Parliamentary Strategy

Dr Rasheed Draman

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1   Introduction

This Parliamentary Engagement Strategy is being developed to guide STAR2's overall approach/interface with Parliament.

The Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana- STAR-Ghana programme is a £22 million multi-donor pooled funding mechanism (funded by DFID, DANIDA, and the EU). The programme is intended to support the creation, utilization and institutionalization of spaces for collective civil society engagement in order to increase the accountability and responsiveness of the executive and key state institutions at both local and national levels. The long-term programme goal is to develop a vibrant, well-informed and assertive civil society, able to contribute to transformational national development for all Ghanaian citizens in an inclusive manner.

The first phase of the STAR-Ghana programme, which aimed to 'increase the influence of civil society and Parliament in the governance of public goods and services delivery', had a focus on strengthening Parliament's capacity to exercise its oversight and legislative functions. The end of programme review acknowledged the significant results achieved in strengthening parliament's capacity and the piloting of innovative approaches to engaging with citizens and civil society for increased effectiveness. The review identified a number of areas for improvement, particularly how parliament engages with citizen groups, how it institutionalizes the results from phase one and a greater focus on achieving strategic and systemic level impacts.

Phase two of the programme will build on these key recommendations from the programme evaluation. The programme's overall objectives, as a result, focuses on supporting the creation, utilization and institutionalization of spaces for collective Civil Society Organization (CSO) engagement with key state institutions, particularly Parliament in order to increase responsiveness of the executive to citizens' voices and issues. STAR2 will also engage with Parliament on core governance issues related to gender, e.g. in terms of Constitutional reform, supporting specific gender related actions and regulations through Parliament and strengthening the analytical basis for legislative scrutiny across Parliament.

Engaging Parliament is informed by STAR2's focus on working with key state institutions in order to increase responsiveness of the Executive to citizens' voices and issues. In addition, it is informed by the multiplicity of roles that the Legislature plays in national politics and in the delivery of public goods and services.   Among them:

1. As an oversight body, Parliament is responsible for holding the government to account for the execution of laws and policies. In doing so, parliament's effort will gain more traction if it collaborates with other oversight bodies such as CSOs and the Media.

2. As a representational institution, Parliament should recognize the importance of its accountability role to citizens. While it holds government to account, citizens should in turn hold Members of Parliament accountable for their stewardship.

3. In addition, Parliament serves as a bridge between citizens and the Executive by channeling citizens' views to the government through establishing healthy collaborative and constructive relations with CSOs and other non-state actors.

4. As a lawmaking institution, Parliament needs to be accountable for the law it makes, amends and ratifies. As such *it is a branch of government* that needs to be equipped with knowledge and skills in order to execute this function with expedience. This should be responsive to citizens' issues and reflective of their input.

1.1 Methodology

Approach: The methodology for developing the Strategy consisted of 1) a comprehensive desk research; and 2) interviews and focus group discussions of identified respondents.

The comprehensive desk research was complemented with 'high level consultation/interviews' with a selected contact group (of not more than twenty persons). There were three categories of interviewees.

The first group consisted of some members of STAR-Ghana's Steering Committee as well as the donors that provide support to STAR-Ghana: This included key STAR-Ghana Technical advisors (PEA and GESI) and PMT to gain a good understanding of the STAR-Ghana context within which the parliamentary strategy will be situated. The group also included Steering Committee members and donors. The goal of interacting with was to understand the programme context and expectations regarding the work with parliament.

The second group consisted of the Leadership of Parliament, select Committee Chairs, identified change champions in Parliament, the Clerk to Parliament as well as select Heads of Departments in Parliament.
The third group was made up of select Civil Society Organizations and the Media (including members of the Parliamentary Press Corps).

The last group was key informants - governance experts in Ghana.

Scope & Target Respondents: In order to elicit relevant responses with respect to the project in question, a purposive approach was adopted in selecting respondents/interviewees. This reduced the level of distractions from less informed respondents and provided a higher chance of maximizing the limited time within which the assignment was carried out.

Suggested/Key Questions to frame the discussion/direction of the Strategy:
The questions for the interviews/discussions were framed around the following areas:
- The governance context in Ghana and impact/implications for Parliamentary strengthening.
- The Parliament context and its development over the years, including results to build on and weaknesses to be addressed.
- Parliament's interface with Civil Society Organizations.
- Assessment of previous initiatives including donor programmes and key lessons learned.

- STAR-Ghana's overall strategic approach.
- Other general issues related to Parliament.

