

# KOSOVO

## PROGRAM PROFILE



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### History of Partnership

The House Democracy Assistance Commission approved a legislative strengthening program with the Assembly of Kosovo in 2009. Since then, it has worked with the Assembly in the areas of constituent relations, committee operations, and parliamentary research.

The Commission has encouraged development on these fronts with a congressional delegation and six training seminars, two for visiting Kosovar MPs and four for visiting staff from the National Assembly.

### Background

A new constitution came into effect in June 2008, establishing Kosovo as a parliamentary republic with three independent branches. The legislature is comprised of the 120-member National Assembly, whose members are elected for four-year terms.

Parliamentary elections to the Assembly of Kosovo have been held five times since 1999 with the latest in 2014. More than 20 political parties competed in the Assembly elections, which were widely deemed to meet international standards of legitimacy and credibility. Kosovo has a vibrant multi-party system, with numerous parties and the system of proportional representation and guaranteed minority representation means that no one party is likely to have a parliamentary majority.

### Congressional Delegations

A delegation from the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) traveled to Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Nepal, and Kosovo between August 11 and 21, 2015. The purpose of the trip was to renew the commission's partnership with the Parlamento Nacional of Timor-Leste, the Parliament of Indonesia, and the Assembly of Kosovo. The delegation also assessed the progress toward a constitutional democracy in the Constituent Assembly of Nepal, as well as the recovery from April's devastating earthquake. The delegation was led by senior HDP member, Vern Buchanan (R-FL) and Ranking Democratic Member David Price (D-NC), along with Reps. Jim McDermott (D-WA), Adrian Smith (R-NE), Susan Davis (D-CA), and Dina Titus (D-NV). This was HDP's second outbound legislative strengthening mission in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress and 32<sup>nd</sup> overall since 2005.

Chairman David Dreier led a delegation to Kosovo in April 2012 to meet with their counterparts in the Kosovo Assembly. After meeting with President Atifete Jahjaga to discuss U.S.-Kosovo relations and tensions between Kosovo and Serbia, the delegation met with the Speaker of the Kosovo Assembly, Jakup Krasniqi. During its time in the Assembly, the delegation met with Serb and other ethnic minority members of the parliament to discuss minority rights; with the Budget and Finance Committee to discuss budget oversight and fiscal analysis; and with the Public Accounts Committee to discuss oversight of government spending. The Kosovo Assembly's women's caucus met with the delegation to share their experiences, which was followed by sessions on committee hearings and constituent services

for committee chairs, deputy chairs, and caucus leaders. HDP staff held concurrent discussions with Kosovar committee staff on public hearing preparations and the role of staff in oversight activities.

The Commission organized a congressional delegation to Kosovo in February 2010, led by Representative Earl Pomeroy. The delegation's trip marked the formal inauguration of the Commission's partnership with the Assembly of Kosovo. The delegation's program began in the Assembly, where they met with the Speaker and the Presidency of the Assembly (a nine-member leadership team representing the major parties). The centerpiece of the two-day program was an afternoon of intensive training sessions on the committee hearing process and constituent services. The delegation also met with the Prime Minister and members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which allowed for discussions on bilateral foreign policy issues. Towards the end of the visit, the delegation visited one of the largest Serb enclaves in the country to underscore the importance of minority rights and participation in democratic development.

## **Staff Delegations**

Retired researcher, Sherry Shapiro from the Congressional Research Service met in Pristina with staff of the Kosovo National Assembly in September 2015 to build on the legislative research and analysis lessons learned during the Legislative Staff Institute in October 2014. The training consisted of an advanced course on techniques of public policy analysis and craft skills needed to work effectively with the Parliament. Additionally, it included a seminar on establishing a budget office, specifically related to rules and procedures of a budget office and the responsibilities of staff to analyze the budget. The Commission consults met with the secretary general of the parliament and the director of research to gauge the extent to which MPs were making use of the research unit, how satisfied they were with the services they received from the unit, and ways to further partner with HDP to continue professionalizing the research unit staff.

In May 2015, a delegation of congressional staff of HDP members visited Kosovo and Macedonia as part of an assessment exercise to capture impact of HDP's work to date and make recommendations as to future programming. Led by former Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND), the assessment team also included Omri Rahmil, Legislative Assistant to HDP Chair Rep. Peter Roskam (R-IL) and Laura Thrift, Senior Policy Advisor to HDP Ranking Member Rep. David Price (D-NC), as well a senior NDI staff. During their visit, the delegation met with senior parliamentary leadership, as well as HDP program alumni, representatives of the diplomatic and donor communities, civil society activists, and other stakeholders with perspective on the legislature's development and the role of HDP in strengthening the parliamentary institution.

