



2ND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION CO-CREATION MEETING

#ParlAmericasOPN

This ParlAmericas co-creation meeting, hosted by the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, drew from the exchanges that took place during the 2nd Gathering of the Open Parliament Network held in Costa Rica and the 1st Co-Creation Meeting held in Colombia, in March and April respectively. The meeting aimed to provide further input to develop a toolkit compiling current trends and practices related to citizen participation in the legislative process, with the intent to stimulate and guide discussions for the development of citizen participation strategies.

The meeting began with words of welcome from Member of Parliament **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and ParlAmericas Board Member, and it was facilitated by **Alisha Todd**, ParlAmericas Director General.

THEME

Citizen Participation

LOCATION

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

DATE

September 7, 2017

PARTICIPANTS

24 parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and civil society representatives from 11 countries



Member of
Parliament **BRIDGID
ANNISETTE-GEORGE**
(Trinidad and
Tobago), Speaker of
the House of
Representatives and
ParlAmericas Board
Member

"In parliamentary democracies, citizens rely on parliaments to advance their interests, and parliament in turn relies on the citizenry for its legitimacy. Therefore, trust and confidence in parliament are elementary ingredients for the strengthening and the deepening of our democracies. Citizens across the world have been asking for opportunities to exercise their democratic rights to participate in the governance decisions that affect them, beyond the election of parliamentary representatives... We shall be invited today to review the work done thus far [to create a citizen participation toolkit] but more so to advance the work and identify actions that can be taken to overcome challenges and mitigate risks."

Educating Citizens and Promoting Participation

Citizens' expectations of legislatures and legislators often fall outside of their functions and authority, which can hamper the effectiveness of citizen participation processes. To help overcome this challenge, parliaments and parliamentarians can undertake efforts to educate citizens on its role, the functions of legislators, their achievements and impact on citizens' lives. This creates a foundation for citizens' participation to be effective. Going further, parliaments and

parliamentarians can also undertake efforts to raise citizens' awareness of participation opportunities and provide incentives to encourage citizens to participate in legislative processes. In this session, parliamentarians and civil society representatives shared initiatives they are undertaking to both educate citizens and promote their participation in the legislative process.

CARO LOUTFI, Executive Director of Apathy is Boring in Canada, discussed the need to acknowledge that we often



group individuals with varied interests together which can render outreach strategies less effective. She explained the benefits of examining the motivations and interests of target constituencies more closely in order to better tailor engagement strategies to reach these “sub-groups” more effectively. For example, through research Apathy is Boring has identified six sub-groupings of Canadian youth in terms of motivation for political engagement.



Lone Wolves (16%) are the least established and not engaged in their communities.



Engaged Idealists (17%) are the most socially connected and keen to make a contribution to society.



Critical Counterculturists (4%) take a questioning stance on status quo and authority.



New Traditionalists (11%) see traditional values and religion as important guideposts.



Diverse Strivers (20%) are focused on career path but also active in their communities.



Bros & Brittanys (32%) are the ‘average’ millennial and focus on financial stability and having a good time. They are not engaged in their communities or voting.



Professor **ROSALEA HAMILTON**, Board Member of National Integrity Action in Jamaica shared the following initiatives undertaken by this organization to promote citizen participation in the legislative process:

- ⇒ **Town hall meetings** to raise public awareness and a **petition** to urge action on local governance reform
- ⇒ Civic responsibility and advocacy **training workshops** translating legislative issues into everyday impact for citizens and providing them with the tools needed to advocate for change
- ⇒ **Integrity clubs** in secondary schools and a **youth ambassador program** to foster political leadership and develop community engagement in youth
- ⇒ **Participatory budgeting activities** through the **Institute of Law and Economics**, an NGO that developed [Jamaica's Citizens' Budget and Guide](#) which provides guidance to read the national budget and understand how local expenditures are integrated



Senator **MAURICIA THOMAS-FRANCIS** (Saint Lucia) presented the Parliament of Saint Lucia's initiative for public engagement and sensitization relative to the business of Parliament, which includes the following activities:

- ⇒ Annual youth parliament
- ⇒ Attendance of secondary school students at parliamentary sittings
- ⇒ Presentation of the constitution and parliamentary standing orders during the Annual Reading Month
- ⇒ Essay and debate competition
- ⇒ Adopt -a- school program
- ⇒ Walk with your parliamentarian
- ⇒ Rotating trophy for the song which most aptly and significantly promotes democracy
- ⇒ Outreach program including a Secondary School Road Show

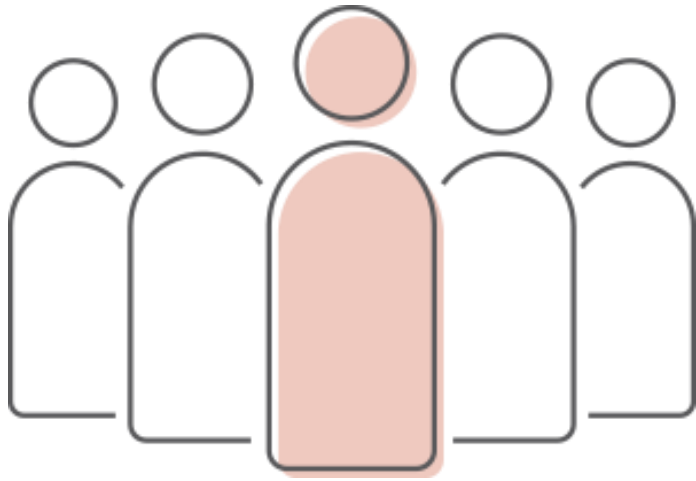


JASON ELCOCK, Manager of Corporate Communications at the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago shared the following tools applied by the parliament to educate citizens and promote their participation in the legislative process:

