



PARLIAMENTARY STRENGTHENING PROGRAM (PSP)

Background:

In 2006, Haiti elected the members of its current legislature comprising 30 Senators and 99 Deputies. Since taking office, these representatives have confronted major political challenges including the development of a new legislative agenda. For most, the legislative process itself is new, as are the roles and responsibilities of an elected official. Given the Government of Haiti's commitment to democratic reform and broad based economic recovery through actions taken during the next two years, it is imperative that these elected officials be provided with technical and logistical support that allows them to fulfill their act as effective legislators and policy-makers. Moreover, supporting the legislature is critical to improving its legitimacy and providing the political space and stability needed to undertake difficult tasks, including long-term legislative planning and constitutional reform. To this end, the Parliamentary Strengthening Program (PSP) will provide direct support to strengthen the Parliament's legislative and oversight functions, improve the skills of members and staff, develop internal administration and management capacity, and support public participation.

Objectives:

The major objectives of this program include providing support to the Haitian Parliament to develop and conduct a new member orientation program, strengthening the institutional capacity of Parliament, improving accountability and transparency in the legislative process, and establishing a new Parliamentary Resource Center while rehabilitating the parliament building itself.



Haiti's Freely Elected Parliament in Plenary
There are 30 Senators and 99 members of the Chamber of Deputies elected in 2006.

Activities: The PSP provides support in the following areas:

- **Instituting a New Member Orientation Program:** New members need guidance and training to effectively exercise their roles and responsibilities within the broader government structure and to exercise their legislative authority in a positive and constructive manner. This program ensures that new members of Parliament have the necessary information, knowledge, and skills to be effective legislators and representatives.
- **Strengthen the Institutional Capacity of Parliament:** The PS program provides seminars and in-depth training for the continued professional development of members and senior staff. Developing the internal administration and management of the Parliament, including the development and implementation of internal rules and procedures, is the central focus of this training. A first of its kind Parliamentary Services Center is being put in place to serve both houses, focusing on providing professional documentation, research, and communication services to the commissions and members.
- **Strengthen Public Accountability and Transparency in the Legislative Process:** The administration and management of Parliament's new website is an essential part of this activity area. Members are assisted in the preparation of their personal web pages on the new parliamentary website by PS project staff. The PSP also produces a newspaper supplement circulated in the national papers summarizing the role and achievements of parliamentarians as legislators in an easy-to-read format. Parliamentary staff are also trained to interact with the media.
- **Facilities Improvement, Repair and Furnishings:** USAID is working together with Canada to launch a parliamentary restoration and rehabilitation project that improves the working space for Senators, Deputies and their staff. In close collaboration with members from both houses of Parliament, the PS program identified several facility needs, including an expansion of office and conference space and establishment of a Resource Center. Once the rehabilitation is completed, the project will provide computer equipment and office furniture for these facility projects.

USAID Support: \$6 million

Life of Program: July 26, 2006 to July 26, 2009

Geographic focus: Nationwide

Implementing Mechanism and Partner: The Parliamentary Strengthening Program is implemented under an Indefinite Quantity Contract with the State University of New York (SUNY). The GOH institutional partner is the Haitian Parliament.

FY 2008 Program Results: During 2008 the PSP achieved the following results.

- USAID provided support for legislative committee functioning focused on strengthening executive oversight and improving the legislative review process. Support was provided to 10 parliamentary commissions for the revision and submission of 14 laws to Parliament and various fact-finding and oversight hearings, which resulted in significant changes in the substance of the laws and transparency in the legislative process.
- The program provided seminar-based training for the continued professional development of all members and senior staff. Efforts concentrated on improving the internal administration and management of the Parliament, including the development and application of internal rules and procedures.
- In addition, a new class of 180 parliamentarians and staff received comprehensive training focused on their new legislative and constitutional responsibilities as well as committee functions.
- USAID also supported a series of public forums on various topics including the management of emergency funds provided by the international community for hurricane relief as well as the roles and responsibilities of parliamentarians vis-à-vis their constituents. While 10 forums were initially planned with one in each Department, 47 were actually held in various locations throughout the country. In addition, nationwide radio spots were aired explaining the precise roles and responsibilities of parliamentarians to the public.
- In a landmark event, the Parliament's first public website was launched to enhance public accountability and facilitate citizen communication with their elected representatives.



President of Senate Kelly Bastien (left), Senators Lambert, Cheron, Victor, USAID/Haiti former Director Paul Tuebner and Minister Joseph Jasmin during the delivery of equipment ceremony to Parliament (2008)

Expected Results Over Life of the Project:

It is expected that the Executive and Parliament will function effectively, with each institution and its members fulfilling a range of constitutional responsibilities including the execution of the legislative agenda and adoption of a national budget in a timely manner. Members of Parliament will represent their constituents' concerns as they formulate and pass key legislation, review and finalize annual Government of Haiti (GOH) budgets in a timely and transparent manner, and review executive policies and performance. In the future, systems promoting transparency and efficiency will be institutionalized and become self-sustaining, making the legislative branch increasingly independent and representative of all citizens.