

IFLAPARL Support for SUNY/CID Tunisia Programme

Background

The Center for International Development of the State University of New York (SUNY/CID) was implementing a US State Department-funded program in Tunisia that began in late 2016. The aim of the program, “Supporting Parliamentary Strengthening in Tunisia”, was to develop legislative research and information capacity to provide Tunisian Members of Parliament (MPs) with objective, quality briefings and information to enable them to perform their jobs more effectively. This program was clearly aligned to IFLAPARL’s own objectives in promoting parliamentary libraries and research services as a fundamental component in the development of democratic legislatures throughout the world and its support for UN SDG 16. Therefore, IFLAPARL was happy to offer its members’ experience and capabilities to support the program as a collaborating partner with SUNY/CID.

IFLAPARL Activities

IFLAPARL contributed to three events during 2019, organised by SUNY/CID, as part of the program. Our team comprised of Iain Watt from the European Parliament and Steve Wise from the House of Commons Library, with several decades of experience of parliamentary research and information services between them.

Seminar 1: February 2019



On 27 February 2019, SUNY/CID organized a seminar titled “*Informing Democracies: How Better Access to Information Improves Law-making and Oversight*”, which took place at the University of Carthage (UC) in partnership with the University’s Faculty of Legal, Political and Social Sciences (FSJPS). The seminar focused on information provision for parliaments and how access to objective, quality information and research can improve law-making and oversight functions of a legislature.

His Excellence, Mr. Mohamed Ennaceur, the President of the Tunisian Parliament gave the opening remarks, stressing the importance of drafting quality laws and in adapting a participatory approach to law-making to include inputs from legal and civil society experts, and other stakeholders. The Dean of Faculty, Ms. Neila Chaabane, along with two other UC professors, then presented on different aspects of the law-making process in Tunisia and the current challenges faced by legislators. In their presentations, the IFLAPARL presenters stressed that MPs cannot be experts in all matters subject to legislation and that they require qualified, expert assistance and research. In the words of Steve Wise, “Better informed legislators make better laws”. The IFLAPARL presenters drew on their extensive professional experience to explain the advantages and disadvantages of different service models and how these could be adapted to meet the needs of different



legislatures. They also emphasized the importance of objectivity and independence in research, along with establishing the trust of MPs, as well as the challenges to be overcome in achieving this.

The seminar was attended by approximately 100 participants, including UC faculty, students and parliamentary staff. It also attracted media attention, receiving coverage on the evening news on the TV station, Tunis 1. A recording of the full coverage can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JEEN5sTklg>. SUNY/CID's own press notice can be found at: http://www.cid.suny.edu/newsroom/news2019/newsroom_2019_tunisa.shtml.

Seminar 2: May 2019

Staff of the Tunisian National Assembly who participated in the February seminar believed that there would be considerable value in repeating the IFLAPARL presentations for colleagues who were unable to attend the original event. Therefore, SUNY/CID organised a further ½-day seminar on Saturday, 4 May, with 18 parliamentary staff giving up their own free time to attend.



Steve Wise repeated his presentation on the Westminster model, with a focus on the enquiry service and research briefings, while Iain Watt presented on Members' use of information, focussing on value and effectiveness, describing how a service could start small and then build up its services and products. Both speakers then gave a joint presentation on practical issues in developing parliamentary research & information

services, based on the IFLAPARL publication, [Guidelines for Parliamentary Research Services](#) (all participants were given their own copy of the Arabic version). The session ended with an extended Q&A session, picking up and explaining concepts discussed in the presentations.

Seminar 3: July 2019

The association of staff of the Tunisian National Assembly (ARP) thought the May seminar had been successful and wanted to take things further through another seminar, focussing explicitly on practical issues in parliamentary research and what could be learned from other parliaments' experience. So, on 13 July 2019, SUNY/CID organised a third workshop – this time using examples from the [Parliamentary Research Handbook](#). Topics covered included: research principles, confidentiality & impartiality, taking & answering questions, policy analysis, research briefings, committee research, quality control & reviewing and the use of statistics and data visualization. The workshop was attended by 22 staff members from various departments from the ARP, including staff from the ARP's newly established Center for Research.



SUNY/CID press notice:

http://www.cid.suny.edu/newsroom/news2019/newsroom_2019_tunisa_workshop.shtml

Outcomes

IFLAPARL's partnership with SUNY/CID's helped to deliver the following program outcomes.

