



United States Agency for International Development

## PARLIAMENTARY ASSISTANCE IN NEPAL

*The 1990 democracy movement and the introduction of multiparty democracy was a turning point for Nepal. Donors suddenly faced requests for immediate help to set the new democratic system in place.*

Through the Democratic Pluralism Initiative, USAID made grants from a variety of funding sources to support activities of different democratic institutions. It assisted Parliament by

- Arranging observation tours to other Asian countries and the United States to expose legislators and support staff to other legislative systems and operations
- Enhancing legislative support resources, services, and skills, including policy analysis, of the Parliament's support staff, the Secretariat
- Supporting nonpartisan discussion of national issues among Members of Parliament (MPs) and informed citizens
- Supporting a publication for MPs, the press, and the public on developments in the new Parliament and how legislatures in other countries function

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## SUMMARY

In 1990 Nepal was swept by a democratic revolution that established a new constitution and multiparty democracy, limited the king's power, recognized the people as sovereign, set up a directly elected parliament, brought the major parties out from underground, and guaranteed human rights.

The U.S. and other donors attempted to give international recognition to this change and help sustain the democratic opening. This evaluation examines the assistance provided in the legislative arena, describes its major features, assesses its impact, draws lessons for legislative assistance in other countries, and examines the extent to which Nepal's Parliament fills the roles of a democratic legislature.

USAID's primary objective was to help Nepal establish the new parliament as a functioning democratic institution. The main strategies were supporting observation tours to Asian countries and the United States to expose staff and members of parliament (MPs) to legislatures in other countries, developing Secretariat support services, fostering nonpartisan discussion among MPs and citizen groups on national issues, and informing MPs and citizens about parliamentary developments in Nepal and abroad.

Specific grants supported 1) an orientation program for new MPs, 2) intermittent visits by an Asia Foundation consultant to develop a needs assessment and long-range development plan, 3) an internship program for recent university graduates, 4) assistance to the parliamentary library, 5) a modest computer capacity, and 6) support of a nongovernmental organization that held seminars and produced a monthly publication about parliament.

At a very broad level, the goals of the Nepal government and donors have been achieved. Parliament is functioning and at the center of political life. Multiparty democracy is becoming institutionalized, and few seek to undo the democratic changes. Peaceful transitions of government have occurred, with opposing parties acceding to controversial Supreme Court decisions.

Though the credit for these accomplishments goes to Nepalis, donor assistance had important identifiable impacts.

1. As a result of observation tours, Nepal adopted a committee system that is already helping Parliament function more effectively.
2. A surprisingly strong and popular oversight role has developed in the Public Accounts Committee, injecting a degree of accountability previously unknown in government agencies.
3. The Secretariat has gained a sense of professionalism. Computerization has greatly increased efficiency in tracking bills, maintaining current versions of bills, and producing documents needed by parliament to be effective and transparent.

This is a rich case for lessons about assistance to parliamentary systems, low-cost interventions, interagency cooperation, external actors in the legislative arena, and managing legislative assistance.

## BACKGROUND

For Nepal, 1990 was a watershed year. That year revolution arose in the Kathmandu Valley. Police responded forcefully to demonstrations of the Movement for Restoration of Democracy. Many people were arrested and more than 50 were killed. But support for change spread quickly throughout the country. Today, in any political discussion, people still emphasize the significance of that year, when the King and the Government acceded to popular demand, ending 30 years of “partyless government.”

Political parties resurfaced that had remained underground since King Birendra’s father, King Mahendra, summarily terminated the country’s previous experiment with parliamentary democracy in the 1950s.

An interim government was set up—a coalition of Nepal’s two dominant parties, the Nepal Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal/United Marxist–Leninist. Its mandate was to draft a new constitution and hold popular elections.

After months of uncertainty and upheaval, the constitution was completed. Ironically, it was never ratified by referendum or by any elected body; rather, the King promulgated it. Five years later, despite turbulent politics in the Parliament and on the street, Nepal’s constitution remains virtually unquestioned, a symbol of democracy and a source of national pride.

The new constitution established several democratic changes. Most important, although the monarchy remains, the people are sovereign, and the power of government is vested in their representatives in Parliament. Interestingly, respect for the King and the monarchy appears to have increased now that his position is constitutionally less powerful. The constitution also guarantees human rights and basic freedoms. In the past, someone criticizing the

King or his government risked life and limb. Today, even the strongest government critics acknowledge there is freedom of speech and of the press. In contrast to the handful of newspapers previously controlled, if not owned, by the government, several hundred registered newspapers and magazines now publish without restraint. In some remote areas, however, respect for such human rights as freedom from arbitrary arrest and torture has not caught up with the constitutional change.

Though modeled on the British system, the new bicameral Parliament has a committee system intentionally patterned after the U.S. Congress and state legislatures. Members of the lower house (House of Representatives) are elected directly, one member representing each district. A more complex selection process determines membership of the less powerful upper chamber (National Assembly).

The Government is formed and headed by a prime minister, an MP who, with the member’s party or in coalition, can command a majority vote of confidence in the lower house. The Government falls when the prime minister can no

### Party Representation in Lower House\*

Party	1991 Election	1994 Election
Nepal Congress (NC)	110	83
Communist Party/United Marxist–Leninist (UML)	69	88
National Democratic (RPP)	4	20
Nepal Workers & Peasants	2	4
United People’s Front	9	0
Nepal Sadvhawana	6	3
Independents/Others	5	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>205</b>

\*In the 60-member upper house, owing to staggered terms and indirect election and selection, party composition changes annually, independent of whether the Government changes.

longer win a vote of confidence. National parliamentary elections were conducted relatively peacefully in 1991 and in 1994 (see box on party representation); a third peaceful change of government occurred in 1995 after a controversial Supreme Court decision and a no-confidence vote only days before the start of field-

work for this evaluation (see box on key political events). The parties' acceptance of the Court ruling to resolve this crisis augurs well for peaceful transitions of power.

## CDIE STUDY

This evaluation of the impact of legislative assistance provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development and other donors is one of five USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) is conducting. The others look at legislative assistance in Bolivia, El Salvador, the Philippines, and Poland. The resulting reports offer the Agency's first analysis of the impact of legislative assistance. In the past 10 years, USAID has increasingly become involved in programs that support democratic institutions. Those few experiences that involve legislative assistance are the grist for the series.

