

**Report for UNDP Lebanon**

Lebanon Parliamentary Project: Summary of Joint BDP-BCPR Mission (September 20-24 2011)

October 2011

**1) Background**

Lebanon has a history marked by armed conflicts and political instability. The 15-year long civil war that ended in 1990 has left a human, physical, economical and psychological impact. Lebanon has a long history of power sharing; yet unresolved problems related to this formula have caused frequent problems. The UN Common Country Assessment of 2007 highlights the extreme political polarization in the country, the need for dialogue and national reconciliation, and the need for good governance.

Good governance is one of the three main priorities in the UNDAF for Lebanon 2010-2014, and the critical importance of good governance is recognized in national priorities. UNDP has several years experience in supporting activities on parliamentary development in the country, and has developed excellent relations with parliamentary committees and parliamentary administration. Yet, the political turbulence in the country has affected the results of previous parliamentary programmes. The current government in Lebanon was elected in June 2011, with a fragile majority, after 5 months of deadlock in parliament. The relation between the executive and the parliament is regularly tens, and results in many key legislative processes being stalled and in a difficulty to address constructively many challenges facing the country. Hence, the political situation indicates that there is still a need for emphasis on national dialogue, good governance and conflict-prevention programming. Given the political complexities, programmes need to be conflict sensitive, have well-developed risk analysis, and adaptable objectives.

The Country Office (CO) has developed a strong relation with the Parliament and to date has had significant achievements in supporting the institution. These include:

* Capacity Development for parliamentarians, parliamentary committees, and human resources.
* Preparation of a National Human Rights Action Plan in close cooperation with the Human Rights Parliamentary Committee.
* Developing cooperation agreements/protocols with foreign Parliaments, and supporting the conduct of study visits for MPs and staff.
* Publishing and distributing several studies and periodic publications.
* Conducting research and workshops organized in support of relevant draft laws (administrative decentralization, political parties).
* Organizing pilot public consultations between parliamentarians, local government officials and civil society organizations from select districts.
* Providing training and supporting the administration in languages, logistics and IT skills.

In the recently developed programme document, the following outputs have been agreed with the Parliament:

* Institutional capacities of the Parliament to address critical reform issues, including key civil peace building challenges strengthened.
* The monitoring and oversight function of the Lebanese Parliamentarians enhanced.
* Support to the Lebanese Parliament to mainstream human rights in parliamentary work provided.

Democratic governance is essential for conflict management, and parliaments, being the people’s representatives, can be well situated to manage social crises, prevent violent conflict and bring about lasting peace, if provided with the knowledge and tools required. The wave of popular demand for more voice and inclusion for citizens across the region, which accompanies the events of the Arab Spring, underlines a strong need to support a potential growing role of the parliament in preventing and resolving crises, engaging in dialogue and strengthening the state-society compact. With these dynamics in mind, it becomes even more important to build on current planning and strengthen activities to support the capacities of the Parliament in crisis prevention and recovery (CPR). The CO has cooperated extensively with bureaus in UNDP, including BDP and BCPR within their previous parliamentary support projects. A proposal and expression of interest has been submitted to the last round of the DGTTF as well as interest has been expressed in BCPR technical and resource support.

Following these processes and the continued need to strengthen the capacities of the Lebanese Parliament, UNDP, jointly between BCPR and BDP (DGG), undertook a mission to Lebanon in order to assist the CO in additional consultations with the Parliament and reviewing/redesigning the project document on parliamentary development, to expand and strengthen its CPR dimension, and to look at potential additional activities to compliment the work already underway with the parliament (See attached ToR for the mission).

The mission conducted a rapid situation analysis and held several meetings, including with the staff of the parliamentary support project, the CO Senior Management, the Governance Team and the CPR Team in the CO, with staff from the Peacebuilding and Common Space Projects, Local development as well as support to the dialogue on the issues of Palestinians refugees.

The team held extensive meetings in the Parliament, including with the National Project Coordinator and the Secretary General as well as several Parliamentary administrative staff, MPs, including members of key committees and committee chairpersons, which the project cooperates with, as well as the external organizations working in the Parliament. Meetings were also held with NGOs working on issues of Parliamentary Development, with a focus on peacebuilding and crises prevention as well as with donor partners.

**2. Mission findings and recommendations**

**2.1 Situation of the project and current position within the Parliament**

* The project is well established and has achieved a very good working relationship with the Parliament. Although it many cases it functions, *de facto,* as a service center for the Parliament, it has achieved a position where it is flexible and able to respond to demands coming from MPs, Committees and the Parliamentary administration. This is innovative and should be preserved and nurtured as it is unique and allows a valuable entry point for work of UN in Lebanon to a key political institution.
* Project outcomes and outputs are sound and should not be amended, but where activities and outputs are similar, activities to meet outputs can be combined. Also, the Project’s outputs would benefit greatly from enhancing coordination and collaboration with other projects from the CO’s portfolio, mutually reinforcing their impacts. For example, the project would benefit (and could contribute to) regular information exchange and conducing joint activities with the Common Space Project, the Peacebuilding Project and other in the CO, where thematic overlap exist.