1. Parliamentary staff gained an increased knowledge of best practice in parliamentary research.
 - *Learning from experienced practitioners of the approaches, processes and challenges faced in delivering services in other parliaments – with the opportunity to ask questions and probe specific issues in depth.*
 - *Provision of training materials, reference guides and real-life examples (much of it in Arabic) that can be shared and re-used by other parliamentary staff.*
2. A sustainable increase in professional collaboration and peer to peer exchange of information.
 - *Parliamentary staff learned of the IFLAPARL network, what it does and how it can support them.*
 - *Staff now have contacts within IFLAPARL they can approach and have access to the range of guidance available on IFLAPARL's web pages.*
3. An increased awareness among MPs, parliamentary staff, law lecturers and students of the role and value of parliamentary research and information services in the legislative process and in ensuring the quality of laws enacted.
 - *Participants have heard first-hand how parliamentary research and information expertise helps the legislative process in other countries.*
 - *The presence of the President of the Tunisian Parliament at the first seminar stressed the importance and value of parliamentary research and information in drafting and enacting effective and long-lasting legislation.*
 - *TV news coverage also helped reinforce the importance of this subject in sustaining the democratic process in Tunisia.*

Appendix I: SUNY/CID Programme Scope



State University of New York/Center for International Development (SUNY/CID)

Background

The Center for International Development of the State University of New York (SUNY/CID), part of the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, University at Albany, has three decades of experience implementing international development programs. SUNY/CID has a long record of accomplishments in the field of democracy and governance, particularly parliamentary strengthening.

For the past 20 years, SUNY/CID has managed over two-dozen comprehensive, multi-year and multi-million dollar legislative strengthening programs worldwide. We have implemented parliamentary strengthening programs in Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, to name just a few. Our programs have covered all aspects of parliamentary development, providing technical assistance to parliaments around the world to improve their law-making, oversight and representational functions. We have assisted parliaments in developing parliamentary information services, including library and research facilities, expanding the local capacity to produce targeted, objective and useful policy information. We have also promoted and fostered long-standing collaborations with local universities, CSOs, and think tanks in that effort.

Tunisia: Program Brief

SUNY/CID's program "Supporting Parliamentary Strengthening in Tunisia" aims to develop legislative research and information capacity within Tunisia to provide Tunisian Members of Parliament (MPs) with objective, quality reports and information to enable them to perform their jobs more effectively. To this end, a series of targeted training and collaborations with universities and civil society organizations will aim to create a research environment in which parliamentary committees are able to obtain objective, quality research and information to inform their legislative work. Legislative research and training will focus on subjects of critical importance to Tunisia, with specific emphasis on issues relating to women, youth and vulnerable populations. At the same time, education and outreach to Members of Parliament will inform them of the value of and availability of legislative research and a demand for them. Working with a consortium of local institutions – universities, think tanks, governmental institutions and civil society organizations – the program will aim to create sources of quality information and studies.

Tunisia: Program Objectives & Outcomes

SUNY/CID is implementing a US State Department-funded program in Tunisia that began in late 2016. The objective of SUNY/CID's program, is to build in-country capacity in the areas of legislative research and policy analysis; improve access to information and objective, quality studies; provide Members of the Tunisian Parliament with better access to relevant studies and information; and to assist in building the environment and conditions for a more informed law-making process. The target audience for this assistance includes parliamentary staff, Members of Parliament, Tunisian universities, and select civil society organizations.

The objective of the project, which IFLAPARL is providing support, is to assist with strengthening the legislative capacity of Tunisia's Parliament by providing Members of Parliament (MPs) with relevant, nonpartisan and credible information on issues that have the potential to promote democratic reforms. The following are hoped for project outcomes.

Outcome 1.2: Increased knowledge of best practices on legislative research

Outcome 1.3: Increased access to information resources including legislative process, human rights, vulnerable populations, etc.

Outcome 1.4: Sustainable increase in professional collaboration and peer to peer exchange of information

Outcome 1.5: Increased awareness among MPs and staff on the role and value of parliamentary information services

Appendix II: IFLAPARL Letter of Support

Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments

Section des Services de Bibliothèque
et de Recherche Parlementaires

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
Federation Internationale des Associations det Institutions de
Bibliothèques

Internationaler Verband der bibliothekarischen Vereine und
Institutionen

Federacion Internacional de Asociaciones
de Bibliotecarios y Bibliotecas

Международная Федерация Библиотечных Ассоциаций и
Учреждений



29 April 2016

Director
Center for International Development
State University of New York
99 Pine Street, 4th Floor
Albany, New York 12246

Dear:

The IFLA Section on Libraries and Research Services for Parliaments (IFLAPARL) is pleased to confirm its commitment to participate as a collaborating partner with the State University of New York's Center for International Development (SUNY/CID) on the forthcoming US Department of State-funded program Supporting Parliamentary Strengthening in Tunisia.

Besides organizing activities that facilitate professional development, networking and knowledge sharing for members from over 100 parliaments, IFLAPARL partners with regional parliamentary networks such as the Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Eastern and Southern Africa (APLESA), the Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Asia and the Pacific (APLAP), and the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), and with international organizations such as the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP). These partnerships take the form of information exchange, support for capacity building, expert consultation and joint publication of standards and guidelines on issues related to the development and improvement of library and research services to parliaments.

IFLAPARL is ready to offer our members' experience and capabilities to support the project Supporting Parliamentary Strengthening in Tunisia. We are aware of SUNY/CID's very substantial capability in the area of parliamentary strengthening projects worldwide and see complementary strengths between our two organizations in supporting developing parliaments.

We look forward to working with SUNY/CID on this important initiative.

Sincerely,
Lillian W. Gassie
Chair, IFLA Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments
Email: iflaparl.chair@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.ifla.org/services-for-parliaments>