The reports assess the types of impacts donor assistance has had on developing-country legislatures and identify the analytical processes necessary to implement effective legislative assistance. The series will conclude with a report synthesizing findings from all five countries, drawing cross-country conclusions and analyzing whether, when, and how legislative assistance should be provided.

To evaluate the impact of legislative assistance in Nepal, in September 1995 a CDIE team interviewed 54 people, individually or in groups, including 14 MPs representing the three major parties (roughly in proportion to their representation in Parliament) two former prime ministers and one deputy prime minister, and the current and former Speaker of the House (see box on evaluation questions). The team also talked with representatives of the Secretariat (which provides staff support to the Parliament), USAID/Nepal (including four former USAID/Nepal staff members and consultants), The Asia Foundation, the Danish international aid agency DANIDA, USIS, the U.S. Embassy, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the press. The team examined program docu-

### Key Political Events

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 1-5/90    | Movement for Restoration of Democracy  |
| 5/90-5/91 | Interim government: coalition of Congress and UML, K.P. Bhattarai as Prime Minister  |
| 11/90     | New constitution promulgated   |
| 5/91      | First parliamentary elections under new constitution. Congress (NC) majority, G.P. Koirala as Prime Minister (PM)  |
| 7/94      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊠ 34 dissident NC MPs challenge PM's program</li> <li>⊠ PM asks King to dissolve Parliament, call elections</li> <li>⊠ PM Koirala forms caretaker government</li> </ul>   |
| 11/94     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊠ Second parliamentary elections</li> <li>⊠ No party wins majority or can form coalition</li> <li>⊠ NC stands aside for UML to form minority government, M.M. Adhikari as PM</li> </ul>   |
| 6/95      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊠ 25 percent of NC MPs ask King to call Parliament into session for no-confidence vote</li> <li>⊠ PM asks King to dissolve Parliament for new elections before it could return to session. Parliament is dissolved</li> <li>⊠ Congress challenges dissolution in Supreme Court</li> </ul> |
| 8/95      | ⊠ Court rescinds dissolution   |
| 9/95      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊠ Parliament is reinstated</li> <li>⊠ UML loses no-confidence vote</li> <li>⊠ Congress in coalition with RPP forms new government, Sher Bahadur Deuba as PM</li> </ul>  |

UML-Communist Party/United Marxist-Leninist  
 NC-Nepal Congress  
 RPP-National Democratic party

### Evaluation Explores Five Questions

- What role has the Parliament played in democratic change in Nepal?
- What are the essential features of the legislative process in Nepal?
- What types of assistance have USAID and other donors given to legislative functioning in Nepal?
- What impact has that assistance had?
- What lessons have been learned in Nepal that may be applicable to legislative assistance elsewhere?

ments and evaluations and tracked newspaper coverage of Parliament for several months.

## DONOR STRATEGIES

Legislative assistance in Nepal grew directly out of the 1990 Movement for Restoration of Democracy and the unexpected changes it brought about. The United States and other countries wanted to give immediate international recognition to Nepal's steps to democracy. With longstanding restrictions on the existence of private organizations lifted, new organizations with interesting ideas appeared. Donors were suddenly faced with many new proposals and opportunities in support of democratic change.

There had been no rationale for more than token assistance to the former National Panchayat, a 100-member, indirectly elected, unicameral legislative body that had little real

power and was accountable largely to the King. Even the government-controlled press rarely covered the Panchayat. Two fundamental changes justified donor support to the new Parliament: it, and not the King, would be the locus of power. And it would be accountable to the people rather than the King, through competitive multiparty elections.

U.S. efforts to help “sustain the democratic opening” in Nepal involved an unusual degree of coordination among three agencies: the Embassy, USIS, and USAID. Lacking a project or single pot of funds to fund an immediate response adequately, USAID made small grants from any funding source it could locate. It also provided a larger PVO (private voluntary organization) co-financing grant to The Asia Foundation, which managed some activities and made further subgrants. These dealt with Parliament, the judiciary, local government, the press, NGOs, and human rights, supporting such activities as constitution drafting, regional meetings to seek public input into the constitution, public opinion polling, and elections.

This broad Mission response to the 1990 changes in Nepal was called the Democratic Pluralism Initiative, or DPI. The Mission adopted the name and principal themes then current in USAID's Asia and Private Enterprise Bureau.<sup>1</sup>

Though this evaluation looks only at the DPI assistance related to Parliament, neither USAID nor DANIDA, the other major bilateral democracy donor, had a separate comprehensive project for Parliament. Some of their many grants and activities in support of democracy involved the legislative arena, most did not.

USAID/Nepal never defined separate institutional objectives for the long term development of the new Parliament in the initiative. With hindsight, we can characterize USAID's legislative development objectives as fairly modest

<sup>1</sup>The themes are 1) voice—improving the number and quality of channels for popular influence on government and for free dissemination of information and opinion; 2) choice—free, fair, and meaningful elections; 3) governance—effective, open, and democratic administration; 4) redress—full protection for individual and group rights; and 5) accountability—government unencumbered by pervasive corruption.

and short-term: *helping Nepal establish its new legislature and encouraging its democratic functioning.*

The Mission's main strategies were to support

- Short observation tours to other Asian countries and the United States to expose legislators, Secretariat staff, and constitution drafters to legislative systems and operations
- The Secretariat's development of legislative support services, resources, and skills, including its ability to retrieve information and analyze policies
- Nonpartisan discussion among MPs and citizen groups on national issues before Parliament
- Means to inform MPs and the general public about developments in the new Parliament and how legislatures in other countries function

USAID shared and coordinated the first two strategies with The Asia Foundation, DANIDA, and Germany's Freidrich Naumann Foundation. DANIDA and the Finnish International Development Agency had an additional strategy that was not part of U.S. assistance: establishing the basic physical infrastructure required by Parliament.

USAID channeled its legislative funding in three main ways: in cooperation with USIS; through The Asia Foundation; and in a grant to the Society for Constitutional and Parliamentary Exercises (SCOPE), a Nepalese NGO concerned primarily with developing Nepal's Parliament.

Observation tours were emphasized because none of the MPs elected from the two main parties (Congress and UML) had previously

served in a legislature. USAID and USIS jointly implemented and funded the observation tours to the United States. Groups of four to six MPs, balanced by party and interest, visited the U.S. Congress and several state legislatures.<sup>2</sup> Similar visits to legislatures of other Asian countries were arranged by The Asia Foundation, using its regional network of offices. Prominent among these were a tour for the three senior Secretariat officials to examine logistic support in parliaments of India, Pakistan, and Thailand and a tour for Public Account Committee members to examine the workings of similar parliamentary committees in five South Asian countries.

