Strengthening Accountability: A Tool to Support Good Governance and Gender Equality in the Caribbean

Accountability is a foundational principle of the democratic system that focuses on ensuring integrity in the work of public actors and efficiency in the use of resources and provision of services to meet public needs.[1] Parliament is an essential actor in accountability efforts as it is both responsible for providing oversight to the actions and outcomes of the executive branch *and* for being accountable itself to the public. Fulfilling both sides of this equation is important to promoting good governance in all its dimensions.

While there is no one internationally agreed upon definition for "good governance," the term is commonly centred in the practices of public participation, transparency, responsiveness, equity, inclusivity, consensus, efficiency, the rule of law and **accountability**. According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Human Rights Office:

> "[G]ood governance relates to the political and institutional processes and outcomes that are necessary to achieve the goals of development. The true test of 'good' governance is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. The key question is: are the institutions of governance effectively guaranteeing the right to health, adequate housing, sufficient food, quality education, fair justice and personal security?"[2]

Answering the question above is only possible with a commitment to accountability, as well as strong measures that allow the public, parliament and other actors to put this commitment into practice.

The exercise of accountability generates information that makes it possible to monitor the impacts of public policies and legislation and assess their coherence with goals related to governance, gender equality and sustainable development – particularly when accountability mechanisms are designed and implemented with these objectives at their core, recognising that policies and laws have different impacts on all members of the public and that levels of access to information can differ. Taking such an approach to accountability can result in greater transparency and stronger institutions, contribute to building citizen trust and support parliamentarians in effectively representing the public. The reverse is also true: a lack

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[1] [Road Map Towards Legislative Openness 2.0](#), ParlAmericas (2022), pg. 16
[2] ["What is Good Governance?"](#) OHCHR, webpage

of accountability can weaken trust in institutions and how these bodies perform and can create barriers to the achievement of development and governance goals in a variety of ways.

With that in mind, this brief was designed to provide Caribbean parliamentarians with information, good practices and resources to strengthen political and parliamentary accountability as a contributor to advancing good governance and gender equality and inclusion goals.

What does accountability look like in practice?

Recognising that public authorities exist to serve the population and meet their unique needs across all public activities, **accountability entails**:

- ✓ honouring and enabling the public's ability to monitor the actions of those authorities (allowing the public to hold authorities to account), and
- ✓ public servants' obligation to justify and accept responsibility for their decisions (being accountable to citizens).

Parliament and parliamentarians have a role in holding others to account and must themselves be accountable to citizens as a result of two main parliamentary functions: oversight and representation.

▶ On one hand, parliament is responsible for **government oversight**: the executive is accountable to the parliament, which requires that parliaments evaluate and oversee government action, review resource allocations and contribute to shaping decision making to help achieve the best results for the public.

> In practice, accountability of the executive towards parliament occurs by way of responding to a starred question,[3] delivering reports or taking part in debates in parliamentary sittings. It can also occur through the parliamentary committee system, which is responsible for examining specific issues, policies and legislation in detail, analysing government action and often providing findings and recommendations via a report.

▶ On the other hand, **parliamentarians represent citizens** and must be accountable to them as well by communicating about and providing rationales for the decisions and actions undertaken in parliament. This not only requires effort by society to monitor and examine parliamentary work, but also proactive steps by parliament and parliamentarians to ensure that the public can do so effectively.

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[3] A starred question is 'a question on the Order Paper for which an oral response is requested.' Glossary of Parliamentary Terms

In practice, accountability of the parliament towards citizens occurs via honouring the right to information and through active transparency policies. Parliaments publish the hansards and committee reports and live stream parliamentary sittings to keep citizens informed of what the parliament is doing. Individual parliamentarians also report to their constituents in various ways on their actions within the legislature.

Why focus on accountability?

Accountability is an integral component of good governance and offers significant benefits to society and institutions. **Research demonstrates that accountability...**

1 *Prevents abuses of power and corruption*

According to the United Nations, corruption and illicit financial flows cost the global economy US$3.6 trillion annually.[4] Further research by the United Nations Development Programme reveals that this money lost to corruption is estimated at 10 times the amount of official development assistance given to developing states.[5] These misused financial resources hamper progress in addressing developmental issues such as climate change and disasters, poverty, crime, gender inequality, food insecurity, clean water and sanitation, among other key issues.

