Indicator 6.3 – Other forms of public engagement

Participatory parliaments are the essential component of the democratic system and are key to improving trust in legislative institutions. Citizens often do not have the opportunity and means to take part in the decision-making process directly. Civil society actors enable different groups of the public to organize, pool their resources, and support participatory parliamentary processes on specific issues of interest or critical importance, while civic education contributes to increasing public understanding of parliament’s role, as well as the notion of the separation of powers and democratic system in general.

The legislature is responsible for making itself accessible to civil society and for educating citizens about the role and mandate of the parliament. Giving civil society a more direct role in the setting of policy agendas and the shaping of decisions that affect them strengthens the legitimacy of such decisions and results in better policy outcomes.

Parliaments are responsible for creating an environment that allows civil society to make its voice heard. Along with other forms of public engagement, consultations with civil society actors and civic education represent important components of the participatory approach of parliaments. The enhanced participation of citizens in the decision-making process requires the public to be aware of the basics of parliamentary process, namely when parliamentary processes take place and how citizens can participate.

The assessment of the indicator on other forms of public engagement comprises the following dimensions:

- 6.3.1 Partnerships for participation – consultation with civil society organizations
- 6.3.2 Civic education
Dimension 6.3.1 Partnerships for participation – consultation with civil society organizations

Indicator: 6.3 Other forms of public engagement
Sub-target: 6. Participatory parliament
Target: 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

About the dimension

The dimension focuses on partnerships for participation and in particular, consultations with civil society organizations. Civil society organizations and groups represent an opportunity for citizens to organize, pool their resources, and support participatory parliamentary processes on specific issues of interest or critical importance.

For the purposes of this indicator, civil society organizations refer to organizations that work in the arena between the household, the private sector and the state, with the intention of negotiating or bringing to the attention of parliamentarians matters of public concern. They can include, but are not limited to, NGOs, private sector organizations, academia, and think-tanks.

The united participation of organized civil society groups in parliamentary processes brings additional expertise and views of citizens to the discussion, and has the potential to amplify the voices of the most vulnerable in society, and thus should be encouraged in a thriving democracy. Specific support should be made available to engage civil society groups, as they can provide parliaments with access to communities that would otherwise remain disengaged from the political system. Strengthening civil society actor engagement with parliament can contribute to more informed policy-making and wider agreement across party lines on laws and policies initiated by national legislatures, and, more broadly, to democracy.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of partnerships for participation – consultation with CSOs would encompass the following:

A legislative framework that enables consultations with civil society organizations and groups, as part of the public participation process, is in place. Rules of procedure, standing orders and laws define the parameters within which civil society actors can request information, propose initiatives and make submissions on matters that are already on the agenda.

Remedies for redress where the legal obligation of consultation are not met, are stipulated within the legislative framework.

Information related to parliamentary processes is published in a timely manner and in the local language, to facilitate accessibility and inclusiveness.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Provisions in the constitution stipulating the involvement of civil society actors

---

1 Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations (TASCO), CSOs and Citizens’ Participation (TASCO, July 2011).
• Legislation, rules or standing orders to support consultation with civil society actors
• Clauses specifically focused on remedies or redress where participation obligations are not met
• Evidence of published information on parliamentary processes

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and report) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Legislative framework**

The legislative framework enables the routine consultation of civil society organizations and stipulates the parameters of that participation, including the manner in which information is requested and inputs are provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Broad consultation**

Parliament, including its bodies and MPs, systematically consults with civil society groups when facilitating public participation, for different perspectives to be represented adequately. Civil society actor representatives can access parliamentary premises and attend relevant meetings. Parliament creates tools for engaging in consultation processes with civil society actors both in person and electronically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Accessible information**

All information including the programme of parliament, logistical information in relation to parliamentary processes, as well as the content of these processes, must be made available and accessible to all civil society actors, both in physical and digital format.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Recommendations for change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Indicator 6.3 – Other forms of public engagement
**Dimension 6.3.2 Civic education**

Indicator: 6.3 Other forms of public engagement  
Sub-target: 6. Participatory parliament  
Target: 16.7 Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative parliament

**About the dimension**

The dimension on civic education focuses on the parliamentary efforts aimed at increasing public understanding of parliament’s role, as well as the notion of the separation of powers, and at strengthening democracy. In order to maximize participation, the public should not just know where and when parliamentary processes take place, but also how they can participate and influence decision-making. These efforts aim to ensure an active citizenry, which can be defined as citizens who are tolerant of diverse views, and who strive to build and contribute to a democratic society for the public good. Civic education programmes must be non-partisan and promote the basic principles of democracy.

Civic education can take many forms, including direct interaction by MPs with citizens through their constituencies, or opportunities for the public to engage or visit parliament and its offices. Civic education can also target different groups in society. While the aim of civic education is to encourage broad participation, it is also important to place a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups to ensure that those with the least resources and access to decision-making processes are not left out. Vulnerable or marginalized groups may not have ready access to information on parliamentary processes. Such groups can include, but are not limited, to women, children, rural communities and the unemployed. Civic education programmes can be stand-alone programmes designed for different groups in society, or can be integrated into the broader education system within both school and post-school curricula.

Parliaments may develop general civic education plans for active citizenship, and create, manage and promote courses, policies and manuals on civic education. Education programmes for children and youth should be adapted to target different age groups, from pre-schoolers to university students.

The role of civic education in enhancing public participation is indeed far-reaching. The right to participate in democracies is bestowed on all citizens of a country, and civic education empowers all citizens to engage with public representatives in meaningful ways.

---

**On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of civic education would encompass the following:**

- Civic education programmes are custom designed to empower a broad range of stakeholders, with the intention of improving the breadth and depth of public understanding about and participation of society in the work of the legislature.

- Parliament has established infrastructure, policies and manuals for civic education. Programmes are provided nationwide with a particular focus on youth and marginalized groups.

- Civic education programmes are free from partisanship, and focus on promoting democratic principles.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.
The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Infrastructure, policies and manuals for providing nationwide civic education, with a particular focus on children and youth
- Policies, models or other documents outlining the process for engaging vulnerable communities and groups of people in civic education. Lists of organizations, communities, groupings and/or platforms engaged with during outreach
- Civic education courses promoted by the parliament
- The number of individuals taking part in parliamentary civic education programmes per year

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Civic education infrastructure and established practice**

Parliament has developed infrastructure, policies and manuals for providing nationwide civic education for all groups of society, with a particular focus on children and youth. Different courses intended for an active citizenry, as well as civic education policies and manuals, are developed, managed and promoted by parliament.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Civic education of especially vulnerable groups**

Clear policies, procedures and mechanisms are in place to ensure that civic education programmes reach the most vulnerable in society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Non-partisanship**

Civic education programmes are non-partisan and promote the basic principles of democracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Recommendations for change**