USAID's assistance to Parliament for building up support services and resources was channeled through The Asia Foundation, which added substantially from its own funds and worked with the Secretariat. These mini-projects and grants included

- an orientation program for new MPs
- Secretariat staff training
- intermittent visits by an Asia Foundation consultant to conduct a needs assessment for the Secretariat and help it put together a long range development plan
- an internship program for graduates of Tribhuvan University to serve as researchers in the Secretariat
- resources to build up a parliamentary library
- development of a modest computer capacity
- help in establishing a parliamentary women's caucus, speakers forums with outside resource people, and workshops in legislative drafting

<sup>2</sup>The USIS-USAID collaboration on observation tours was unusual and difficult bureaucratically, but successful. The agencies' different requirements for U.S. visits required waivers from their respective headquarters. But with patience and frequent communication, staff resolved the difficulties.

The bulk of USAID support to external actors in the legislative arena went to SCOPE for its seminars and workshops for MPs and outside professionals and for its monthly magazine, *Parliamentary Affairs*. The Asia Foundation also supported a subgrant to the Nepal Press Institute, in part to help the emergent press cover parliament.

## **PARLIAMENT, THE CENTRAL INSTITUTION OF A DEMOCRACY**

To understand how the Nepalese Parliament has developed since 1990 and as background to examining the impact of donor assistance, the team probed the extent to which Parliament assumes various roles of a legislature in a democracy. Six questions guided this inquiry. While the implied objectives were not clearly spelled out by the government or in any donor project documents, they were most certainly in donors' minds. These same questions would be important to ask if long-range institutional assistance to Parliament were being considered.

1. Is Parliament a key forum for debate on national issues?
2. Does Parliament play an oversight role with the ministries and agencies that implement laws?
3. Does it effectively carry out its lawmaking responsibilities?
4. Does Parliament seek and receive public input to its deliberations, for example regarding proposed legislation or review of the performance of government agencies?
5. Is Parliament functioning in a transparent manner?
6. Do members represent and serve their constituencies?

The answers paint a mixed picture. Though Parliament has developed more than might reasonably be expected in its first few years, many interviewees hope for improvement in some areas.

### *Debate*

Vigorous debate on key national issues occurs on the floor of Parliament, particularly in the House of Representatives. The public has great interest in such debate and a sense that Parliament is where the debate should occur. However, MPs are under strong pressure to toe the party line during debates on the floor, as well as in voting. They sometimes vigorously defend party positions on matters with which they have little familiarity, according to MPs of both parties. The most substantive discussion of issues in Parliament does not occur in debates on the floor; it typically occurs in the less formal committee meetings, which are not, for all practical purposes, open to the public. In those meetings, MPs apparently feel little pressure to defend party positions, so they can discuss issues on their merit.

### *Oversight*

A parliamentary oversight function is emerging, particularly in the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Representatives. The committee scrutinizes government bureaucracies that previously were accountable to no one. This committee is the only one the press follows closely, and it is the only committee that meets regularly during the long periods between parliamentary sessions. It reviews reports of the auditor general and has probed many irregularities in the use of government resources. In press reports, Public Accounts Committee investigations seem less partisan than other parliamentary activities.

None of the other seven standing committees regularly takes such an activist oversight role. Though the rules empower committees to call ministers or other officials to appear before

them, many committee chairs and members do not fully understand their committee's role and how it can be exercised, according to several MPs who participated in USAID-sponsored tours of the U.S. Congress and state legislatures.

Furthermore, there may be disincentives to committee oversight of ministers and the Government—ministers and committee chairs are all MPs of the government party or coalition; ministers are often senior to committee chairs; and committee chairs (and members) depend on their party for resources in elections.<sup>3</sup>

### *Lawmaking*

Parliament's record as a lawmaking body is mixed. There were short periods when many laws passed. For example, 1992–93 was a productive period—68 bills were enacted. However, there also have been long periods when virtually no legislation passed. Much work remains to rewrite old laws to be consistent with the new constitution<sup>4</sup> (see box on inheritance law and other legislation affecting women).

Parliament has considered few bills drafted by MPs or Parliament staff. Rather, as in many countries, civil servants of various ministries draft bills; the relevant minister or the Prime Minister then presents them as Government bills. Parliament and its committees are responsible for reviewing those bills, amending or modifying them if needed (or returning them to the ministry with revision instructions), and ultimately passing or defeating them. Committees do not generally have staff to conduct rigorous review or independent background re-

## **Inheritance Law Is Top Priority for Change**

Nepal's new constitution bestows equal political rights on men and women. However, much existing law—regarding citizenship, divorce, and inheritance, for example—has not yet been revised to be consistent with the new constitution. Furthermore, existing legal protections such as those against sex trafficking, polygamy, and child marriage are often not enforced.

Nepal's increased political freedom has spurred a great increase in the number of NGOs and human rights organizations concentrating at least partly on this situation. The highest priority of these groups is to revise the laws of inheritance. Currently a daughter has no birthright to her parents' property unless she is over 35 years old and unmarried. If she marries after inheriting property, her inheritance is rescinded.

Though the major parties do not seem to disagree on the need for change of the law, they hesitate to support legislation introduced by an opposing party. Thus, no change has occurred.

Women's and human rights advocacy NGOs appeared not to have a clear sense of how to engage parliament: of tracking action in parliament and its committees; of who in Parliament (or the executive agencies) is responsible at different stages of the legislative process; and of strategies to keep the legislation moving and achieve agreement among parties.

<sup>3</sup>Incentives almost certainly function differently than in presidential systems where legislative and executive branches provide checks and balances. Ministers (executive branch) are also MPs (elected legislators) and *ex officio* members of parliamentary committees related to their ministry. However, two factors may support committee independence from parties and the Prime Minister: Nepal's committee chairs are *not* chosen by the party, Prime Minister, or parliamentary leadership, but by fellow committee members; and prime ministers have not necessarily been the leaders of their party.

<sup>4</sup>At least 122 existing laws or administrative regulations have been identified as in conflict with the constitution, including many affecting newly defined human or civil rights. The Nepal Law Reform Commission, which has received financial assistance from DANIDA, is charged with revising such laws and drafting implementing legislation for rights in the new constitution. In part because of the shortage of lawyers skilled in legislative drafting, that process still has far to go. USAID projects supported drafting legislation on several topics (a companies act, a privatization act, and some human rights legislation) by the Nepal Law Society and outside consultants, but none had been enacted when the CDIE evaluation team arrived in September 1995.

search.<sup>5</sup> In some cases when a reviewing committee needs outside advice, it calls in experts from a ministry or university.