Hiring a full time project manager, would help achieve the above. Whereas the team has been conducting their duties well, they would benefit from strategic direction and alignment of activities undertaken with the work undertaken by other projects in the country office, which a project manager would be able to provide.

* On a strategic level, the mission team has observed the need for an increased number of contacts between the CO senior management and the political leadership of the Parliament. While the relations between the parties have been good, the contacts could be more often and provide traction to some of the key activities undertaken by the Project. UN senior Country Teams representation should engage with parliament’s senior leadership (i.e. - Speaker; Committee Chairpersons) on a regular basis and strategically, to allow for the periodic intervention at the political level of the Parliament and to build the relationship between the UNCT and senior political leaders in Lebanon.
* To increase engagement and strengthen relations, the Project should ensure quarterly project steering or board meetings and ensure a cross-section of MPs (i.e. – government and opposition coalitions; party blocks) are invited and provided opportunities to provide input into ongoing activities and future planning.

**2.2 Key findings on capacities of Parliament**

* The Parliament lacks a strategic plan and a clear division of roles and responsibilities between the administrative bodies and staff. There is a lack of a functioning human resources department, and there is a substantial presence of a workforce whose duties are unclear. This situation raises many challenges to the effectiveness and functioning of the parliamentary administration and provides for divisions between the parliamentary administration and the MP’s.

While a clear recommendation could be to develop a strategic plan for the Parliament, including conducting thorough assessments of current capacities on the ground and the needs for enhancement, the National Project Coordinator rejected it as unnecessary and not desired. This is mainly due to political challenges that would come with the development of a strategic plan and its impact on the control over hiring of staff.

While this is a reality that the project needs to deal with, the focus on finding creative ways of building capacities of the right staff, the capacity of the committee support structures and “champions” who can drive progress within parliamentary work, could be enhanced further and given a strategic priority.

* The National Project Coordinator also expressed a request for support to the development of the Arab Parliamentary Institute, which is going to be housed in the Lebanese Parliament. The Institute will work on developing capacities and building best practices for Arab Parliamentarians, but can also serve the purpose of developing capacities of Lebanese Parliamentary Administration and should be identified as an entry point for this work. Currently USAID and Westminster Foundation support the initiative, but support has been requested for UNDP to engage in the strategic planning and sharing best practices from similar institutes in other parliaments, to share training modules.

**2.3 Entry points for scaling up activities for enhancing Parliaments role for fostering dialogue and engaging in peacebuilding :**

**2.3.1** **Supporting the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan into a legal framework and national institutions, including the holding public consultations by the Human Rights Committee of the Parliament.**

**2.3.2 Supporting the HR Committee to hold dialogue on difficult issues, including the issue of Palestinian refugees rights. Ensuring the Committee conducts consultation on key issues related to Palestinian rights and engages constructively in further legislative and institutional efforts in this area.**

Engagement with Human Rights Committee is one of the strongest and most advanced outputs of the current work with the Parliament and remains a possible entry point to strengthen the contribution for CPR issues through engagement on dialogue around contentious issues. Support provided by the project to the HR Committee should continue after the human rights action plan is adopted by parliament. Support should be holistic and ensure all aspects of work of parliament are supported, including:

* Legal and research support to the committee as it considers the drafting and adoption of draft legislation related to human rights,
* Public consultations with citizens and CSOs outside of Beirut to build consensus for and enhance the substance of legislation,
* Build capacity of secretariat staff to the committee to develop their ability to sustainably support future law-making and oversight work,
* Develop and support a dialogue platform on issues of rights of Palestinian People, including on employment and land tenure.

**2.3.3** **Support to parliamentary committees and individual MPs to conduct public consultations, outreach and dialogues between committees, MP’s and citizens in their constituencies on key issues for development planning, service delivery and social cohesions.**

This approach to area based development presents a good example of participatory approaches which can be scaled up and conducted in the regions themselves, with consultations on key issues relating both to development and peacebuilding, contribution to social cohesion and dialogue and improved service delivery. There is will from the Parliament, expressed by the National Project Coordinator (who stated support for MP’s outreach to citizens as key for UNDP support) as well as from MP’s (for example expressed by the head of influential and critical for service delivery Public Works Committee)

Support provided by the project could include:

* Providing technical advice/support to committees including training, mentoring and providing tools and research to engage in public consultations on key developmental issues.
* Supporting the chosen committees to hold inquires and public hearings focused on the key areas of service delivery and social cohesion.
* Support directly the MPs for effective constituency communication and outreach and discussion on key identified issues (such as land tenure, electricity and water, other service delivery)
* Support to developing and distributing materials for the consultations including leaflets, questionnaires reports and others, together with relevant committee staff and supporting distribution among stakeholders.