Accountability promotes the appropriate conditions to reduce the occurrences of misappropriation of public funds and contributes to ensuring that these are used for the good of all in society. Studies have shown that "government audits of public entities aimed at uncovering the misuse of public resources have made officials more accountable to voters and reduced corruption in many cases."[6]

2 *Builds citizen participation and fosters greater trust in government institutions*

In the Latin American and Caribbean region, only 34% of the population has trust in governmental institutions.[7] This alarming lack of trust increases political apathy and can hinder citizen participation in decision-making processes. This can result in even further negative societal impacts as civil society organisations, women's organisations, youth, the private sector and other groups can offer unique perspectives and information to help formulate and implement laws and policies that are representative of all in society.

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[4] The Cost of Corruption, United Nations
[5] Corruption: The Other Global Pandemic to Eradicate, UNDP
[6] Increasing Accountability and Reducing Corruption Through Government Audits, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)
[7] Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2020, OECD

Studies report that citizens' perception of good governance (perceived responsiveness, perceived accountability and perceived transparency) is positively associated with their trust in government.[8] At both the institutional and individual levels, integrity, accountability and transparency are key traits that build trust and boost citizen confidence.

3 Enhances openness and representative democracy

Parliamentarians exercise representative, legislative and oversight functions, holding responsibility for passing laws and "monitoring the quality of the work of the government regarding implementation of the law, development plans and budgets that have been previously adopted by the parliament."[9] When transparency and accountability are practiced, citizens are *included* in the processes of observing, assessing and being informed about what the parliament is doing. This can have a wider impact on government efficiency and responsiveness, aid in upholding the rule of law and reduce the likelihood of corruption.

According to the World Justice Project Rule of Law index, countries that display openness of government better adhere to the rule of law and are less prone to corruption.[10] Openness of government entails that "the government shares information, empowers people with tools to hold the government accountable and fosters citizen participation in public policy deliberations." Corruption is also less likely when there is adherence to the constitutional and institutional means that place constraints on government power and its officials and agents are held accountable by law.

4 Results in more efficient, effective and inclusive outcomes from decision making

When parliaments are efficient, effective and inclusive, national development and growth can occur. Representation of diverse views in decision making prevents distorted development and ensures that financial allocations and the formulation and amendment of laws and policies meets the needs of all in society, thus boosting the efficiency and effectiveness of governmental institutions. Having accountability practices and mechanisms in place at the institutional level of parliament and at the level of individual parliamentarians' work helps make this possible, as the public is more aware of and able to be involved. This is especially beneficial when a gender-responsive approach is applied to this work – meaning that inclusion is prioritised and parliaments ensure the views and perspectives of all, especially those of underrepresented or traditionally marginalised groups, are considered.

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[8] Citizens' Trust in Government as a Function of Good Governance and Government Agency's Provision of Quality Information on Social Media during COVID-19, Mahnaz Mansoor
[9] Parliamentary Function of Oversight, AGORA
[10] WJP Rule of Law Index Factors, WJP

5 *Supports the achievement of international agreements and national policies*

According to the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "accountability is a cornerstone of the human rights framework, itself a system of norms that govern the relationship between 'duty bearers' in authority and 'rights holders' affected by their actions."[11] Accountability has further been acknowledged and embedded as an integral component of achieving international commitments agreed upon at meetings in Paris, Accra and Busan, among countless others.[12]

> As one example, Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) affirms that states have an obligation to submit a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted and the subsequent progress made, to the Secretary General of the United Nations for consideration by the committee, once every four years at least. Parliamentary oversight over government action related to this framework therefore supports in compliance with this article in addition to ensuring priority remains on the substantive content of CEDAW.

Research has specifically revealed that progress towards the 2015 Millennium Development Goals was hindered because countries' "pledge of accountability [was] more rhetorical than real."[13] Political accountability via parliamentary oversight of the executive or citizen oversight of parliamentary representatives can therefore help to propel progress on international agreements and/or national policies, as those responsible for their implementation will be required to share information on the progress towards international commitments or national policies.