Though the rules of both houses permit members to introduce private bills, interviewees claimed Parliament has yet to enact any private bill introduced by an MP. MPs face serious constraints in initiating legislation and reviewing proposed bills. Many legislators lack the skills and time to draft legislation themselves or conduct background research, even when they have a clear idea for legislation they wish to propose. Individual MPs do not have *any* staff, let alone staff capable of conducting detailed reviews. They must, therefore, rely on line ministries to draft legislation. Some MPs resent their resulting loss of control over the development of a bill. Several MPs and advocacy groups cited instances where draft legislation prepared by a ministry at Parliament's request effectively undermined the constitutional intent.

To get a bill enacted, an MP from the Government party has to persuade the relevant minister to introduce it as a Government bill. Antagonism between parties is so strong there is apparently no chance of enacting a bill introduced by an opposition MP, even if there is no substantive disagreement on it. MPs cited an example of a bill introduced by an opposition MP that was enacted only after it was withdrawn and reintroduced as a Government bill.

Practical considerations also hinder private bills. Both houses require distribution of copies of proposed bills and summary information to all members two days before the bills are introduced on the floor. Yet, for lack of budget, the Secretariat does not copy private bills for distribution. Some MPs complained they can introduce a private bill only if they are able to bear this expense personally. Many cannot.

### *Public Input*

Norms for seeking and receiving public input on legislative proposals are not yet clearly established. Public hearings have not been fully adopted, though some have been held. The Environment Committee held highly publicized hearings in the early 1990s on the Arun III project, a controversial proposed dam for hydroelectric power and irrigation. Parliament rules do not hinder either house from holding public hearings, but many MPs believe the practice is not yet institutionalized. For some, public hearings were the most desirable single feature of American legislatures. Although Parliament does not actively resist public input, it rarely seeks it, aside from expert witnesses. NGOs interviewed seemed unsure of the legislative process and how they could engage in it.

### *Transparency*

Parliament and its actions seem moderately open. Full sessions are open to the press. Most committee meetings in practice are closed to journalists, unless special permission is given. (Journalists are excluded primarily on the grounds that the meeting rooms are too small.) General information on agendas, decisions, and actions taken by Parliament and committees is published in the daily *Journal*, produced by the Secretariat and made available to the press. Verbatim transcripts, however, are long delayed, have limited distribution, and require some digging to obtain. Despite considerable public interest in press coverage of Parliament, the media have limited resources to cover it in detail. Press coverage seldom extends to analyzing bills or following them through the legislative process (see box on parliamentary proceedings).

<sup>5</sup>Normally only one part-time Secretariat staff member is assigned to a committee while it is actively meeting to provide administrative support and summarize committee decisions. Though Secretariat leaders appear to want to accommodate special requests by committee chairs or individual MPs to conduct background research, review draft bills, or do original drafting, staff with such skills can be released for such assignments only for short periods. The Secretariat does not have full-time subject-matter specialists.

### Parliament Publishes Proceedings

The reporting section of the Secretariat regularly prepares two key reports: a verbatim *report* of the proceedings of each full chamber and the *Journal*, a summary of major activities, bills, speeches, and actions. The *Journal* is published in one day and distributed to all MPs.

Preparing the verbatim report is laborious; before it is typed, it is transcribed and checked by hand from tape recordings. Because the proceedings are generally in Nepali, which is not the native language of all MPs, minor editing is done to correct errors. Though the verbatim report is not widely distributed to members, some make copies of the tape recordings of their own speeches to play back to their constituents.

The Danish government aid agency DANIDA plans to help the Secretariat computerize the reporting and publication process. But Secretariat officials believe the laborious step of transcribing by hand may have to continue.

#### *Representation*

Many MPs report difficulty effectively representing and serving constituents. MPs from remote constituencies (some as many as eight days' travel from Kathmandu) say they have great difficulty keeping in touch with constituents and finding out about problems in their district. Travel costs to and from districts are reimbursed only at the beginning and end of sessions. Phone communication, where possible, is expensive and not reimbursed. Some MPs advocate a parliamentary (or even party) allowance to maintain a district office with one staff member and an allowance for regular phone communications. MPs from districts closer to the capital may experience greater constituent pressure for patronage benefits—to help find government jobs, deal with family economic crises, or intervene with government agencies, for example.

#### **IMPACT**

The team assessed the impact of donor assistance on four levels: the continuation of multiparty democracy, the legislature and how it functions, the physical infrastructure and staff

support for the legislature, and support to external actors.

#### *Impact on Multiparty Democracy*

The goal of the series of USAID and USIS interventions, only some of which dealt with Parliament, was “to help sustain the democratic opening.” The more specific legislative objective was to get Parliament up and running. USAID/Nepal initiated DPI under pressure to respond immediately to momentous changes. The new Parliament was viewed as the focal point for multiparty democracy, although the new constitution had not yet been drafted and final decisions on Parliament's structure had not yet been made.

In the attempt to take and hold power, the major parties have, internally and in their relationship with each other, experienced alternating periods of accommodation and acrimony. Unrealistic popular expectations for rapid improvement of Nepal's economy have not been achieved. Political parties put forth platitudes rather than clear ideologies or solutions to problems. And there have been four governments in five years,<sup>6</sup> raising concern about stability and continuity.

<sup>6</sup>Many interviewees pointed out that Nepal experienced the full range of governments possible under a parliamentary system in the first five years of the new system: an appointed, multiparty government with a specific mandate; a majority party government; a caretaker government; a government formed by a minority party; and a coalition government formed by two minority parties.

However, striking accomplishments give grounds for optimism that a framework for orderly succession of governments is taking root:

- Elections were held and the new Parliament was established.
- The experiment with multiparty democracy continues. Neither the King nor any ruling party seems inclined to terminate it.
- Three transitions of government have occurred, peacefully and according to constitutional prescriptions, even though the transitions were between parties that are bitter antagonists.
- All parties acceded to Supreme Court verdicts during two controversial transitions that required constitutional interpretation.
- Nepal's constitution is still popular and a source of public pride. Few advocate changing it, except on the most minor of points.

We will not know for many years whether multiparty parliamentary democracy is firmly institutionalized in Nepal. But at the end of five years, Nepal seems well along the path to that goal.