A good pilot for these activities has been the organization of a regional development workshop for the district of Zahle, which included MP’s from the district participating in a discussion on the demographic, economic and social situation of the Caza of Zahle, with background materials and research prepared by UNDP. There has been positive feedback from participants and a comprehensive report with developmental planning recommendations has been produced.

**2.3.4 Other areas to strengthen Parliaments work on CPR include:**

* The Parliament has a critical role in passing legislation related to key CPR programmatic areas, which are currently covered by UNDP in Lebanon. These could be mapped by respective teams engaged programmatically in the CO, and taken forward through support to specific committees, by a mixed approach of thematic preparations and research as well as providing platforms for internal consultations as well as discussions with main stakeholders and public consultations including media and CSO.

These would need to be taken case by case, but would fall under the outputs of the current project, and can be taken up by the Parliamentary Project Team, in close cooperation with the relevant CPR project teams. An example can be the work on cluster munitions, DDR gender based violence, Palestinian refuge rights issues, as well as youth employment.

* The meeting with the National Project Director in the Parliament made it clear that there is interest in the project supporting parliamentary committees in discussing key issues at the heart of national dialogue – including issues of Palestinian refugee rights, decentralization, political and electoral reform.

This support can take the form of providing research and knowledge products for discussion and expert technical support in these areas (which could be coordinated with the Common Space project ) as well as through committee meetings with major stakeholders, including civil society and the media.

* There is an opportunity to build the link between the Parliamentary Project and the Peacebuilding project at the CO, which has the opportunity to engage MP’s in dialogue with youth clubs in Universities and youth dialogue. The PB project is also preparing an toolkit on mediation and dialogue to be utilized and promoted at the municipal level by the Mukhtar, - this important initiative could be supported through MP’s in form of curriculum change for schools. There is also a role for MP’s to build consensus on history (major impact for PB – the bus project).
* In coordination with UNDPs Project on Electoral Reform, it is crucial to support the parliamentary committees that will be considering the draft legislation due by early 2012 on electoral law reform. The means of support provided will depend on resources but could include legal and technical research and public consultations. Electoral reform legislation will be introduced in the parliament by early 2012 and UNDPs work with the Ministry of Interior could benefit from project’s support in consideration of draft law in parliament

**2.4 Financial situation and funding opportunities:**

* Currently the Project in the Parliament is only partially financed. The Parliament itself is providing 70 000 USD annually, mainly for staff and administrative costs. The project has another funding stream from CO of 50 000 USD per year, leaving a funding gap of 125 000 USD annually to implement the planned activities. Additional funding is also needed to hire a project manager.
* While the funding pocket which has been available previously from BDP and BCPR has terminated (due to exhaustion of funds), BCPR and BDP can explore if some additional funding may become available to support minimizing the project gap and focusing activities to strengthen impact on CPR.
* There will be a window of opportunity opening up for funding from the European Union. The EU will be conducting a comprehensive needs assessment with the Parliament towards the end of the year, following which priorities will be set and a tender will be open for funding to deliver on them. As the capacity gaps and priority for parliamentary development are generally known to the CO, it is well positioned to take part in the bidding process. It also has by far the most established presence as well as developed relation with the Parliament from any other stakeholders working on Parliamentary support.
* Following the discussion with the EU representation, it is clear that an effort should take place to brief them on developments within the projects and its achievements for Parliamentary strengthening on regular bases and continue a discussion, including high level, with the EU mission leadership.
* Others donors should be also approached to seek funding for the project, especially that many of them are shifting more resources into democratic governance due to events in the regions. Following the meeting with French Embassy representative, a suggestion to create a basket fund has come up, which is a good idea and should be pursued by CO.

**3. Key recommendations and next steps**

* It is recommended the relation with the Parliament is reinforced with increased engagement in more regular high level contacts between the CO and broader UNCT senior representation and parliament’s senior leadership (Speaker; Committee Chairpersons) on a regular basis. This could be achieved through (at least quarterly) the project steering committee meetings and informal, diplomatic engagement.
* It is recommended that once resources are available, the CO hires a project manager to ensure strategic visions and alignment of the Project with other programmes in the CO, contributing to each other’s’ activities and contributing to increased resources and impact. It is further recommended that the Project discusses with the CPR Portfolio all critical areas for MP’s and specific committee engagement and define a strategy to support and engage parliament in debating and passing critical laws.
* It is recommended that the project focus its efforts on one or two key substantive outcomes that will make an impact on CPR in Lebanon.