On the basis of the above, the following key questions were formulated to guide the discussions with the target respondents based on interviewees' knowledge and background:

1. What are the key governance challenges facing Ghana?
2. What will be the likely impact of these challenges on the mandate of the 7th Parliament? Describe and justify any 3 you consider critical.
3. Name at least 4 issues that the 7th Parliament should focus on. Give reasons for your answer
4. To what extent is gender equality and social inclusion mainstreamed throughout all of Parliament's work? Please provide examples.
5. To what extent does parliament promote equality in numbers of women and men across all its bodies and internal structures? Please provide examples.
6. Name three (3) key priority areas that a STAR-Ghana Parliamentary should focus on?
7. How can Parliament's relationship with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) be: (Give at least 2 suggestions with justifications)
   - (i) Developed?
   - (ii) Nurtured?
   - (iii) Sustained? and
   - (iv) Institutionalized?
8. Can you name 3 previous initiatives to support Parliament and your evaluation of those initiatives? Any lessons learned that should guide future initiatives?
9. Do you have any general comments and/or opinions you want to share on parliament's work and how it can be improved?

2   Linkages between the Parliamentary strategy and STAR-Ghana'S theory of change

This section will examine the nexus between STAR-Ghana's theory of Change and its Parliamentary Engagement Strategy.   The goal here is to ensure that the various components are aligned: theory, key programmatic frameworks (Gender and Social Inclusion strategy - GESI), approach to institutional strengthening and the findings of its Political Economy Approach (PEA) framework.

2.1   Star-Ghana's Theory of Change

The STAR-Ghana Theory of Change (ToC) is premised on the fact that, STAR-Ghana, by working with both supply (government) and demand side (citizens) in a 3Cs (Convener, Catalyst and Coordinator) approach, may lead to an active citizenship that influences and contributes to transformational change.   The theory states that, if STAR-Ghana convenes, catalyzes and coordinates spaces and alliances with relevant stakeholders on salient issues ripe for change, then there will be a well-informed active citizenry which influences governance processes and structures that will effectively contribute to transformational change around key challenges of poverty, inequality and inclusion for all citizens.[1]

Ultimately, STAR-Ghana's aim is to achieve "*increased effectiveness of citizen influencing change that advances democracy, accountability and social inclusion through Civil Society Organisations".* This ultimate goal should translate into "a *well-informed and active civil society, able to contribute to transformational change around key challenges of poverty, inequality and inclusion for all citizens".[2]*

STAR-Ghana aspires to achieve these by adopting the Convener, Catalyst and Coordinator (3Cs&L) approach.

Box 2: STAR Ghana II – Three Cs & L strategic approach

The programme will provide a comprehensive, coordinated and strategic push to enable citizens to hold leaders to account by:

•   **Convening a broad range of stakeholders for dialogue and to support the identification of opportunities and critical entry points for action and engagement.**

•   **Catalysing change through joint working with new and innovative strategic partners.**

•   **Coordinating with a broad cross section of actors, promoting joint influencing and actions amongst partners, to ensure effective use of limited resources available.**

•   **Learning from past and present experiences and effective application throughout the process of implementation.**

Source: STAR-Ghana PEA Technical Approach Paper

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[1] STAR 2 Ghana Theory of Change (September 2016).
[2] Ibid.

The **Convener approach** will seek to build alliances and partnerships across CSOs and stakeholders on the demand and supply sides to address salient issues including fundamental areas of inclusion. This will create spaces for citizens to collect around a common issue, for their voices to be heard as well as build a strong active citizenship. The **Catalyst approach** identifies, facilitates and supports interventions and approaches through joint working with new and strategic partners, with the potential to catalyse the nature of change being sought. This is going to rely on action research, analysis and support for CSO's and other strategic partners' change efforts. The **Coordinator approach** requires STAR-Ghana to hold consistently the various processes and actors across the portfolio of STAR-Ghana, which are ultimately all leading towards an increased effectiveness of citizens and their ability to influence duty bearers on salient issues. Key is the coordination of joint stakeholder processes between supply and demand; facilitating learning and harnessing best practice through reviews in order to influence the work and actions of partners; build and facilitate consistent communication with stakeholders on the programme results and approaches; and ensure that monitoring is supporting the adaptive flexible programme approach of STAR-Ghana so learning can inform strategy.

The 3Cs approach will be deployed alongside a Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) framework to ensure the cross cutting element of gender equity and inclusive outcomes and results for those who have often been left out and excluded. The 3Cs, GESI together with a strong focus on research and learning, will be key feature of STAR-Ghana activities with the aim to support civil society and GoG to inevitably build strong alliances, collaboration and engagement on salient issues. Put simply, the theory of change is formulated on the basis that if citizens organize to push salient issues eefectively, it will lead to action, influence policy as well as the behaviour of duty bearers which will then crystalize into improved service deleivery and systemic change.

