

PAKISTAN PROGRAM PROFILE



History of Partnership

The House Democracy Assistance Commission approved a partnership with Pakistan in March 2010. Since then, it has worked with the National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan in the areas of budgeting, information and technology, committee operations, and civil-military relations. The Commission has encouraged development on these fronts to strengthen the independence and efficacy of the National Assembly and Senate through Congressional visits to Islamabad and training and seminar programs in Washington for visiting Pakistani members of parliament and key parliamentary staff.

Background

On February 18, 2008, Pakistan held elections after nine years of military rule. Pakistan has a bicameral Parliament whose lower house, the National Assembly, has 342 members; 272 are directly elected, and the remainder are reserved for women and minorities. The Senate has 100 members elected by provincial assemblies.

Congressional Delegations

Representative David Dreier led a delegation of five Members of Congress to Pakistan in February 2012. The delegation met with the Chairman of the Senate Farooq H. Naek, Prime Minister Yousaf Gilani, and Interior Minister A. Rehman Malik. In addition, the delegation formally opened the USAID-funded Pakistani Institute for Parliamentary Studies (PIPS) which promises to be a training center for legislative staff and legislators alike in the years to come. Following the opening ceremony, the delegation held workshops with Members of the National Assembly and the Senate on committee operations and oversight. Concurrent staff training was held on the role of a professional staff and management of a congressional office.

The Commission organized a delegation of Members of Congress to Pakistan in March 2010. Representative David Price led the delegation of four Members who met with the Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr. Fehmida Mirza, Senate Chairman Farooq H. Naek, Prime Minister Yousaf Gilani, and President Ali Zardari. The delegation also met with Members of the Pakistani Women's Caucus and Foreign Affairs Committee. Several workshops were held to demonstrate the roles defense budget oversight, committee operations, and parliamentary oversight of the executive branch have in an effective legislature. The delegation also visited Peshawar, capital of North-West Frontier Province, to examine local governance and federal-local relations, especially as pertains to service delivery.

MP Seminars

In March 2011, Members of the Pakistani Senate and National Assembly visited Washington to attend an HDP-organized seminar on committee operations. The Pakistani Members met with a dozen of their counterparts in the U.S. House of Representatives to discuss the organization and operation of public committee hearings, the importance of committee oversight, legislative ethics, the support Members

receive from agencies, such as the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), and the role of a committee chairperson. The program began with an overview of the U.S. committee structure by CRS, and presentations by senior staff members of key House committees on how committees set their agendas in consultation with House leadership, how committee press operations are managed, how legislative drafting takes place, and how budget analysis is provided by CBO for the Congress. In addition, participants also met with the Comptroller General of the United States, viewed an Appropriations Committee hearing, and compared and contrasted their own committee systems with those of other seminar participants.

In March 2010, the Commission, in cooperation with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan, and Near East/South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, organized a study visit for three Pakistani Senators focused on civilian-military relations. The objective of the tour was to demonstrate how civilian legislators can oversee the armed services. The delegation met with Members of Congress from key defense appropriations and oversight committees, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, and Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. In March 2009, the Commission had assisted with the organization of a similar visit by members of the Pakistani National Assembly, prior to Pakistan's entry into the House Democracy Partnership program.

Staff Seminars

In January 2012, two staff members participated in a training seminar on legislative research and analysis. They were joined by colleagues from 12 other HDP partner countries. The parliamentary staff institute included presentations and discussions with Members of Congress and top officials from the Congressional Research Service (CRS). Current and former CRS staff provided the participants an overview of basic legislative research and analysis techniques including identifying sources of information, basic policy analysis, developing alternatives for the legislature, and conducting impact analysis.

In December 2010, Pakistani staff took part in a Commission-sponsored Legislative Staff Institute in Washington, focused on committee operations, where they held meetings with CRS, staff from several House committees, and the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Commission. In addition, committee staff from the Republic of Macedonia shared their experience in developing procedures to begin using oversight hearings as an element of the work of their parliamentary committees.

In October 2010, staff from the Pakistani parliament participated in a staff institute focused on strengthening legislative budget analysis capacity. Twenty-one staff from 11 partner countries participated in the program, which included meetings with or presentations by officials from CBO, CRS, and staff from the House Committees on Budget, Appropriations, and the Joint Committee on Taxation. Additionally, budget analysts from the Kenya National Assembly shared their experience in establishing and developing a parliamentary budget office.

In June 2010, two staff members of the Pakistani parliament traveled to Warsaw, Poland, to attend the 20th anniversary of the Frost-Solomon Commission, which was the predecessor to the House Democracy Assistance Commission. They were joined by 22 staff members from 11 partnership countries, along with MPs and research staff from former partners of the Frost-Solomon Commission. While they were in Warsaw, current and former staff of the Congressional Research Service worked with the Pakistani staff to help them further develop their parliamentary research service through workshops, peer-to-peer discussions, and open forums. Speakers underlined the importance of reliable, impartial, timely,

and accurate research to the work of democratic legislatures. They also shared tips on how to engage legislators and help them see the value of research, which was a concern shared by a number of participants.

A December 2009 legislative staff institute was organized in conjunction CRS. The Institute hosted 27 participants from 12 partner countries, including Pakistan, who were mostly officials and analysts of their respective parliament's research services. The program focused on the role of a research service in providing independent information and analysis to members of parliament and their staff.