

# **Professional Development for Parliamentarians and Staff**

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## **Parliamentary Committees**

## Introduction

The Parliamentary Centre, in partnership with the World Bank Institute, has developed a training module focusing on Parliamentary committees. This course is intended primarily for Parliamentary Staff but will be of benefit to Members of Parliament (MPs) and individuals interested in learning more about the core functions of Parliaments. The module on Parliamentary Committees forms part of the self-paced learning program on “Professional Development for Parliamentary Staff”.

### *Purpose and objective:*

The main objective is to introduce parliamentary staff and Members of Parliament to parliamentary committees focusing on functions, powers and procedures, needs and related issues that govern the effectiveness of parliamentary committees. The training course will increase the understanding of participants on the important role of parliamentary committees in legislature.

The course is comprised of the following units:

### **UNIT 1: Parliamentary Committees In Democracies**

Unit 1 provides introductory information on how parliamentary committees as units of organization within legislatures, provide greater freedom for in-depth analysis making it possible for Members of Parliament and ultimately the parliament itself to perform the core functions of law making, oversight and representation. The unit looks in detail at the committee system, committee types, committee functions and powers.

### **UNIT 2. Effectiveness Of Committees**

Unit 2 examines factors that contribute to the effectiveness of parliamentary committees, and highlights the need for consensus building, the importance of diversity and the requirement for non-partisanship in committee work. The unit also looks at the basic information needs of committees, the role of committee staff and the required core competencies.

### **UNIT 3. Procedural and Administrative Support**

Unit 3 concentrates on the procedural and administrative support needed for effective parliamentary committee work. It looks at the types of administrative support, requirements for performing effective administrative functions, as well as the nature of parliamentary procedure. In-depth information is provided on some procedural issues, examples and best practices.

### **UNIT 4. Research Services For Parliamentary Committees**

Unit 4 looks at the need for parliamentary committees to have access to timely up-to-date, accurate and well-researched information for effective decision-making. The unit draws attention to the different methods and types of research as well as the skills required by parliamentary staff in undertaking legislative research. It stresses the importance of paying attention to the political, ethical and technical considerations in all legislative research.

### **UNIT 5. Parliamentary Committees and The Law Making Process**

Unit 5 is devoted to the critical role that committees play in the proposal of new laws. Often, when the legislative powers of a country are vested in parliament, procedures for passing public, private and hybrid bills will require entrusting such bills to the relevant parliamentary committee for consideration. Parliament is expected to scrutinize and make amendments to ensure that the bill conforms to national and international policies. This unit focuses on the role of parliamentary committees' in achieving these goals.

### **UNIT 6. Government Accountability and Parliamentary Committees**

Unit 6 is devoted to parliaments' important role in ensuring government accountability. Parliaments have the responsibility to ensure accountability and openness of government through oversight of activities of the executive and its auxiliary bodies in order to curb corruption and effect good practices. Parliaments also have the power of the purse and the mandate to scrutinize the utilization of public finances and ensure financial accountability. Unit 6 looks at how parliamentary committees can promote government accountability.

## **UNIT 7. Transparency, Participation and Outreach**

Unit 7 is devoted to Parliamentary transparency, encouraging participation and promoting constituency outreach. As representatives, MPs require a system that allows concerns and aspirations of their constituents to be reflected in decision-making and laws governing the country. The unit looks at some of the suggested procedures for achieving transparency, promoting participation and expanding outreach through partnerships with civil society.