To suggest this movement toward institutionalizing multiparty democracy is the result of foreign donors and their programs would slight the actors in the Nepal polity and greatly overstate the impact of donor assistance. The outcome may have been the same without any foreign assistance. But a case can be made that donor assistance helped. Nepal's key politicians are sensitive to international opinion. Whether each element of donor assistance was effective or contributed directly to institutionalizing multiparty democracy, assistance for democratization, and for Parliament in particular, expressed international support for Nepal's new directions at a critical period in its history.

## *Impact on Parliamentary Effectiveness*

The core evaluation question is: Did donor assistance have any impact (positive or negative) on how Parliament functions? The short answer is yes. USAID and other donors took reasonable steps to respond quickly to an unexpected situation. The assistance they provided had several positive effects on the functioning of Nepal's parliament. The overall impact was modest, but so were the donor inputs. While no negative impact was observed, there was at least one objective the Mission did not accomplish.

A look at the specific impacts provides a more detailed answer.

*The committee system.* Establishment of committees within the parliamentary system is a major impact of USAID assistance. Most MPs interviewed said the decision to incorporate committees was influenced by tours of U.S. legislatures; the structure was consciously based on American-style committees. This is striking because a well-developed committee structure is not generally part of parliaments modeled on the British system.

Many interviewees in and outside Parliament said most committees do not yet function effectively enough. Yet the committee system is beginning to contribute to several democratic ends. Some legislation is being examined critically and revised; a structure is being established for oversight; and informal interparty dialog is facilitated.

Committee operating norms are still evolving. Some MPs desire changes in chairing and managing committees, in assigning committee staff who are experts in the subject matter, in making committee assignments based on expertise, and in regularly conducting public hearings on major legislation. Other MPs and party leaders, according to a recent article in the *Kathmandu Post*, defend the committee system as working satisfactorily.

*Oversight.* Probably the most important single impact of USAID–Asia Foundation assistance is the emergence of an activist Public Accounts Committee. Its oversight of agencies and ministries is a first for Nepal. Government bureaucracy has long been viewed as arbitrary, powerful, and accountable to no one. This committee’s conception of an activist role for itself emerged during a tour The Asia Foundation arranged to raise the issue of effective oversight by taking committee members to observe how similar committees function in five south Asian countries.

*Meeting space.* Even though Parliament’s facilities are inadequate, both houses now have a place to meet, thanks to donor assistance. An awkward initial constraint was that the two houses of Parliament had to take turns meeting in the only room large enough for such gatherings. DANIDA constructed a separate building for the smaller upper chamber. It also financed a modest remodelling of the assembly room for the House of Representatives, furniture and a public address system.

In the lower house, members are crowded, have little space for papers or reference materials at

their seats, and find it difficult to avoid hitting their microphones when they take or leave their seats. Members at the back of the room cannot readily see or be seen by the Speaker. Discussions were under way both in Parliament and with donors for additional remodeling: floor risers for seats at the back, more suitable microphones, or even construction of a new building.

Equally important, members of Parliament still have no offices where they can read, work, or meet constituents. Their offices are the large shared meeting areas on the Parliament grounds designated for each political party.

*Orientation.* An orientation program for new MPs appears to be institutionalized. The Asia Foundation organized the first orientation in 1991, a three-day session. After the 1994 elections, the Secretariat organized an orientation, following that model. It concentrated on the committee system, the legislative process, Secretariat services, sources of information, roles and responsibilities of MPs, the organization and rules of procedure for the two houses, and other institutional matters. MPs interviewed appreciated the need for the orientation.

### Women Are Underrepresented in Parliament

Though Nepalese women played an important role in the 1990 Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, they are not well represented in Parliament. Women hold only 10 of the 265 seats in the two houses combined. Though a woman once held a ministerial post, none was in any powerful position in Parliament or the Government when fieldwork was conducted.

The constitution requires that at least 5 percent of MP candidates for election from each party be women. No party has fielded more than the minimum, and parties have met the quota by fielding women candidates in constituencies where they have little chance of getting elected.

One key UML MP said his party is strongly committed to increasing the number of women MPs, but it (like other parties) is constrained. Few women party members are politically experienced, and few have become well known locally by playing major roles on local councils. Without experience or name recognition, they do not have much chance of being elected. Thus, fielding a woman candidate for a particular constituency can be an admission that the party does not expect to win that seat. The UML MP advocated that parties actively increase the number of women electable to national office by getting more women members elected to local development councils, where they will garner the necessary popularity and recognition.

*Promotion of bipartisanship.* The strict bipartisan nature of MPs' observation tours presented a model that may be important for future civil relations among the parties in Parliament. USAID, USIS, the Embassy, and The Asia Foundation put a lot of effort into ensuring bipartisanship, and all participants interviewed commented on its significance. Although assessing impact is difficult, some MPs volunteered that the tours cemented personal and working relationships they would not otherwise have developed with members of opposing parties. U.S. Embassy staff also reported a payoff in developing friendly, substantive relationships with members of majority and minority parties.

*Women's caucus.* One objective assistance failed to achieve was establishment of a nonpartisan women's caucus in Parliament that would take the lead in articulating and advancing legislative issues affecting women. A women's caucus was eventually organized, with catalytic support from The Asia Foundation. But shortly after, Parliament was dissolved and elections called. Fewer women MPs were elected than before, and they have not formed a new caucus. Meantime, Nepalese women's organizations are exploring how to work more effectively with parties to promote legislation and get it enacted (see box on women in Parliament).

*Summary.* Nepal's Parliament is still new and obviously in many areas has only begun to develop effective, responsive, and democratic processes. Donors funded quite a few relatively small, economical interventions that helped get it up and running and had positive impacts. They provided opportunities for MPs to define their roles through interaction with counterparts from other countries and their colleagues in other parties. However, there should be no illusion about how much was accomplished and what remains to be done. The financial and organizational resources provided by USAID, other donors, and the Nepalese Parliament itself were limited and did not add up to a comprehensive, sustained program for the institutional development of Parliament.

### *Impact on the Secretariat*

Parliament inherited the core of its Secretariat, including some very capable civil servants, from the former National Panchayat. However, the bicameral, multiparty Parliament has far greater needs than the smaller, less powerful Panchayat. The lower house alone has twice the membership of the Panchayat, and the Parliament is more independent and more active. USAID and The Asia Foundation provided assistance in improving the services, efficiency, and logistic support of Parliament, working closely with the Secretariat (see box on Secretariat).

