By 1993 primary education was compulsory for the entire country. This was followed by a National Campaign for Social Mobilization for Basic Education, the elimination of school fees for rural girls, discontinuation of school uniforms, and food-for-education and stipend schemes.²³ In 2000, the parliament endorsed the prime minister's national education policy, again demonstrating their commitment to educational development. Although a 2001 political re-appointment of the education commission and subsequent re-consideration of the mechanisms in use has slowed the reform process somewhat, the impact of the initial legislation mandating primary education is still visible in Bangladesh's elementary enrollment numbers.²⁴

LEGISLATION IN MONGOLIA SECURES DOMESTIC RESOURCES FOR IMMUNIZATION COSTS

Mongolia has made tremendous progress towards achieving the 2015 target for MGD number four, reduction of child mortality. Here, as in Bangladesh, parliament played a

21 "Media Release, April 20, 2004" Global Campaign for Education <www.campaignforeducation.org>

22 Elaine Unterhalter, Jake Ross, and Mahmudul Alam. "A Fragile Dialogue? Research and Primary Education Policy Formation in Bangladesh, 1971–2001." British Association for International and Comparative Education. 2003. Vol. 33, No. 1:7. Cambridge Education Consultants.

23 "Political commitment to basic education in Bangladesh." Info Change India. October 2004. <<http://www.infochangeindia.org/bookandreportsst76.jsp>>

24 Manzoor Ahmed. "Why have the reforms failed?" Star Weekend Magazine. March 26, 2004 <<http://www.thedailystar.net/magazine/2004/03/04/education.htm>>

role by passing the Law on Immunization in 2001. Although Mongolia had been implementing an Expanded Program on Immunity with support from the international donor community, the law also established a national fund for vaccination programs. In this way, the legislation contributed to the sustainability of what has become a very successful immunization effort in Mongolia. In one estimate, the fund should enable Mongolia's domestic resources to maintain delivery of 95% immunization levels, so long as international organizations supply the vaccines.²⁵ To date, the successful immunization program has contributed to the reduction of child mortality to just below 30 deaths per live 1000 births.²⁶

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT MOVES RWANDA TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY GOAL

In 2003, the Parliament of Rwanda approved a new constitution stipulating that at least 24 seats in Parliament should be occupied by women, and requiring greater gender balance among political leadership positions. For the ensuing elections, 24 seats were reserved for women. However, parties also ran a greater number of female candidates for unreserved seats, and voters returned a parliament with almost complete gender equality. Rwandan women now occupy 48.8% of the seats, and hold nine of 28 ministerial positions. These numbers make Rwanda the most gender-balanced parliament in the world.²⁷ Although the 2015 targets for the MDGs do not include an explicit focus on increasing the number of women in the national legislature, it is widely accepted that improving gender balance within the national assembly is critical for the empowerment of women, and thus the achievement of MDG number three.

OVERSIGHT OF PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS

Once policies that pursue the MDGs are underway, Legislatures can monitor progress toward the goals by exercising oversight of relevant projects. This not only confirms efficient use of resources, but may also identify areas in which a different approach could be used for a better effect.

INDIAN PARLIAMENT INVESTIGATES LACK OF PROGRESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

At times, legislative investigation into a long-standing or incomplete development project can uncover information needed to adjust the program appropriately. In February 2004, the Indian Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee tabled a report detailing multiple scale and timing flaws in an 18 year-old initiative to clean up the Ganga River. The Ganga Action Plan (GAP) had been initiated in 1985 in an effort to improve water quality and halt pollution by dealing with municipal sewage, which accounts for 75% of the

25 Japanese International Cooperation Agency. "Outline of the project: Maternal and Child Health Project (in Mongolia)." Oct 1997 – Oct 2002. <http://www.jica.go.jp/english/evaluation/report/terminal/14-1-28.html>

26 "Goal number four: reduce child mortality." The National Statistics Office of Mongolia. 2003. November 2004 <http://www.nso.mn/mdg/eng_goals4.htm>

27 Helen Vesperini. "Rwanda's Parliament Now Leads World in Gender Parity." UNDP Choices Magazine. March 2004. <<http://www.undp.org/dpa/choices/2004/march/rwanda.html>>

river's pollution. Originally scheduled to be complete by 1990, the deadline was pushed to 2000, 2001, and eventually, 2008.

