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An exchange of experiences on legislative oversight and budget processes in Africa

May 2015, by Birgit Hahn and Julia Bastian

Legislative oversight in Africa, that is the elected parliament holding the government to account on its management of public resources, still faces a variety of challenges. These can lead to situations where audit findings received from national Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) are not used properly to hold government accountable.

A particular challenge lies in the communication between supreme audit offices and parliamentary oversight. Therefore, the programme facilitated a workshop that brought together practitioners and experts on legislative oversight from the African continent to discuss their roles and challenges and identify common ground and opportunities for joint learning.

The GIZ programme Good Financial Governance in Africa within its action field Legislative Oversight seeks to enhance the capacities of parliamentary research and support services to support member of parliaments in their tasks of holding government accountable and improving budget planning and execution.

This workshop took place in conjunction with the ten years anniversary of AFROSAI-E, i.e. the English-speaking subgroup of the African Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (AFROSAI). During the meeting, legislative budget specialists from Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi, Morocco, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia and Belgium engaged in a variety of challenging and fruitful discussions on legislative oversight and enjoyed learning from their peers. Some of the discussions were aided by the use of Lego bricks; based on a learning methodology called “LEGO Serious Play”, which was definitely a new experience for most of the specialists.



Lego bricks are used as a learning medium.

The objective behind the use of Lego was to better visualise and make the ideas brought forward by the participants more concrete.

What made the workshop a rare occasion was the sharing of knowledge across several language groups and political and administrative systems. The participants from French and Arabic-speaking Africa had the opportunity to share their system specific experiences with their English-speaking colleagues. During these exchanges, it became clear that although different systems are in place, challenges are often similar. Parliamentary support services are often not in the best place for effectively supporting parliamentary oversight. At the end of the workshop the participants showed their interest in continuing with the joint-learning on public finance processes and to foster peer-learning among African oversight institutions.

On 7 May 2015, the participants had the opportunity to attend the tenth Governing Board Meeting of AFROSAI-E. The topic of the day was the cooperation between SAIs and parliaments. It was discussed how this cooperation has evolved in the last decade and the participation of the members of parliamentary oversight committees assured a representation of both sides of the cooperation. The representatives of the African SAIs learned about the specific needs of their parliamentary counterparts. It was also highlighted that a functional and permanent cooperation between parliaments and SAIs plays an extremely important role for a strong accountability system, which keeps governments' spending under a watchful eye.

For further information please visit <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/15725.html> or contact: Dr Matthias Witt (matthias.witt@giz.de)



Legislative Oversight practitioners and experts from Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi, Morocco, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia and Belgium.