2.2   Linking the Theory of Change to Parliament

As already stated, STAR-Ghana is seeking to increase the accountability and responsiveness of the executive and key state institutions at both local and nation levels. Parliament is considered a major stakeholder in this contex. STAR-Ghana's parliamentary strategy therefore seeks to:

  i.   Strengthen the institutional structures and procedures of Parliament in order to guarantee its role and position as a strategic actor in governance in Ghana.
 ii.   Strengthen the committee system to enhance the role of key committees as the spaces for non-partisan discussions for improved governance and accountability.
iii.   Improve parliamentary oversight of service delivery by building partnerships and linkages with CSOs and the Executive.
 iv.   Promote evidence informed scrutiny and policy making through research and uptake of research information.
  v.   Ensure sustainability of project outcomes by building linkages with other parliamentary support programmes.

Parliament is placed at the Catalyst and Coordinator levels of the 3Cs approach. It is one of the strategic partners that are uniquely positioned to catalyze the change being sought. By its nature, Parliament through its representative role is expected to champion the views of ordinary citizens so their voice is reflected in policy. STAR-Ghana also seeks to empower citizens and help them organize themselves around important issues, which will then be taken up at higher levels of the governance structure. Forging better citizen-parliament

collaboration thus fits in well within the STAR-Ghana theory of change. However, for parliament to play this function it is important that its internal structures and procedures are well established. The support to parliament to consolidate its institutional structures will be a continuation of work that was initiated under STAR 1. For example, revising the Standing Orders, establishing the Scrutiny Office and the Parliamentary Training Institute etc.

The functions of parliament are only visible when "its Committee rooms is at work" (Woodrow Wislon, 1885). A robust institutional framework is therefore essential. The people whose work give meaning to these frameworks are the Members of Parliament (MPs) and their work within Committees is vital to the success of parliament. Citizens' voice (through petitions for example) needs to be channeled through the appropriate medium to achieve its intended influence on parliament's work. While STAR 2 is focusing on improving the ways citizens collect around issues and how they effectively present their voices, recipient organizations must be equipped to handle citizen input. The parliamentary strategy aims to support Parliament and its committees to ensure that their engagement with citizens and stakeholders is effective.

Furthermore, the strategy seeks to strengthen the oversight role of Parliament through a CSO-Parliament-Executive collaboration. It is important to note that the goal here is to find common grounds for collaboration while living CSOs undisturbed and uncompromised to do their advocacy work when they have to. This fits in with STAR-Ghana's theory. Parliament already engages in oversight activities by virtue of its mandate. Currently, the accountability loop does not proceed beyond the recommendations of oversight committees. The strategy seeks to find ways in which there can be follow up mechanisms to monitor the oversight work of committees on salient issues to pressure duty bearers to be more accountable.

Learning, innovation and research are important aspects of the STAR-Ghana theory of change and which will be guiding activities under STAR 2. These aspects of parliamentary work will also be supported to ensure that Parliament is up to date and well informed on new developmental trends, is able to use information and evidence to inform debates and law making as well as guide the Executive in agenda setting.

Finally, the parliamentary strategy seeks to set up mechanisms that ensure the sustainability of STAR-Ghana-supported interventions. It is important that the partnerships and relationships that are developed to champion citizens' voice and exact responsiveness in service delivery are sustainable. It is important to develop collaborations with other projects that are supporting parliament, leverage resources and ideas to ensure continuity.

The strategy and activities that will be implemented take into account issues of GESI. It also recognizes the uniqueness of Parliament and will be anchored on other factors such as the political nature of the institution, parliamentary cycle, resistance to change, institutional memory among others.

3 STAR-Ghana's niche and entry points

This section examines STAR-Ghana's niche via its recognition and confirmed status as a non-partisan institution with the core objective of developing an active and constructive citizenry in Ghana. It also examines the high level of trust it enjoys among the Leadership and Members of Parliament and how that is crucial to its success in developing a Parliamentary programme. The section finally looks at what constitutes STAR-Ghana niche when it comes to parliamentary development in Ghana.

3.1 Star-Ghana's Niche

STAR 2 will build on key recommendations from the evaluation of STAR 1 in order to focus on supporting the creation, utilization and institutionalization of spaces for collective CS engagement with key state institutions, particularly Parliament in order to increase responsiveness of the executive to citizens' voices and issues. STAR2 will also engage with Parliament on core governance issues related to gender, e.g. in terms of Constitutional reform, supporting specific gender related actions and regulations through Parliament and strengthening the analytical basis for legislative scrutiny across Parliament