### **The Secretariat: How Is It Organized?**

The nonpolitical Secretariat provides accounting, clerical, security, administrative, organizational, and other technical support services. In contrast to most bicameral legislatures, a combined Secretariat serves both chambers. Three positions are constitutionally prescribed: Secretary General, secretary of the House of Representatives, and Secretary of the National Assembly. They are appointed by the King for five-year terms on recommendation of the Speaker of the House and the chairman of the National Assembly.

The Secretariat includes more than 350 staff members in several categories: 7 joint secretaries, 50–60 senior officers, and 30 undersecretaries are members of the career, merit-based Parliamentary Service overseen by the Public Service Commission. The balance of nonprofessional support staff includes 250 mostly clerical staff, guards, and what are called "peons," low-paid staff who serve as messengers and run errands.

Despite continuing constraints in human and material resources, the team observed two areas in the Secretariat where USAID assistance had a positive impact (professionalism and computerization) and two other areas where it had limited impact (legislative drafting and research support).

*Professionalism.* The assistance contributed to a sense of direction and professionalism in the Secretariat. Those interviewed had a sense of what support Parliament needs, what services need to be developed, and what limitations exist, generated in part by the observation tours, short-term training, and needs assessment and planning support of The Asia Foundation consultant.

*Computerization.* The Secretariat seems to be increasingly efficient and professional in producing materials important to the smooth functioning of Parliament. It has become more efficient and more professional in tracking bills, maintaining up-to-date versions of bills, and producing the daily *Journal* and other documents while Parliament is in session. Less visible is progress in maintaining parliamentary accounts—in total disarray earlier and now well organized and up to date. Also, through a closed-circuit audiovisual system supplied by DANIDA, current schedules and announcements are immediately available within the Parliament compound.

Much of the credit for these advances goes to a computerization program of The Asia Foundation. Initially, not one Secretariat staff member was computer-literate. The foundation supplied 18 computers (DANIDA and South Korea provided others), and arranged local computer training. It also had its consultant lead a phased introduction of hardware, training, and applications, provide training, and plan an eventual network. Computerization took hold slowly at first, but now the Secretariat depends on computers to complete many of its tasks.

*Research support.* Donor support for developing a stable system of legislative research sup-

port for committees and individual MPs has had little impact. The small library expanded with help from The Asia Foundation and book donations from India is used increasingly by members. And the foundation, in one of its most expensive activities, underwrote a one-year congressional fellowship in the U.S. Congress for a Secretariat staff member. Though that fellow has dedication and a vision of what can be done, the Secretariat's professional staff is still too small and the demands on them too great to take on substantive legislative research. Until the Nepal government hires or dedicates the professional staff required for sustained analytical support, further donor support to improve research services cannot be expected to make much difference.

The Asia Foundation's one-year parliamentary internship program for recent graduates of Tribhuvan University has helped make research skills available to Parliament on a temporary basis, partially addressing the research need. But this program has also had its ups and downs. Interns were demoralized by periods of underutilization (such as after elections were called in 1994), and Secretariat staff have questioned whether selection standards of the first two years have slipped. A longer range institutional solution is needed.

*Legislative Drafting:* The Asia Foundation attempted to improve legislative drafting skills by organizing a workshop presented jointly by Nepal's foremost authority on legislative drafting and a foreign legislative drafting consultant. The foundation's other efforts to develop legislative drafting skills encountered problems of logistics and timing. The shortage of competent drafting skills available to Parliament remains serious.

*Contacts.* The Asia Foundation worked routinely with a counterpart in the Secretariat and had access to the Secretary General and on occasion to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, who approved plans related to the Secretariat. The foundation might have elicited broader support for the changes it proposed

### SCOPE: Good Intentions...Mixed Results

USAID/Nepal made an interesting grant to an NGO dealing with Parliament—SCOPE, the Society for Constitutional and Parliamentary Exercises. The organization was formed by prominent academics and lawyers after the new constitution was drafted. SCOPE provided a neutral forum for monitoring and discussing the organization and functions of Parliament and the national issues coming before Parliament.

SCOPE's program had two main elements: seminars and workshops about major issues before the Parliament, and a monthly magazine, *Parliamentary Affairs*. Most MPs interviewed (regardless of party affiliation) were aware of SCOPE and had attended some seminars. They identified the seminars as allowing open discussion on important issues without respect to formal party position. The more critical MPs, however, thought SCOPE's timing in selecting seminar topics was not optimal. Instead of scheduling them earlier when issues could be discussed on their merits, they were often held after issues reached Parliament, when party positions had already solidified.

Virtually all MPs interviewed were familiar with *Parliamentary Affairs*, which was published in both English and Nepalese. Some MPs of both major parties said they had been regular readers, found the magazine addressed a real need, and were disappointed when it stopped being published.

SCOPE continues to exist with a skeletal staff, but with much fewer resources and activities than it expected. One of SCOPE's principals acknowledged that it had attempted to do more than it was capable of and had not developed a strong organization. Another felt SCOPE had dabbled in too many activities and seminars on too many national topics; members could not devote enough time on a sustained basis to see these activities through. SCOPE members admitted they had not run the organization in a way that prepared them for the day when donor funds would no longer be available.

had it had available a lesson learned from other legislative-strengthening programs, (such as the one in Bolivia<sup>7</sup>) and set up a steering committee of MPs from the various parties. The steering committee could have concentrated on the Secretariat and ensured donor assistance met nonpartisan priorities, was fully utilized, and was consistent with Parliament's plans for institutional development.

#### *Impact on External Actors*

In a democracy, an effective legislative process involves people outside the legislature. The assistance USAID, The Asia Foundation, and DANIDA provided addressed at least three

types of external actors involved with Parliament or proposed legislation: an NGO centered on Parliament itself (SCOPE), NGOs advocating policies in particular sectors, and media and media-related associations.

Like the Center for Legislative Development in the Philippines,<sup>8</sup> SCOPE is an NGO composed of professionals who work to develop the legislature (see box on SCOPE). However, the organization and the services it provides are quite different. The Philippine center conducts research and provides information packets on legislative issues, similar to those the Congressional Research Service provides to the U.S. Congress. The center has taught such skills

<sup>7</sup>See L. Marcia Bernbaum, et al., *Modernizing Bolivia's Legislature*, CDIE Impact Evaluation No. 1, 1996.