Concerned with the pace of this program, the Public Accounts Committee investigated the rate at which sewage treatment infrastructure was being developed in each of the states in the Ganga basin. They discovered that a lack of established timelines for the administration of GAP were preventing it from moving on to phase II, and expressed concern that money intended to finance GAP projects had been diverted to other purposes.

Upon tabling the report, the committee also called up the Ministry of Environments and Forests to explain the diversion of funds, and suggested several measures that could be used to speed the projects completion. These included the establishment of concrete reporting deadlines to enable progress to phase II, the establishment of an autonomously administrated river regulation zone, and a redesign of the projects financial management in light of erratic expenditure from state to state.²⁸

**OVERSIGHT CAN HAVE AN IMPACT ON
ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS**

In some cases, legislatures wish to conduct corruption investigations to determine if national resources have been used appropriately by policy makers. While direct investigation of corruption allegations by a legislative ethics committee is one option, is not the only way to ensure resources are being used for public good. Oversight mechanisms such as sectoral committee investigations into policy impact, public hearings on the delivery of recently funded services, and parliamentary site visits can be useful for bringing information to the surface where corruption or mis-management of resources has been a concern.

While oversight tools can contribute to a corruption investigation, legislative use of these mechanisms does not inherently imply mistrust by the parliament. Typically such activities are simply for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Although this parliamentary oversight initiative was not explicitly intended to promote the MDGs as a full set of development goals, it offers an excellent example of legislative action to improve the country's ability to meet MDG number seven. As the Ganga river basin covers some 25% of India landmass, reversing the effects of pollution throughout the basin is critical for achievement of environmental sustainability and the provision of clean drinking water.²⁹ By proposing solutions to identified environmental challenges in their committee report, the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee of India very specifically supported national progress toward the environmental MDG.

²⁸ "19 years on, Ganga Action Plan is nowhere near completion." InfoChange Environment reprint from Source: The Asian Age. February 8, 2004. November 2004.
<http://www.infochangeindia.org/EnvironmentIstory.jsp?section_idv=6&recordno=2826#>

²⁹ "Rivers in India." IndianChild.com data from Library of Congress. 2003. November 2004
<http://www.indianchild.com/rivers_in_india.htm >

5. CONCLUSION: PROMOTING POSITIVE LEGISLATIVE ACTION

For many countries, commitment to the MDGs was initiated by the executive branch. As time passes however, it becomes increasingly evident that effective pursuit of the eight development goals will require support and participation from the legislative branch. Constitutionally established to pass legislation and budgets, to represent the population in national decision making, and to monitor executive implementation of national policies, a national assembly has many potential roles to play in ensuring national achievement of the goals. Using the mechanisms established to fulfill their basic legislative responsibilities, national assemblies are able to demonstrate national commitment to the MDGs, raise awareness of the goals, and—in some cases—enable more efficient pursuit of a particular goal.

The tools available to each parliament to support the MDGs vary tremendously. However, and each parliament must tailor its actions to the national development context. This is most effectively done by ensuring members—particularly members of relevant committees—are fully briefed on localization efforts, as well as MDG related policies that are presently being implemented. From this information, legislative leadership will better be able to determine the legislative tools that can be applied most effectively.

In cases where legislatures' efforts to support the MDGs are bringing certain tools to bear for the first time, legislators may seek information on effective process from colleagues in international parliamentary networks, or from international technical assistance bodies. For example, as China has only recently established the legality of legislative hearings, they are now working with legislative colleagues and experts from elsewhere on the 'scientification' of the hearing process. This includes an analysis of lessons learned elsewhere in addition to the provinces where assemblies are testing a variety of techniques for conducting hearings. Similar efforts to determine the most effective way of bringing legislative tools to bear on national MDG targets in other countries have included work supported by the UNDP, the World Bank Institute, the UK Department for International Development, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, and the US Agency for International Development. Many of the examples cited in this paper are, strong examples of collaborative national-international efforts to enable legislative support for the MDGs.

The executive branch and its administrative offices are ultimately responsible for implementing national policies in pursuit of MDG targets. However, the constitutionally defined legislative, representative, and oversight responsibilities of the assembly position it to play a critical role for the nation as well. In most cases, legislators are not only national political leaders and participants in the policy making process, but are also often public opinion leaders. This combination makes their support for MDGs doubly powerful.