1. Continue support to the Human Rights Committee, and engage its members in trips outside Beirut to discuss with local population and witness issues under discussion for the national HR action plan, building consensus on its implementation. Consultation to serve as bases for further development of national HR institutions, and development of legal framework. Special attention in the process to be given to the issue of Palestinian refugee rights.
2. Following the success of regional development workshop for the district of Zahle, scale up and develop the approach and engage key Committees to conduct public consultation and dialogue on key service delivery and social cohesion issues. Ensure

* It is recommended that in coordination with UNDPs project on electoral reform, support is provided to the parliamentary committees that will be considering the draft legislation due by early 2012.
* It is highly recommended that CO engages donors on a systematic basis. EC funding of new project with parliament in 2012 must be pursued and starts with senior level engagement with senior EC officials in Lebanon. French suggestion of a basket fund may be a good idea and should be pursued by CO

**3.1 Next steps:**

* CO to review report and recommendation and agree on approach proposed/endorse recommendations
* BDP and BCPR to seek funding to lessen the financial gap in the project from global and regional sources once CO endorses recommendations and steps for moving forward
* CO to engage donors on a systematic basis. EC funding of new project with parliament in 2012 to be pursued, including senior level engagement with senior EC officials in Lebanon. French suggestion of a basket fund may be a good idea and should be pursued by CO
* According to planned application processes, BCPR and BDP to assist in the formulation of a proposal for the EU for long-term funding of the parliamentary support project

Annex 1– list of meetings conducted:

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| **Wednesday 21/09/2011** | **Thursday 22/09/2011** | **Friday 23/09/2011** |
| **AM** | **AM** | **AM** |
|  | **8:30** Meeting with Celine Moyroud, UNDP CPR Portfolio Manager  **Confirmed** | **9:00** Meeting with UNDP’s Peace Building project (Joanna Nassar and Sanna Tassala) at UNDP **Confirmed** |
|  | **9:30** Meeting with Ibrahim Kanaan (Chair of the Budget and Finance Parliamentary Committee)  **Confirmed** |  |
| **10:00** Briefing Meeting with UNDP Management and UNDP Project at Parliament and Governance Portfolio  **(Seif, Celine, Hassan and Gaelle)** | **10:00** Meeting with **Michel Moussa** (Chair of the Human Rights Parliamentary Committee **Confirmed if there is no General Assembly** | **10:30** Dr. Riyad Ghanam, Director of Parliamentary Session and Committee Department **Confirmed** |
| **11:30** Secretary General of Foreign Affairs department. at Parliament, Mr. Bilal Sharara  **Confirmed** | **10:30** Meeting with Westminster Foundation for Democracy (Hovig: Project Manager of WFD at Parliament and Hasnaa Mansour: Project Manager of the EU-WFD Project)  **Confirmed** | **11:00** Simon Mouawad , General Director- consultant  **Confirmed** |
|  | **11:00 UNDP Parliament Project to review some documents** | **11:30**  Meeting with Fadi Abilmona, Project Manager of LPDC at UNDP  **Confirmed** |
| **PM** | **PM** | **PM** |
| **12:00** Rashid Samaha, Head of the Parliamentary Relations and Tarek Sanjakdar, Head of the Parliament Unions, Foreign Affairs Department. **Confirmed** | **1:00**  MP Farid al Khazen  C**onfirmed** | **12:30** Secretary General of Parliament  Mr. Adnan Daher  **Confirmed** |
| **LUNCH BREAK 1:30-2:30** | | |
| **2:30** Meeting with Common Space Initiative (Karam Karam, Soha Frem, Vida Hamd).  **Confirmed** | **2:30** ARPAC, Laury Haytayan, Executive Director**.** At Mukhaiber office or at our office. **Confirmed**  Tel: 01-388113/4/5 ext 13  Mukhaiber out of town | **2:30** Meeting with Maria Sanchez EU  [delegation- lebanon@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:delegation- lebanon@eeas.europa.eu-)  Location: Saifi  01-569 400  03-355 779  **Confirmed** |
| **3:30** Meeting with Nahwa Al Mouwatiniya to discuss the Lebanese Parliamentary Monitor: Dawra **Confirmed** | **3:30** Meeting with Mohammad Kabbani (Chair of the Energy Parliamentary Committee)  **Confirmed** |
| **5:00** Meeting with Raghed Assi  UNDP Local Development Advisor | **5:00** French Agency for Development (AFD). Mr. Denis Cassat 01-420192 or by email at [cassatd@afd.fr](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/h/rkeh96x2o5n0/?&v=b&cs=wh&to=cassatd@afd.fr)  **Confirmed** | **4:30** Debriefing with UNDP Project and Governance portfolio  **(Seif, Celine, Hassan and Gaelle)** |
|  |  | **6:00** Meeting with NDI |