STAR-Ghana has gained recognition as a non-partisan, national development-oriented institution. It has gained the trust of key national stakeholders including Civil Society Organizations, the Media and state actors such as Parliament. There are 2 reasons for STAR-Ghana's sterling reputation. First, as a donor-pooled fund, the institution is not tied to any particular donor with the attendant risk of being tagged as advancing the national/strategic interest of that particular donor. Second, the institution has been effectively managed by a team of well-respected Ghanaians – from the Programme Management Team to the Steering Committee.
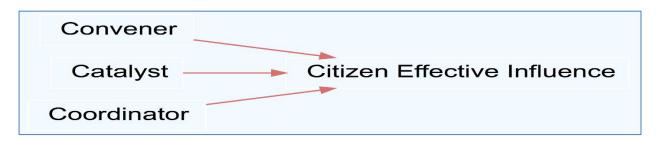
Parliaments are generally very conservative and 'closed' institutions. Parliamentary programmes often meet some level of 'push-back' from parliamentary leadership that is either not keen to support strengthening the oversight capacity of its institution or does not trust the intentions of the donor/executing agency. The programmes therefore can require careful negotiation involving the leadership of parliaments. Where there is a dominant and over-bearing Executive, with a strong majority in Parliament, it sometimes must be convinced that the parliamentary strengthening initiative being proposed does not constitute a zero-sum game for the executive branch of government. This is where reputation and recognition play a central role and when it is important to emphasize that the overall effectiveness and legitimacy of a state will be increased through parliamentary strengthening.

In addition, because of the complexity of legislative institutions, the effectiveness of a parliamentary intervention program is likely be enhanced if, when negotiating with parliamentary partners, efforts are made to engage with and have input from all main the political parties represented in the institution, not just the Speaker.

3.2   Entry Points

This section will examine key areas of parliamentary functions that could potentially serve as entry points for a STAR-Ghana parliamentary strategy. It is possible for STAR-Ghana, on the basis of its reputation, to use its core approach to programming – **the 3Cs – Convener, Catalyst and Coordinator (see diagram below)** – to drive its parliamentary strategy and engagement with the Parliament of Ghana.

Diagram 1. 3Cs

This core approach is informed by the fact that there is limited civil society capability in convening and supporting collective citizen voice and action as well as an inactive population with limited know how and will in approaching duty bearers or service providers on service delivery issues. As a result of these limitations, follow through from the public and CSOs in building collaboration around salient issues with duty bearers needs to be deeply strengthened if longer term results are to be achieved. Seen as STAR-Ghana's new strategic approach, it signals a shift from grant maker to an institution that play a central role in deepening change in public institutions and accountability to the interests of all Ghanaians. [3]

STAR-Ghana can use its **Convening powers** to ensure that alliances are built between CSOs, citizens and Parliament in order to influence the delivery of goods and services and to exact accountability. STAR-Ghana, through this approach, could create spaces between CSOs, citizens on the one hand and the leadership of Parliament, parliamentary committees on the other. The goal here will be to support awareness raising, to inform citizenry and to bring citizens around a common concern which they can act on.[4]

Using its **Catalyst approach,** and through its grants to CSOs and other actors, some conditions can be introduced that compels grantees to ensure that their work feeds into the work of Parliament. Grants and support to Parliament could also come with suggestions to encourage Parliament to use feedback from CSO work in the process of oversight, scrutiny and policy making.

Through its **Coordinator approach,** STAR-Ghana could build and facilitate consistent communication and joint processes between CSOs and citizens on the one hand and Parliament on the other. The approach could also be used to facilitate learning and the harnessing of best practices between CSOs and Parliament.

Parliament's role and functions cut across key areas of policy development and democratic governance which have a bearing on STAR-Ghana's objectives of increasing the accountability

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[3] See STAR-Ghana's Theory of Change
[4] Ibid.

and responsiveness of the executive and key state institutions so there is a wide range of areas where STAR-Ghana can engage Parliament as discussed below.

3.3 Representational Function

A key focus of developing the representative role of Parliament is to highlight the importance of working with CSOs and the media so that citizens can advocate their views and needs effectively to MPs. For STAR-Ghana, this can only come about by a vibrant and effective civil society, working in alignment with the Government of Ghana (GoG) where all people are valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the democratic space - economic, social and political life. For STAR-Ghana, GoG policies must be inclusive as they affect all citizens' in particular those of the minority and vulnerable groups[5].

Possible activities here include:

- Training citizens organizations and advisory groups to interact with Parliament, and
- Helping prepare citizens and CSOs to participate in public hearings.

3.4 Financial Function

Financial function refers to the responsibility to control the resources/finances of the State as well as how such resources are disbursed. The Legislature's power of the purse refers to the sole responsibility constitutionally endowed on parliament to approve taxes and determine how those taxes are expended. Thus the financial function transcends the mere allocation of funds to include a general understanding of economic indicators and how decisions of the Legislature such as increases in taxes and the imposition of levies impact on economic activity generally. The effective and efficient execution of this responsibility will therefore determine the direction of the economy and the country's ability to reduce poverty and to achieve targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Possible areas activities that could be undertaken here include:

- Working with key financial committees to determine how to best improve budgetary understanding;
- Establish a non-partisan scrutiny unit (currently underway, through interventions of STAR 1)
- Simplify budget formats
- Assist in getting parliamentary access, through information technology, to view government budget data, and
- Support budget hearings and mechanisms for inputs in the budget process.

