

Middle East and North Africa Multi-Donor Trust Fund

Parliamentary Strengthening in Tunisia and Morocco

Overview

The events of the MENA region since the beginning of 2011 reinforce the central role of parliaments in strengthening voice and participation and promoting inclusive and accountable governance. Parliamentarians are an important link between the electorate and the executive government and play a key role in voicing the concerns of the people they represent. Engaging citizens in the decision-making process is therefore essential to good governance, and a cornerstone of parliamentary procedure. Some MENA countries have started to introduce reforms in regards to parliamentary oversight.

Objective

Strengthen parliament in the areas of budget oversight and public engagement in Tunisia and Morocco.

In Tunisia, the role and powers of the parliament have been pivotal in the discussions on the shape of post-revolution Tunisia. The National Constituent Assembly (NCA) was established on October 23, 2011, to realize the ambitions of the Jasmine Revolution by putting in place a new constitution for greater transparency and inclusiveness and playing the role of an interim Parliament.

In Morocco, the 2011 Constitution introduced the following reforms: the prime minister is now appointed from the party that wins parliamentary elections; parliament has been given authority over the cabinet; parliament is also granted more oversight of civil rights and electoral issues. But there is more work to be done: a draft law on access to information has not yet been adopted by the Cabinet and its successful implementation will depend in large part on political will for genuine open and inclusive governance. A draft law on petitions and legislative motions are also being developed and may take the form of parliamentary procedure, thus necessitating capacity building of parliament to respond to these new rights.

New open government reforms in Tunisia and Morocco will require an active involvement of Parliament in the review and approval process of these and other laws as well as in carrying out enhanced oversight functions. Hence, this **Bank-executed** activity aims to:

- strengthen the capacity of parliamentary staff and targeted parliamentarians with regards to public engagement mechanisms in parliamentary work; and
- enhance the capacity of parliamentary staff and targeted parliamentarians in budget analysis to improve oversight responsibilities.

This proposal has received \$360,000 from the MENA MDTF.

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Deliverables

The specific deliverables of this activity will include:

- Two capacity reviews (one for Morocco and one for Tunisia);
- Four training sessions to be conducted in both countries in the areas of public engagement and budget oversight;
- A knowledge-exchange series (videoconference and/or face to face) which will help connect regional parliamentary staff and targeted MPs with the international parliamentary community to learn from international experience in these domains; and
- One study tour for local experts from Morocco and Tunisia to benefit from hands-on site visit to an international parliament, learn from their experience and strengthen cross-country knowledge exchange networks.

Beneficiaries and Expected Results

The primary intended beneficiaries of this activity are parliamentary staff, including through direct support to the work of parliamentary committees. Other beneficiaries are civil society representatives who will participate in seminars and knowledge-exchange sessions to maximize multi-stakeholder dialogue and to help establish strong lines of communication and collaboration on these important reform areas. The expected outcomes include:

- **Effective engagement** through a better understanding of various methods and tools that can be utilized;
- **Enhanced legislative oversight functions** particularly on budget formulation and implementation; and
- **Increased awareness** among parliamentary staff on how other countries have undergone similar reforms as well as why public engagement and transparency is an important tool to improve parliamentary capacity.

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