> One example of citizen oversight supporting the achievement of national policies occurred when Raise Your Voice Saint Lucia observed the gaps in the policies surrounding women's protection and rights and was able to successfully lobby for improvement of women's rights via the Domestic Violence Bill. Their ongoing attention to the issue and partnership with parliamentarians to move the law forward was an important factor in the successful implementation of the Domestic Violence Bill in Saint Lucia.[14]

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[11] Who will be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

[12] "The Role of Accountability in Promoting Good Governance," in Accountability and Democratic Governance: Orientations and Principles for Development, OECD

[13] Who will be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

[14] "Saint Lucia has a New Domestic Violence Act," Raise Your Voice Saint Lucia, web post

Where do gender equality and inclusion come in?

Supporting gender equality and sustainable development are priority objectives of all Caribbean countries, affirmed through national policy documents and commitments to international frameworks. Strengthening accountability, and doing so with attention to inclusion, gender-responsiveness and intersectionality, contributes in various ways to addressing inequality and promoting inclusive development. Taking such an approach to accountability work is also necessary to truly meet the goals of accountability and good governance: ensuring that public decision making and resource allocation is efficient and results in outcomes that serve the best interests of **all** people.

Gender-responsive accountability means both **developing accountability measures** that facilitate broad access to information and engagement in related processes, particularly by underrepresented and traditionally marginalised groups, and **applying a gender lens in oversight and representative work** to ensure that decision-making processes, resource allocation and policy implementation meet the diverse needs of women, men and all other societal groups. Examples of concrete actions to achieve these objectives are provided in the next section of the tool.

Sex: the label of male, female or intersex that is assigned to individuals at birth based on a set of medical factors like reproductive/sexual anatomy, chromosomes, and hormones. (Gender Equality 101, CIWiL and ParlAmericas)

Gender: a person's identity as a woman, man, or a non-binary individual based on how they relate to the expectations, standards, and characteristics typically thought to be masculine and feminine in their particular culture and society.

Gender equality: refers to a condition in which **all people** have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. This does not mean that all individuals are the same, but that they have equal value, should be accorded equal treatment, and should not experience discrimination or privilege on the basis of gender. (Gender Equality 101, CIWiL and ParlAmericas)

Gender-responsive: a people-centred approach to decision making that demonstrates understanding of gendered realities and seeks to respond to these by ensuring that their design provides what is needed by beneficiaries of different genders, thereby addressing (or at least not exacerbating) inequalities. (Gender Equality 101, CIWiL and ParlAmericas)

Intersectionality: analytical tool which recognises that the experience of systemic inequalities is shaped by overlapping social factors such as gender, race, and class. An individual's disadvantages and privileges in a given time and place therefore cannot be understood by examining elements of their identity in isolation. Rather, attention must be paid to the full set of power relations that impact them, including macro forces such as histories of colonisation and poverty, and micro forces such as an individual's health status and the structure of their family or community. (Intersectionality, ParlAmericas)

The consequences of corruption and weaknesses in accountability, transparency and access to information are experienced differently by individuals due to gender and various other identity factors.

If gaps in access to information and other inequalities are not considered when designing policy or accountability measures, these inequalities are likely to be exacerbated and those who are already disadvantaged will be further harmed. Situations of vulnerability or limited protections can also be purposefully exploited for corrupt or other criminal means. **Some examples include**:

▶ Lesser access to critical information for emergency preparedness is one of the reasons why the UNDP finds that, globally, women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men in the event of disasters.[15] Women are often poorer, have fewer assets and capital to be able to adapt to the changing climate and are more excluded from decision-making processes.

▶ Research by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other agencies has found that "trafficking in persons simply could not be perpetrated on a large scale without corruption."[16] UNODC highlights that, "[i]n 2022 alone, authorities across 25 countries in [Latin America and the Caribbean] reported about 4,300 victims of human trafficking to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime" and that, in Central America and the Caribbean, girls and women represented 52% and 30% of detected trafficking victims, respectively.[17]

▶ Transparency International reports that marginalised groups such as Indigenous peoples are more likely to be harmed by corruption and lack of accountability as they often bear the cost and losses attached to corrupt land grabbing in their associated territories.[18]

▶ Traditionally marginalised groups, and women in particular, are at greater risk of sextortion, which is a form of corruption that involves an implicit or explicit request to engage in any kind of unwanted sexual activity in exchange for exercising power entrusted to someone occupying a

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[15] [Gender, Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction](#), UNDP

[16] [Emerging Knowledge and Practice Regarding the Prevention of and Response to Corruption in the Context of Trafficking in Persons](#), Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Working Group on Trafficking in Persons, 2023

[17] "[How widespread are human trafficking and migrant smuggling in Latin America and the Caribbean? And other questions](#)," UNODC, webpage

[18] [Corruption and Marginalisation](#), Transparency International

position of authority.[19] Though sextortion can affect all socio-economic groups, the most vulnerable are poorer people and persons with limited legal protections.