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[5] See STAR-Ghana GESI strategy which goes into further detail on social integration, inclusion and cohesion for an inclusive society.

3.5   Gender and Social Inclusion

Increasing the political participation and engagement of women and minorities is a key area of STAR-Ghana's focus.   Cross cutting all components of STAR-Ghana's intervention, is a stream of work integrating Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) to ensure that results are felt by those who have often been excluded (e.g. youth, women, disabled and vulnerable groups). Any cross cutting work of GESI is expected to be interdependent and mutually supportive for results on inclusivity.[6]

STAR-Ghana can assist in this area by working with caucuses/Leadership of Parliament to promote the role of minorities and women in Parliament or by supporting the development of cross-party minority and women's caucuses. STAR-Ghana can also engage in developing women and minority leader's public outreach strategies or by strengthening parliamentarians' capacity to engage with their constituencies on minority and gender issues. Such activity should be linked to the electoral cycle, with long-term capacity development activities established to enable newly elected women to have an impact on gender-sensitive legislation.

3.6   Parliament and Economic Development

Parliaments are central to a country's economic development. As a forum where policies are shaped, laws are made and resources allocated, Parliaments play a critical role in determining a country's economic development.   Capable and vibrant Parliaments are essential to the development process and are a key stakeholder in achieving global development objectives such as the Sustainable Development Goals.   Programmes that support the role of Parliament in development issues – poverty, gender, social inclusion, environment etc. – can promote more comprehensive societal participation in economic development. STAR-Ghana can target particular development areas that require legal reform and work with both Parliament and possibly the Executive to develop political will to enact legislation.

Other initiatives in this area will include:

- Developing parliamentary awareness of the SDGs and ensuring that they are mainstreamed in policy, legislation and the budget process;
- Establishing informational links between Parliament and the relevant ministries working on development issues.

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[6] See STAR-Ghana's Theory of Change.

4 Designing and implementing a Parliamentary engagement strategy: programmes built around how change happens in Ghana's parliament

This section, which will constitute the core of the Strategy, will map out the key interventions that should guide STAR-Ghana's intervention over the next few years. Parliamentary development is slow, and invariably short-term. Parliamentary reform is incremental, complex, messy and ultimately political. Yet most traditional parliamentary support still depends on technical interventions and the assumption of linear progress. There is a tendency to rely on the same methods irrespective of different political contexts or the distinct challenges that come with attempts to improve the performance of a parliament.

4.1 Challenges Associated with Political Change

Each Parliament around the world is unique and change happens differently in different Parliaments. The Parliament of Ghana is no exception. Parliamentary change is convoluted and rarely predictable and never fully meeting the expectations of any of the interested parties. Development is disjointed as members incrementally add new institutional mechanisms without dismantling preexisting ones which renders such development programming ever-ongoing and open-ended. Moreover, the interplay of coalitions that promote contradictory objectives produces institutions that are tense battlegrounds rather than stable, coherent solutions[7].

4.2 An Agile and Flexible Strategy?

A parliamentary strategy to be adopted and implemented by STAR-Ghana for the 7th Parliament of Ghana must be agile and flexible and driven by outcomes rather than processes. The strategy is situated within the current political challenges facing Ghana and draws on the findings of a political economy analysis commissioned by STAR-Ghana, which identifies key challenges affecting the performance of parliament as including amongst others:

- Restrictions on Parliament's formal powers by constitutional provisions which have had the effect of making the Ghana Parliament a less-than-equal partner with the Executive in the governance process;
- MP's capacity and knowledge gaps with regards to their legislative functions; and
- Inadequate resourcing of Parliament to enable MPs be fully effective.[8]

The strategy will also be informed by the findings and recommendations of the parliamentary engagement during STAR 1. Key among them:

1. Incentivize a commitment for reform and improved performance across parliament.
2. Support the representational role of parliament to undertake purposive citizen engagement to solicit views on key national issues and allow for discussion of the work of the selected committees in public

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[7] Ibid.
[8] See Review of STAR-Ghana's Parliamentary Workstream, December 2014. Even though the PEA of Parliament was conducted during STAR 1, the issues identified are still valid today.
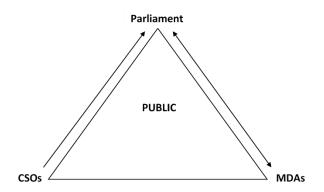
3. Develop a strategy for influencing the wider political context within which parliament operates, particularly, the political parties.
4. Identify a number of key issues of public concern on which to target support for strengthening the capacity of parliament.
5. Identify and support innovative, bold and informed initiatives by CSOs and other citizen groups to put pressure on parliament to be more accountable to citizens.
6. Capitalize on the openness of parliament to engage with CSOs to develop a strategy for institutionalizing these arrangements.
7. Improve practical implementation of GESI in the support to parliament.
8. Focus on programme indicators which measure the effectiveness of parliament and reflect a tangible difference to people's lives.