<sup>8</sup>See Michael Calavan, *Strengthening the Legislature and Democracy in the Philippines*, CDIE Impact Evaluation No. 1, 1995.

as drafting and analyzing bills and regulations to legislative staff, regional legislators, and executive agency staff members who deal with legislatures. It also consults with advocacy organizations, businesses, and local governments on legislative process and strategy.

By contrast, the two main activities of SCOPE are holding nonpartisan seminars and workshops for MPs and outside experts on issues of national importance expected to come before Parliament, and publishing news and information about Nepal and foreign legislatures. Several of its principals were involved in drafting the new constitution in 1990, a process USAID supported with regional meetings to elicit opinions on the content of the constitution.

The SCOPE grant became something of a headache for USAID. First, some activities anticipated in the grant agreement (objectives USAID staff considered important) materialized barely, if at all. These included drafting model legislation on important national issues; helping development and advocacy NGOs understand the parliamentary process, track legislation, and articulate and promote their legislative suggestions; and helping form a parliamentary women's caucus and promote legislative awareness of issues affecting women. Second, regardless of the merits of its accomplishments, SCOPE failed to develop management and accounting systems adequate to report reliably on its activities and expenditures. USAID eventually allowed the SCOPE grant to lapse.

Other Nepalese NGOs active in development work before 1990 received funding from USAID, The Asia Foundation, DANIDA, or other foreign donors. The number and diversity of active organizations increased dramatically after 1990. Though the goal in supporting these organizations was not legislative strengthening, the team met with several organizations that address women, children, and human rights to get a sense of how they promote legislative priorities. In general, these organizations had a clear idea of the problems requiring legislation and high interest in what is going on in Parliament. However, they do

not know how to promote legislation as it moves through that body.

The evaluation team came away with three impressions about the impact of assistance through external actors:

1. Many MPs participated in and appreciated the seminars and read some *Parliamentary Affairs* articles. Press coverage of the seminars helped bring issues of national importance to public awareness. However, SCOPE may not have held seminars sufficiently in advance of issues coming before Parliament. The team did not identify any direct effects SCOPE had on Parliament or specific legislation before Parliament.
2. Many advocacy NGOs do not know how to press their legislative concerns in Parliament. The democracy initiative did not successfully address this issue.
3. The public is interested in coverage of Parliament, but the press in Nepal lacks the resources, both in money and skilled journalists. The minimal project contribution to improve newspaper coverage of Parliament was well conceived, but not sustained long enough to generate significant impact. Assistance did not address electronic media (especially radio, which reaches people in remote areas).

## SUMMING UP

This story is not complete without tying up some administrative loose ends: how USAID/Nepal managed the assistance, changing internal Mission support for legislative assistance, and reasons for discontinuing legislative assistance.

### *USAID/Nepal's Management*

The Democratic Pluralism Initiative required intensive management by USAID/Nepal—particularly in the first three years as events

were unfolding rapidly, funding sources were not secure, and overseas observation tours were being planned. The high degree of coordination among the Mission, USIS, and the Embassy was important to the initiative's success.

Despite continued interagency coordination, USAID management and senior staff involvement with assistance to Parliament diminished after the first two to three years. Though partly caused by the near simultaneous turnover of key players in USAID and the Embassy in 1992–93, USAID's management structure for the democracy initiative was another factor. There was no one in USAID/Nepal (direct hire, foreign service national, or personal services contractor) who remained involved over the five years of legislative assistance, thus there was little institutional memory about what had been done and why. No senior Nepalese staff member had continuous responsibility for the program. A series of locally hired expatriate personal services contractors working out of the USAID program office handled the day-to-day management of grants and contacts with grantees. They and The Asia Foundation maintained most of the subsequent program contact with Parliament, though earlier USAID senior staff had maintained regular direct contact with Parliament's leadership while planning the initiative.

### *Changing Internal Support*

Over the five years, USAID/Nepal's internal support for legislative elements of the democracy initiative waxed and waned, for three reasons. First, the Mission did not anticipate long-term development support for Parliament. The focus of the initiative was expected to shift gradually away from central government institutions. Perhaps for this reason, legislative assistance objectives were not articulated as fully as for most projects.

Second, discussion at interagency coordination meetings often centered on whether and when

the initiative's institutional emphasis should shift. There were articulate advocates for both strengthening and reducing support to elections, civil society, human rights, the judiciary, local government, Parliament, polling, voter education, and women's organizations. USAID's support for parliamentary development was controversial; some thought the Agency should emphasize democratic grassroots support.

And third, turnover of those involved with the initiative was high. In the five years, the Mission had three each of directors, deputies, and program officers. There was also turnover among personal services contractors directly managing the initiative.<sup>9</sup>

### *New Democratic Programming*

In its 1995 strategic plan, USAID/Nepal shifted its support to the grass-roots level. Support for democratic institutions is subsumed under one of the Mission's three strategic objectives—empowering women. Among other elements, this includes improving the legal environment for women, educating women about legal rights and the statutory framework affecting them, and increasing women's participation in local government. The new strategy is crafted to maximize synergy among elements of the Mission's overall program, located almost entirely outside Kathmandu. DANIDA and The Asia Foundation are shifting their democracy programming similarly, continuing only minimal assistance to Parliament. The team did not evaluate the new strategy.

The way the Mission viewed its small legislative portfolio as it defined a new strategy may be of interest to other Missions considering legislative assistance. The main reason the Mission decided to discontinue its former strategy was broader trends in the Agency and the Asia Bureau: rapidly diminishing overall resources, the reengineering mandate to focus resources

<sup>9</sup>During the evaluation in fall 1995, because of the turnovers, not one staff member of USAID/Nepal (direct hire, foreign service national, or personal services contractor) had been regularly involved in assistance to Parliament.

more narrowly, and the Mission's apparent difficulty in obtaining funds earmarked for democracy.

Another reason the Mission allowed its legislative support to lapse was its doubt that it could define a strategic objective for which it was willing to be held accountable by USAID/Washington. The difficulty was in setting up an objective that would adequately capture significant institutional changes in Parliament, could be accomplished within a period when funding would be secure, and for which progress could be objectively measured.

### *Concluding Thoughts*

If funding were available for major new legislative programming in Nepal, would the team have recommended it? Not without major restructuring and a rethinking of the concept, which would not be realistic. The parliamentary assistance the Mission and The Asia Foundation supported under the Democracy Pluralism Initiative was reasonable and, in some cases, creative in a rapidly changing situation. The overall impact was not overwhelming, but specific significant impacts occurred, commensurate with the level of funding.