## **MP Seminar**

Parliaments worldwide face common challenges arising from a perceived crisis of trust by citizens. Public opinion polling in many regions reveals a continued decline of public confidence in legislative performance. To help address these issues, HDP convened a special MP exchange on this topic in September/October 2015, featuring participation by members of parliament from the legislatures of Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Nepal, and Ukraine. The program provided opportunities for sharing international perspective, strategies, and practical tools for managing citizen expectations, demonstrating effective legislative performance, and rebuilding public confidence. To this end, the program included meetings with members of the U.S. Congress; representatives of civil society, including from "watchdog" organizations; and staff of independent third-party audit agencies. The

agenda also includes in-depth exploration of these topics through case studies that illustrate specific legislative responses to declining citizen trust in the legislature.

In February 2015, the National Democratic Institute facilitated a parliamentary exchange program that represented a departure from the previous technical subjects of focus, tackling “leadership in the digital economy.” The program was jointly supported by HDP and the Institute for Representative Government (IRG), a bipartisan organization of former members of Congress dedicated to strengthening the legislative institution. The program included 22 members of parliament in total, representing the legislatures of Colombia, Georgia, Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Nepal, Peru, Serbia and Tunisia. The program explored how, from the use of social media and mobile platforms by members of parliament to connect with constituents to enhanced capabilities for voter targeting, new technologies are changing how politics functions and parliamentary business is conducted in many countries. The program also probed how the burgeoning use of technology also raises a number of policy issues for parliaments around the world, including how best to support economic development and trade, protect citizens’ privacy interests, and defend against cybercrime. As an emerging field of policy expertise, issues relating to technology also present opportunities for women and young politicians to assert leadership, bringing new skills that may not otherwise exist within traditional party and parliamentary structures. During the exchange program, delegates explored these topics through dialogue with fellow members of parliament, parliamentary staff, policy experts and industry leaders in both Washington, D.C., and Silicon Valley, CA. The Silicon Valley portion of the trip was especially appreciated by delegates, who have been experimenting with several new applications, platforms, and technological initiatives to narrow the gap between parliament and citizens.

Kosovar MPs were invited to Washington in June 2014, for a week-long seminar that focused on strengthening committee operations. The seminar hosted 20 MPs from five partnership countries. Delegates examined the U.S. Congress committee structure and functions including committee relations with the executive branch agencies they oversee; the role of committee chairs; the role and significance of public hearings; professional research, drafting, and amending services to committees; and several other related issues. Additionally, MPs observed a public committee hearing and met with current and former members and staff of the U.S. Congress.

In July 2012, four Kosovar MPs came to Washington to participate in a week-long seminar on committee operations. They were joined by colleagues from Macedonia and Liberia. The program covered various aspects of committee operations including the role of leadership, legislative ethics, oversight, and committee hearings. Members of Congress and staff also discussed the importance of non-partisan institutions such as the Congressional Research Service, the Government Accountability Office, and the Congressional Budget Office. More than a dozen current and former representatives were able to participate and share their experiences with the visiting MPs.

In June 2012, HDP invited three female MPs to participate in its inaugural Women’s Seminar. The week-long program brought together women MPs from four partner countries (Kosovo, Indonesia, Peru, and Macedonia) to discuss economic and political issues relevant to women. The seminar began with presentations from think tanks and NGOs on topics including advocacy, economic empowerment, and using research to further policy. Later in the week, the MPs met with female Members of Congress, including the Co-Chairs of the Congressional Women’s Caucus and a member of the House Leadership Team, to exchange ideas about particular challenges faced by elected female representatives and strategies for furthering women’s advancement into leadership positions.

Kosovar MPs were invited to Washington from September 26-October 3, 2009, for a week-long seminar focused on committee operations. The program began with an overview by the Congressional Research Service of the Congress and its committee structure. Committee staff and former members of Congress spoke to participants about various aspects of committee operations, including the role of staff and organizing public hearings. Roughly a dozen Members of Congress spoke to participants in the seminar, offering their personal experience in using committees to advance their own legislative and oversight priorities.

### **Staff Seminars**

In December 2015, 3 parliamentary staff members from the Assembly of Kosovo joined colleagues from four other countries for the first HDP staff institute tailored for partisan staff. The weeklong exchange focused on providing effective support to parliamentary groups and caucuses with sessions focused on utilizing support structures for caucus operations, the role of the caucus in communicating and advancing party platforms, promoting cohesion and discipline in caucus operations, and drawing on data and technology to enhance caucus operations.