4.3   Objectives

As indicated in Section 2, the strategy is anchored on STAR-Ghana's Theory of Change and within the overall aim, purpose and objectives of STAR 2. Support to Parliament will be aligned with Parliament's core functions of oversight, accountability and representation.

One of the biggest governance challenges facing Ghana today is transparency and accountability. Parliament does not have the political will or capabilities to deal with this challenge by itself. A fundamental aspect of the strategy is to create an "oversight triangle" that will deepen accountability and responsiveness of duty-bearers. This is supported by the evaluation conducted on the parliamentary programme in STAR 1.

The "triangle" will create linkages between CSOs and Parliament (Leadership and key oversight committees); and then Parliament and the Executive (MDAs that key oversight Committee interface with). This will lead to the creation, utilization and institutionalization of spaces for collective CSO engagement with Parliament on the one hand, and the Executive on the other, in order to increase responsiveness of the Executive to citizens' voices and issues.

4.4 Elements of the Strategy

Following from the objectives and based on the earlier analyses of STAR-Ghana's niche/entry points as well as views collected during interviews for the strategy, STAR-Ghana will adopt a four-pronged interconnected approach to its support work with parliament based on:

1. Addressing constraints to the effectiveness of parliament in the area of oversight and accountability, both of which have a direct correlation with the delivery of goods and services as well as ensuring Executive responsiveness to citizens' voices and issues.

2. Enhancing capacity of both Parliament and CSOs to engage with each other as well as draw in the Executive into the "oversight triangle" in order to increase responsiveness of the Executive to citizens' voices and issues, particularly around accountability and service delivery.

3. Addressing strategic issues of relevance that have remained unfinished from STAR 1; cross-cutting issues, particularly GESI; and emerging or "hot" issues. This will not only make the strategy flexible and responsive, but help to improve parliament's effectiveness in oversight and accountability.

4. Addressing the Parliament's uncoordinated agenda to create a coordinated and focused demand.

4.4.1 Component 1: Addressing Constraints to Parliament's Oversight Effectiveness

This component of the strategy will focus on helping to develop and strengthen the capacity of Parliament to properly and effectively live up to it's most important role – scrutiny of Bills, policy documents and the Budget. Legislative oversight is a means for holding the executive accountable for its actions and for ensuring that it implements policies consistent with the laws and budget passed by the parliament. The ability of a parliament to robustly monitor and scrutinize the executive is an indicator of good governance. Even in advanced democracies, oversight has been found to be central to the effectiveness of Parliament.

One of the key governance challenges facing Ghana today is transparency and accountability in the delivery of goods and services. Parliament is central to addressing this challenge. Parliament's inability to exert itself and exercise effective oversight can be reduced to two critical factors: political will and knowledge. Addressing constraints to the effectiveness of parliament in the area of oversight and accountability, is of utmost importance in helping achieve STAR-Ghana's overall goal as there exists a direct correlation between effective scrutiny and the delivery of goods and services as well as ensuring Executive responsiveness to citizens' voices and issues.

The indicative areas of focus (below) will aim to address these two constraints.

1. Strengthening the points of intersection between key Legislative and Executive "players" and design activities that will help build consensus amongst them to engender political will.

2. Strengthening consensus building and developing a nonpartisan approach to oversight through the engagement with the leadership of Parliament.
3. Improving access to information and the readiness of the Executive to produce evidence and to respond to reports.
4. Strengthening the office of Parliamentary Scrutiny (this was a strategic initiative supported by STAR 1 and expected to be officially launched before the end of the 6th Parliament).
5. Improving the quality and timeliness of information available to MPs/Committees for oversight.
6. Strengthen mechanisms for Parliament's self-evaluation of its performance, particularly in the area of scrutiny.
7. Strengthening Media/CSO/Public interest and involvement in Parliament's scrutiny efforts.

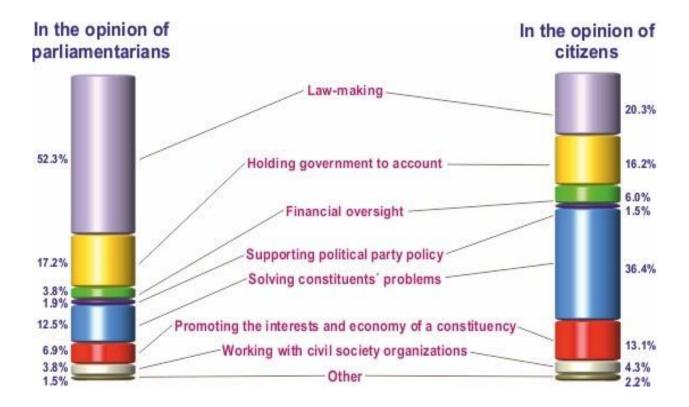### 4.4.2 Component 2: The "Oversight Triangle"

Enhancing capacity of both Parliament and CSOs to engage with each other as well as draw in the Executive into the "oversight triangle" in order to increase responsiveness of the Executive to citizens' voices and issues, particularly around accountability and service delivery addresses two key areas of parliamentary functions: oversight and representation.