On July 9, 2024, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago hosted a debate on sextortion by the 2024 cohort of Young Women Empowered to Serve (YES) Leadership Programme, organized by the Women Parliamentarians of Trinidad and Tobago caucus. Watch the YES Programme's simulated parliamentary sitting to learn more about this issue.

Strengthened accountability practices can help to ensure that work by the government and parliament to address the root causes of inequality is as effective as possible.

Without gender-responsive accountability, research shows that governments are less likely to allocate and spend resources to implement national gender equality laws and policies.[20]

▶ International commitments such as the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are invaluable instruments for guiding national-level action on gender equality issues. Some agreements, like CEDAW, are also legally binding for countries that have signed and ratified them, creating a legal obligation for their provisions to be implemented. Prioritising oversight over these agreements – and fulfilling accountability requirements around reporting – will aid in progress.

▶ Creating spaces for the voices of traditionally marginalised groups and underrepresented groups in decision making and accountability processes enriches related dialogues by broadening the perspectives and experiences considered. Proactively engaging women's organisations and other civil society actors in parliamentary work on any theme can support the development, implementation and oversight of legislative and other policy and program initiatives and the application of a gender-responsive, people-centred approach to these efforts.

▶ Implementing gender-responsive budgeting processes can support more effective and nuanced monitoring of resource allocation, fostering an understanding of who accesses and utilises services and the various ways decisions made by the government impact different people. This can, in turn, better aid in the resourcing of solutions that meet public need.

Attention to women's rights and the application of a gender lens strengthens the practice of accountability and anti-corruption work.

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[19] Breaking the Silence around Sextortion. The Links between Power, Sex and Corruption, Transparency International
[20] Strengthening Public Finance Management Systems for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Promising Practices and Remaining Gaps, UN Women

For instance, research has shown that higher levels of women's representation in parliaments and governmental organisations can lead to lower levels of corruption.[21]

At the same time, the prevalence of corrupt practices and institutions undermines women's participation in government. This provides another crucial reason for parliaments to take proactive steps in tackling corruption and strengthening accountability while considering how these agendas intersect with gender and other important social factors.

Promoting strong and inclusive accountability practices

Strengthening accountability in a way that is effective and inclusive – thereby supporting realisation of the countless governance and social benefits of this practice – is within the purview of all elected and appointed representatives and can be done at various levels within parliament and its work. **Some examples of relevant actions are provided below**, which relate both to parliament holding the government accountable and to parliament and its members being accountable to the public[22]:

At an institutional level

☑ Establish and/or strengthen regulations, guidelines and training to facilitate parliamentary oversight, ensuring that the mechanisms used for this purpose (parliamentary committees such as oversight or Public Accounts Committees, interpellation sessions, requests for reports, etc.) have clear objectives, are inclusive in terms of composition and public participation processes, and produce results that are useful for subsequent decision making.

   ☑ Ensure that capacity building initiatives cover the connections between gender equality and accountability, including the gendered impacts of weak accountability/transparency measures and corruption.

   ☑ Draw on the support of parliamentary organisations and other experts – including from civil society – where needed, to contribute to training initiatives for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff on inclusive and effective accountability practices and tools.

☑ Establish and/or strengthen tools or initiatives for the monitoring and evaluation of government actions and public policies, laws and commitments adopted both at the international and local level, including gender-sensitive indicators and information on their relevance to good governance, sustainable development and the realisation of human rights and gender equality goals.

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[21] Estimating Causal Relationships Between Women's Representation in Government and Corruption, Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer

[22] Many of these actions are drawn or adapted from the following ParlAmericas tools: Road Map Towards Legislative Openness 2.0 (2022) and Standards for Legislative Openness in the Work of Committees (2023)

☑ This can include promoting mechanisms and processes for post-legislative scrutiny to examine and determine if the legislation approved by parliament is being effectively implemented and achieves the expected results and outcomes according to the objectives established by the laws. The Principles of Post-Legislative Scrutiny by Parliaments of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy can be a helpful tool for this work; point 7 of which discusses the connections to gender equality and human rights.