NDI facilitated an HDP Parliamentary Staff Institute on “Strengthening the Legislative Institution in the Wake of Political Transitions” from April 27 to May 1, in Washington, D.C. In total, 17 parliamentary staff from Kosovo, Macedonia, Nepal, and Ukraine participated in the exchange. In addition to discussion of the normative principles of democratic legislative processes, the delegation engaged on a practical level with specific tools and resources they could use to support legislatures back in their home countries.

In January 2015, two parliamentary staff members joined colleagues from 14 other countries for the largest HDP staff institute to date. Facilitated by the National Democratic Institute, the weeklong program focused on strengthening committee operations. The program sought to provide participants an overview of committee operations in the U.S. Congress, and covered topics such as internal and external policy analysis resources, the oversight role and oversight tools available to committees, as well as legislative and executive branch relations. Emphasis was placed on organizing, preparing and conducting public hearings. The program also provided the delegates the opportunity to discuss the role and functions of committees in their home legislatures.

Staff of the Assembly of Kosovo participated in a Legislative Staff Institute organized by the Commission in October 2014. The staff institute hosted 24 participants from 12 partnership countries for a week-long seminar that focused on legislative research, analysis, and drafting. The program began with an overview of how the U.S. Congress works, led by the office of the Clerk of the House and the Congressional Research Service. The seminar focused largely on the policy analysis process, which was designed to enhance analytical skills, strengthen the connection between information providers and the legislative process, and to ensure that legislatures were presented with a variety of choices to solve societal problems. The seminar provided best practices to (1) define the problem to be addressed, (2) identify alternative solutions for the resolution of the problem, and (3) trace the key impacts and effects of the alternatives, to utilize when providing products and services to the legislature.

In October 2012, one staff member from the Kosovo Assembly participated in a staff institute to strengthen legislative budget analysis. Twenty-three staff from twelve partner countries participated in the program, which included meetings with officials from the Congressional Budget Office, the Congressional Research Service, and staff from the House Budget, Appropriations, Agriculture, and Ways and Means Committees. Participants also met with representatives from the Government Accountability Office, the World Bank Institute and the International Budget Partnership.

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.

Staff from Kosovo attended a staff institute on strengthening budget analysis capacity in the legislature from October 18 to 22, 2010. The institute included 21 staff from 11 partner countries. The institute included meetings with or presentations by officials from the Congressional Budget Office, the Congressional Research Service, and staff from the House Committees on Budget and Appropriations and the Joint Committee on Taxation. In addition, budget analysts from the Kenya National Assembly shared their experience in establishing and developing a parliamentary budget office.

The Commission organized a staff institute on committee operations from December 13-17, 2010. The institute included 27 staff from 13 partner countries, including Kosovo. The institute included meetings with or presentations by officials from the Congressional Research Service and staff from several House committees, as well as meetings with Rep. David Price and Rep. David Dreier. In addition, committee staff from the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia shared their experience in developing procedures to begin using oversight hearings as part of the work of their parliamentary committees.

In June 2010, staff from the Kosovo Assembly traveled to Warsaw, Poland to attend the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Frost-Solomon Commission. They were joined by 22 MPs from 11 partner countries, along with MPs and research staff from former partners of the Frost-Solomon Commission. Current and former staff from the Congressional Research Service worked with them to help develop their own parliamentary research service through workshops, coaching, and open forums.

Staff from the Kosovo Assembly participated in a training program in Mavrovo, Macedonia from November 10-14, 2009. They joined 24 participants from three countries for an intensive program on committee operations. Organized in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute, the program examined how staff can more effectively support committee operations by organizing hearings, soliciting public input on legislation, conducting policy and legal research, and writing committee reports.

A delegation of staff from Kosovo attended a staff institute from December 7-17, 2009, that was organized in conjunction with CRS and the International Republican Institute (IRI). The institute hosted 27 participants from 12 partner countries, who were mostly officials and analysts of their parliament's research service. The program focused on the role of the research service in providing independent information and analysis to members of parliament and their staff.

Staff from Kosovo also attended a seminar that was held from November 2-6, 2009 in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute (NDI). This Institute hosted 27 participants from 12 partner countries and focused on the role of information and technology in the legislature. The centerpiece of the program was participation in the third annual World E-Parliament Conference, which specifically addressed how information and communication technology can help improve representation, transparency, accountability, openness, and effectiveness in parliament.

## **Self-Initiated Parliamentary Delegations**

In June 2012, the commission welcomed the Speaker of the Kosovar Parliament to Washington, D.C. As part of a four-day program, HDP facilitated a meeting between the Kosovar Speaker, the Chairman and Ranking Member of HDP, and the Speaker of the House.