CSOs in Ghana are increasingly keen to influence the policy process. One of the ways in which CSOs might try to shape policy is by engaging with Parliament. CSOs in Ghana can play an important role in helping Parliament to perform its representative, legislative and oversight functions, not least by providing evidence about the impact of particular policies. Evidence and influence are at the core of the between CSOs and Parliament. CSOs engagement with the Parliament and its committees will be a good opportunity to put their points of view across, points of view which are informed by their work on the ground. By feeding in evidence about the impact of policies on the ground, they will help Parliament do a better job of holding the government to account, and influencing policy in a direction which is beneficial for the country's development.

As indicated earlier, this component is a fundamental aspect of this strategy for two main reasons:

First, in the last few years, representing and addressing citizens' expectations has become a defining issue for Members of Parliament globally including Ghana. As the diagram below shows, there is a wide discrepancy between MPs' perception of their role and the expectations of constituents.

Chart 1: MPs vs. Citizens[9]

In the opinion of parliamentarians

In the opinion of citizens

- Law-making
- Holding government to account
- Financial oversight
- Supporting political party policy
- Solving constituents' problems
- Promoting the interests and economy of a constituency
- Working with civil society organizations
- Other

Parliamentarians: 52.3%, 17.2%, 3.8%, 1.9%, 12.5%, 6.9%, 3.8%, 1.5%

Citizens: 20.3%, 16.2%, 6.0%, 1.5%, 36.4%, 13.1%, 4.3%, 2.2%

The needs of constituents are tied to Executive responsiveness to citizen voices and issues which is in turn, tied to how effective MPs deliver on their mandate of representation and oversight. An "oversight triangle" will help address this challenge.

The second and an important reason why the oversight triangle is fundamental to this strategy is because of STAR-Ghana's relationship with and support to CSOs. In many countries, Parliamentary collaboration with CSOs has proved to be an extremely useful approach through which the Legislative body holds the Executive to account. The strategy will take advantage of the support STAR-Ghana will be providing to both Parliament and CSOs to create a platform through which information from the latter could be shared with Parliamentary Committees in order for them to carry out their scrutiny functions. The central objective here is to take information generated by CSOs, synthesize it into policy briefs and readable formats for various Parliamentary Committees. Armed with this information, the Committees can then exact the needed accountability from the Executive, especially the MDAs that they oversee as well as provide them feedback. This, it is hoped, will not only create a deterrent effect on the part of MDAs but will begin to change the face of oversight and accountability in Ghana.

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[9] See www.ipu.org

Indicative areas of focus under this component are:

1. Improve the relationship between Parliament (two power points: Leadership and Committees) and CSOs through activities that bring the two sides together.
2. Strengthen the spaces for dialogue between the two parties.
3. Improve the quality, nature and format of information generated by CSOs so that it is easily usable by Parliamentary Committees.
4. Strengthen information flow between CSOs and Parliamentary Committees.

4.4.3 Component 3: Addressing Strategic/Cross-Cutting Issues

This component is a basket of a number of identifiable and unidentifiable issues that will help Parliament perform its oversight and accountability functions effectively. It will also help Parliament perform its representative role by ensuring that issues of gender and social inclusion are mainstreamed in key parliamentary processes. This will not only make the strategy flexible and responsive, but help to identify emerging issues that could help improve parliament's effectiveness in oversight and accountability.

In the parliamentary strategy of STAR 1, three key strategic issues were supported:

1. The Review of Standing Orders;
2. The Establishment of a Scrutiny Office; and
3. The Establishment of a Parliamentary Training Institute (PTI).

One of the key goals of the review was to remove some inhibitions on parliamentary committees and position them to effectively carry out their oversight mandate.

The Office was supposed to enable MPs have access to quality information and sufficient knowledge about the often-complex financial issues and international loan agreements that are brought to the House for approval.

With regards the Parliamentary Training Institute, its establishment was aimed principally at addressing the sustainability of Parliament's capacity building efforts as well as address the challenges associated with the high attrition rate the Parliament of Ghana has witnessed over the years - on average, a 50% turnover of Members of Parliament after every election.

In terms of GESI, as indicated earlier, Parliament is uniquely positioned to promote gender and women's empowerment because if effective, they represent a cross-section of members of plural societies. In general, gender-sensitive parliaments offer a more diversified and real representation of society, but they also improve the tone and culture of parliamentary oversight and the way that issues are overseen.