> **Examples of international agreements and frameworks to support or provide oversight on include:**
>
> ✓ 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda
> ✓ The Paris Agreement
> ✓ The Escazú Agreement
> ✓ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
> ✓ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
> ✓ Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Para Convention)
> ✓ Follow-up Mechanism for the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption
> ✓ The SAMOA Pathway
> ✓ Summit of the Americas mandates
> ✓ Open Government Partnership commitments
> ✓ Other frameworks on national priority themes, such as migration, security, health, education, etc.

☑ Incorporate and/or strengthen legislation and policies to ensure proactive access to information during the budgeting process, including the publication of budget proposals from the executive branch and other supporting documents submitted to parliament like reports, presentations, gender-based analyses and information on debates carried out in committee and plenary sessions.

☑ Publicly disclose the measures, programs, policies and practices in place to promote gender equality and inclusion within parliament both as a workplace and as a decision-making body representative of a diverse population.

  ☑ This could include, for example, sharing measures to improve the accessibility and family-friendly nature of parliament to better ensure the parliamentary precinct meets the different needs of staff, parliamentarians, and visitors. It could also include sharing the types of actions employed by committees and parliamentarians to assess the gender sensitivity of specific bills.

☑ Host forums, consultations, dialogues and other activities with women's organisations and other civil society actors to identify pressing issues, receive feedback on policy proposals and collaborate on initiatives that promote gender equality and inclusive approaches to topics of legislative work – especially when issues of focus are not traditionally seen as gender issues.

☑ Incorporate, within communication and active transparency strategies, information related to the historical participation of women and marginalised/under-represented groups within the parliament's membership and in parliamentary leadership positions.

☑ Promote regulations that compel parliamentarians to inform the public about their activities, including a specific component of the work they do in relation to gender equality and promoting sustainable development.

☑ Support the development and work of gender equality/human rights committees and/or parliamentary women's or gender equality caucuses to ensure a specific body is focused on advocating for or advancing legislative work on key gender equality issues.

☑ Publish the parliament's policies on the procurement of goods and services and provide full access to procurement information, from planning to implementation.

  ☑ Review procurement policies and data collection systems for their capacity to support gender-responsive procurement, recognising the power of procurement processes to empower women and grow the economy. Good practices include diversifying suppliers and reducing barriers for women-owned businesses to compete for contracts.

☑ Facilitate and make available a registry of parliamentary staff, including advisers to parliamentary offices, committees and decision making bodies, with up-to-date contact details.

☑ Implement gender-sensitive reporting mechanisms and whistleblower protections to ensure that existing/new channels to report corruption account for how women and marginalized groups can be particularly discouraged/wary of making formal complaints.

☑ Enable/call for equitable participation by women and other marginalised groups in anti-corruption bodies and other oversight institutions.

> **Examples of institutional accountability mechanisms**
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> ✓ **Regional**: Convene and participate in activities on <u>gender-sensitive parliaments</u> and parliamentary oversight, including the participation of civil society actors.
>   - o Learn more: Agenda for the Caribbean parliamentary meeting "Making the Work of Parliaments Responsive to the Needs of Women and Men"
> ✓ **Young Women in Leadership programming**
>   - o Learn more: <u>YWiL Country Reports</u>
> ✓ **Women Parliamentary Caucuses**
>   - o Learn more: Multi-party Caucuses for Gender Equality A Handbook for Parliamentarians in Latin America and the Caribbean, ParlAmericas
> ✓ **Trinidad and Tobago**: Publication of reports on gender equality-related work by parliamentary actors
>   - o Learn more: <u>Trinidad and Tobago Delegation Report- Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Gender Equality and Sustainable Development</u>
> ✓ **Grenada**: <u>Gender Budget Statement 2023</u>
> ✓ **Canada**: <u>Gender Based Analysis Plus</u>
> ✓ **Canada**: <u>Gender Budgeting Act</u>
> ✓ **Canada**: <u>Gender Results Framework</u>

At a committee level

☑ Collaborate with women's organisations and other civil society actors, including academics, the private sector and journalists, to contribute to evidence-based oversight work that draws on diverse perspectives, as well as other committees, parliamentary staff and/or government actors.

☑ Conduct gender analysis on legislative issues and resource use related to the priority thematic areas of the committee (even if not traditionally seen as a gender issue), including through consultations with women's organisations and other experts, and generate reports of the results.