The Nepal Parliament is still in the early stages of development and has meager resources and facilities with which to work. Had donor assistance aimed to have made a major qualitative change in Parliament's effectiveness as a democratic institution, considerably more would have been required than has been done and than USAID can provide with resources it is likely to have available. It would be crucial for the donor or an intermediary to work with a core multiparty group of MPs that engages the rest of the Parliament in analyzing its own institutional needs and priorities, defines its change objectives, and is the internal engine for bringing about institutional changes. An agent or intermediary would need several years of support to work with Parliament to achieve such internally driven institutional changes.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The Nepal case is a rich one for donors interested in learning about legislative assistance. It offers useful lessons on providing assistance in the wake of national democratic revolution, assisting parliamentary systems (versus presidential systems), devising useful low-cost interventions, assisting external actors in the legislative arena, working within a broader multipronged democracy program versus a focused legislative-strengthening program, and structuring legislative assistance.

### *Assistance in Parliamentary Systems*

Many countries outside Latin America that receive USAID assistance have parliamentary systems, rather than presidential systems with separate executive and legislative branches of government. The Nepal case suggests several lessons that may be applicable to legislative assistance in countries with a variant of the British parliamentary model.

- **“Snap elections,” part of the democratic process in parliamentary systems, cause unpredictable downtime for assistance activities that require working with MPs directly.** For example, The Asia Foundation and USAID incurred costs for consultants hired to conduct workshops even though the workshops had to be canceled when elections were called. Parliamentary interns felt demoralized by the long period of inactivity when Parliament was not in session in 1994 because of elections and again in 1995 because of disagreements among the parties.
- **Practices that appear inherently undemocratic in one system may serve democratic ends in another.** The closed committee meetings in Nepal seem undemocratic, but provide a locus otherwise absent for MPs of opposing parties to discuss legislative issues informally without being bound to party positions.

- **Those working to improve legislative oversight must analyze the incentives acting on individual legislators or committee chairmen.** In Nepal, there is no apparent bar to oversight of civil servants. By contrast, MPs may hesitate to review ministers who oversee those civil servants, because they are party and parliamentary colleagues and the MPs depend on them for party support at election time.

### *Useful Low-Cost Interventions*

Most of the legislative interventions in Nepal were inexpensive and may be useful even in the absence of a comprehensive legislative development program. Highlights include:

- **An NGO magazine or newsletter can effectively introduce ideas about how legislatures in other countries function and keep members, the press, and outside observers up to date about developments in Parliament.** A publication such as SCOPE's Parliamentary Affairs may be particularly useful when press coverage of Parliament is limited or not well informed, or when members of a new legislature lack prior legislative experience.
- **A parliamentary internship program for recent university graduates can have multiple benefits.** Through the well-received internship program The Asia Foundation sponsored with Tribhuvan University, legislative research skills—otherwise unavailable to MPs and parliamentary committees—were temporarily available. University interest in the legislature was heightened. And a core of future professionals are familiar with how parliament functions.
- **An intermittent consultant may provide useful assistance in taking the lead on improving legislative functioning.** In Nepal, on a series of visits The Asia Foundation consultant helped conduct a needs assessment for legislative support, analyze staff

workloads, and plan for developing the Secretariat. A consultant with a different background could conceivably work with a legislative steering committee to address other functions of Parliament.

### *Managing Legislative Assistance*

USAID management of legislative assistance may have requirements and opportunities that differ from other projects.

- **Legislative projects provide opportunities for cooperation among U.S. government agencies, but this requires intensive staff effort.** Two factors required this cooperation in Nepal: a) the overseas observations tours were organized jointly by USAID and USIS and, from the Embassy viewpoint, required strict political neutrality; and b) the rapidly unfolding development of Nepal's political system.
- **Contrary to conventional wisdom, USAID and USIS can jointly program and fund overseas visits.** These visits were successful. However, because of the differing institutional requirements of the two agencies for U.S. visits, waivers were required from their respective headquarters.
- **Observation tours, which USAID usually considers "participant training," may not be acceptable to legislators if labeled "training."** In Nepal, MPs accepted activities labeled "orientation" and "observation tour," but rejected participation in activities with names implying they were not fully qualified.
- **Legislative projects supported by USAID can create friction among U.S. government agencies, because they blur traditional areas of responsibility and expertise.** In most assistance activities, USAID staff members have limited professional contact with political actors, particularly legislators, in contrast to Embassy political staff. Conversely,

USAID staff members have considerable hands-on experience with institutional development, while Embassy staff usually have little.

### *External Actors*

Though assistance in Nepal centered less on external actors in the legislative arena than in the Philippines, lessons learned in Nepal include:

- **Helping outside organizations, such as advocacy groups, understand the legislative process can be useful.** Such programs were envisioned in Nepal, but not implemented. Outside organizations need to understand how to follow a bill's progress through Parliament, and recognize stages where public feedback and reaction are possible.
- **Lack of sound management can undermine implementation of a sound idea.** USAID ended its support to SCOPE for the same reasons it has curtailed funding of NGO projects in many parts of the world—the NGO failed to develop adequate management and accounting systems.

### *Postdemocratic Revolution Programming*

- **The openness to new ideas that may exist after a democratic revolution will not last indefinitely.** Many countries would not accept a foreign development agency's involvement with the central democratic institution—the legislature. In the wake of

Nepal's 1990 revolution the opposite occurred. The Nepalese actively sought outside ideas, models, and assistance in shaping the new Parliament. However, as Parliament establishes new traditions, its openness to foreign assistance in institutional development is diminishing.

- **An unanticipated "democratic moment" presents USAID Missions with programming challenges.** These include a need to show concrete support for democratic change, a need to respond almost immediately to requests for assistance, uncertainty about priorities and next steps for assistance when the new democratic institutions have not been formed or fully defined, and a paucity of funding mechanisms that allow an immediate response.
- **A collection of reasonable, targeted interventions does not necessarily add up to comprehensive institutional development.** Each of the varied elements of legislative assistance in the Nepal case were reasonable and well grounded; most, though not all, of the intended effects of grants and activities were at least partially achieved. Yet the donor assistance has not helped Parliament establish a dynamic internal process of self-examination and set institutional priorities for its development. Longer range project interventions do not seem to have evolved from a bipartisan vision (including both MPs and staff) about priority changes needed to become more effective and more democratic.

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