Indicative areas of focus under this component include:

- Strengthening processes that help mainstream gender and vulnerability issues in the policy making process.
- Improving the role of minorities and women in Parliament through engagement with the leadership of Parliament and by supporting the development of cross-party minority and women's caucuses.

- Strengthening existing as well as new strategic initiatives identified by the Leadership of Parliament.

4.4.4 Component 4: Helping Parliament to Coordinate Its Needs

The phenomenal growth in the number of parliament globally has, understandably, come with increased public expectations of what Parliaments can and should be doing in the interest of the citizens that they represent. Public expectations as well as interest in the work of Parliaments manifests itself at different levels: development partners/development community, parliamentary development experts/practitioners, academics and most importantly, citizens. These different groups have issues that account for why they are interested in the work of the Legislature

This interest in the work of parliaments by citizens - who are seeking improvements to their livelihoods through the action of their elected representatives - and other actors in the democratic governance (local or international), have pushed parliaments to take steps that ensure a better, coordinated approach to how they work in order to better serve the citizens that they represent. One major step taken by many Parliaments is the development of a Strategic Plan to help them better utilize their resources as well as better serve the needs of their citizens.

Unlike many Parliaments on the continent, the Parliament of Ghana today lacks a clear strategy within which this strategy as well as other interventions will fit.

Possible areas of focus under this component include:

- Strengthen Parliament's planning process by helping develop a simple Strategic Plan
- Improving coordination between STAR-Ghana and other actors currently supporting Parliament, i.e. the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the World Bank, the African Development Bank to name a few.

4.4.5 Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy will be a four-step approach: identification of priority issues; funding and carrying out activities; and in keeping with the focus on outcome rather than processes, managing for results; and finally, training on managing for results.

1. Issue identification and Joint Planning:
- The PMT will work with the Strategic Advisor on Parliament, the Leadership of Parliament and the Office of the Clerk through the Donor Coordination Unit of Parliament to identify priority areas of focus – (carry out a mini-strategic planning exercise?);
- The PMT will also work with the CSO Platform and the Leadership of Parliament to define engagement strategies and thematic areas where CSOs can feed into the work of Parliament;
- Identify key Select Committees to be supported, analyse the constraints facing them. This will be undertaken jointly by a consultant contracted by STAR-Ghana and the leadership of those Committees;
- Harmonisation of the issues identified in the first 2 steps above to arrive at a composite set of issues that STAR-Ghana will support; STAR-Ghana will provide technical assistance to help ensure that the set of issues take full account of GESI;
- Validation with other stakeholders (particularly stakeholders already supporting or intending to support Parliament) to avoid duplication and ensure synergy;

- Development of budget, timelines, roles and responsibilities and monitoring and reporting guidelines with the Leadership of Parliament, the Office of the Clerk and the leadership of selected Committees.[10]

2. Funding Identified Initiatives for Change:

- An annual composite plan and budget will be developed for the initiatives identified and presented to the STAR-Ghana Steering Committee, through the Grants sub-committee, for approval;
- It is important that mechanisms are developed to ensure that funds are not lodged directly with Parliament. The approach adopted under STAR1 could be maintained;
- PMT to work with Parliament as partners to ensure that activities are carried out based on agreed timelines and spending guidelines.

3. Developing a Results Framework for Monitoring Expected Change

- A simple monitoring and reporting plan (both narrative and financial) will be agreed with the various activity responsible persons as part of the development of the action plans. This monitoring and reporting plan will as much as possible be aligned to STAR-Ghana's overall M&E framework;
- The monitoring plans and reports must include reference to GESI elements of the proposed work;
- There will be quarterly reporting, with a focus on results, not simply reporting activities. Acceptance of these reports will trigger funding for the next quarters' activity plan.

4. Training on Managing for Results:

- At the beginning of the implementation of the strategy, committee members and staff as well as the Leadership of Parliament will be trained on Results Based Management (RBM) and how it relates to parliamentary performance;
- Monitoring will be undertaken jointly by the Parliamentary Platform, the Committee Leaderships and the PMT. As part of this effort, MPs and will undertake an annual self-assessment exercise with a focus on programme indicators which measure the effectiveness of parliament and reflect a tangible difference to people's lives;

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[10] The Parliamentary program under STAR1 supported the establishment of a Parliamentary Training Institute (PTI). All preparatory work has been completed – concept, implementation strategy, curriculum, etc. In addition, space has been allocated in the Job 600 building to house the PTI. This is one key achievement of STAR1 and the currently parliamentary strategy should take advantage of this investment by ensuring that as much as possible, most training activities take place within the premises of the PTI. This will significantly reduce the costs associated with implementing activities – hotel, transport and other related costs.