☑ Consider relevant international frameworks and standards on gender equality, good governance and sustainable development that are relevant to issues of focus in the committee work and assess how actions proposed or being taken are contributing to the achievement of these agreements.

☑ Publish comprehensive information regarding the committee, including the meeting schedule, its composition (including gender balance) and details of the experts and organisations consulted over time, among other details.

☑ Communicate with the public about the committee's work and specific areas of attention in oversight actions, highlighting the ways in which attention was given to the differential impacts

of issues on different members of the population and to contributing to gender equality and sustainable development.

☑ Proactively disclose the resource allocations to the committee and how these are used (for example: the funds spent on committee activities, consultancies, reports and studies, among others).

☑ Proactively provide information about the staff assigned to the committee and their institutional contact information.

☑ Advocate for, support or make use of tools and mechanisms discussed under the institutional-level section of this document.

Examples of accountability actions by committees

✓ **Belize**: Women's Parliamentarians Caucus issued a press release on discriminatory and offensive language:
  o Learn More: Women Parliamentarians Caucus Speaks Out
✓ **Trinidad and Tobago**: Publication of committee reports and ministerial responses by the Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity
  o Learn more: Reports webpage for the Committee on Human Rights , Equality and Diversity
✓ **Trinidad and Tobago**: Invitation of stakeholders and civil society organisation to contribute to the Special Selection Committee on Sexual Offences Amendment (No.3) Bill
  o Learn more: 5th Meeting - SSC on The Sexual Offences (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill, 2021 - February 11, 2022
✓ **Jamaica**: Public Consultation on Sexual Harassment- Joint Select Committee on The Sexual Harassment Act, 2020
  o Learn more: Cabinet to Receive Recommendations for Sexual Harassment Tribunal Membership and Public feedback on anti-sexual harassment bill

✓ **Antigua and Barbuda**: Legislative workshop by Antigua and Barbuda Parliament Gender Caucus in partnership with Women Against Rape (WAR Inc)
  o Learn more: The Antigua and Barbuda Network of Women Parliamentarians (Parliament Gender Caucus) hosted a workshop in partnership with Women Against Rape (WAR Inc) to review legislation in Antigua and Barbuda that affects women.
✓ **Canada**: Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on Preventing Human Trafficking
  o Learn more: Committee Report- Act Now: Preventing Human Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People in Canada

At an individual level

☑ Proactively communicate with citizens on legislation introduced and/or supported, committee work, constituent initiatives supported and/or other actions taken within the parliamentary term that are related to gender equality and sustainable development through performance reports, social media, public forums and/or other means.

☑ Conduct town hall meetings with constituents, women's organisations and other actors to provide information about proposed legislation, the political oversight actions undertaken, gender-focused budget analyses conducted, among other topics.

☑ Attend and actively participate in community forums organised by constituents and community organisations to listen to the concerns and opinions of constituents.

☑ Actively participate in gender committees (where these exist) and advocate for impartial investigations of potential government irregularities, with a specific focus on gender-related issues such as gender-based violence and discrimination.

☑ Advocate that all committees– regardless of their thematic area or the specific issue of attention – consult with women's organisations and gender experts on a regular basis.

☑ Ask questions in parliament about how diverse perspectives and experiences were sought out in the preparation of different legislative initiatives, the budget, etc. including who was consulted, what kinds of data were used and who was involved in review processes. Questions can also be posed about implementation plans and the resources allocated to support this.

☑ Offer interventions in parliament and in the media on gender equality topics that are affecting constituents.

☑ Meet with responsible ministers and other responsible authorities to ask questions about the implementation of key international frameworks on gender equality, sustainable development and good governance to support this oversight work and assess opportunities to support in any areas where there are gaps.

☑ Advocate with parliamentary officials for the implementation of actions referenced under the institutional and committee-level sections of this document.

> **For more information on strengthening accountability practices in parliament, please see the following ParlAmericas resources**
>
> ✓ [Road Map Towards Legislative Openness 2.0](#) (2022)
> ✓ [Strengthening Accountability through Fiscal Openness: A Toolkit for Parliamentarians in the Americas and the Caribbean](#), published with GIFT and the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (2020)
> ✓ [Standards for Legislative Openness in Committee Work](#) (2023)
> ✓ The ParlAmericas [Open Parliament Commitment Tool](#) can be filtered to view parliamentary commitments to strengthen accountability practices

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