- ⇒ Fact Sheets
- ⇒ Children's Activity Book and Comic Book
- ⇒ ParlNews, a weekly newspaper column (discontinued)
- ⇒ ParlBuzz, an internal quarterly e-magazine
- ⇒ Cross Talk, a quarterly corporate magazine
- ⇒ Public tours of the Chamber
- ⇒ Annual Open Week
- ⇒ Parliament TV Channel
- ⇒ In house video productions
- ⇒ School outreach
- ⇒ Public outreach in a Parliament Caravan
- ⇒ Social media:
 - ◇ Facebook: /ttparliament / ttyouthparliament
 - ◇ Twitter: @ttparliament
 - ◇ Instagram: /ttparliament1
 - ◇ YouTube: /ttparliament /parlview
 - ◇ Google+: /+ttparliament

For any information related to the work of the OPN, contact the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Program: parlamericasopn@parlamericas.org

Opportunities for Citizen Participation

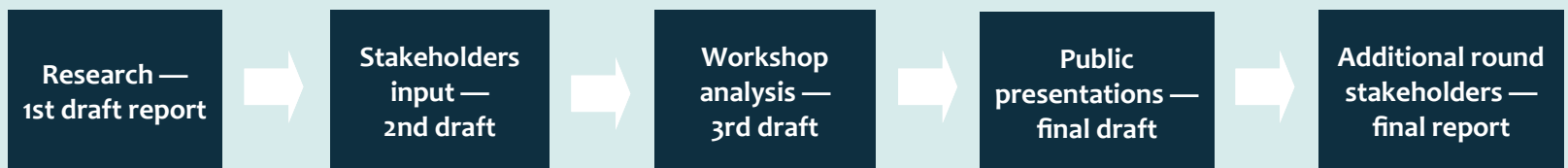


Opportunities for citizens to participate in the legislative process are most commonly presented in the form of citizen petitions that contribute to agenda setting, witnesses in committee meetings that contribute to studies, development of content or review of a bill, and through citizens' relationship with their representative. While in-person mechanisms for citizen participation

are most common in the Caribbean, the rise of digital tools and social media are also presenting new opportunities or ways for the public to be engaged, adding to traditional practices. In this session, parliamentarians and civil society representatives shared initiatives they are undertaking to allow citizens to participate in the legislative process.



SHARDA GANGA, Director of Projekta in Suriname discussed the engagement of citizens in monitoring public policies through its Citizen Initiative for Participation and Good Governance. A multi-stakeholder participatory process was established to monitor the implementation of various policy promises to determine their outcomes and impacts.





LEMARQUE CAMPBELL, Chairman of Citizens for a Better Bahamas, presented a civil society led initiative, integrating collaboration with government, to engage citizens to improve the Freedom of Information bill prior to its debate in parliament.

- ⇒ Formed a coalition of civil society organizations and experts, including social scientists and community activists to review the bill and develop a list of 20 recommendations for its enhancement
- ⇒ Undertook an awareness-raising campaign by speaking in the media to explain the bill and its impact on the day to day lives of citizens to make it relatable
- ⇒ Held a series of town hall meeting with over 200 attendees (as a result of the awareness-raising campaign), where both government and civil society joined hands to discuss recommendations on how to improve the bill with citizens, adding another 30 recommendations
- ⇒ Recommendations were provided to the Minister of Education, and were considered by cabinet



Senator **ANDRE WORRELL** (Barbados) explained the current mechanisms made available by the Parliament of Barbados to allow citizens to participate in the legislative process:

- ⇒ Attendance at plenary sessions
- ⇒ Live streaming and radio broadcast of parliamentary sessions
- ⇒ Pilot forum on the website where citizens could comment on the prevention of corruption bill
- ⇒ Radio call-in programs where citizens provide their feedback and parliamentarians actively listen
- ⇒ Political party constituency branches' monthly meetings
- ⇒ Town hall meetings hosted by parliamentarians for constituents
- ⇒ Stakeholder meetings hosted by government to draft legislation
- ⇒ Town hall meetings hosted by government to allow broader input to draft legislation
- ⇒ Youth parliament, including training and workshops

Through the ensuing question and answer period participants identified the role of the constituency office as an important space for citizen outreach. Challenges related to resource allocation, remote constituencies and partisanship were discussed. Mitigation strategies for some of these challenges were explored including the concept of “pop-up” constituency offices and the example of parliamentary mandated non-partisan look and feel of constituency offices, currently in practice in Trinidad and Tobago, to promote the constituency office space as an extension of the parliament and not the political party. It was agreed that greater consideration for the use of constituency offices as a means to engage citizens should be included in the citizen participation toolkit under discussion.

Mitigating Challenges to Citizen Participation

Participants recognized that there are risks and challenges to implementing effective citizen participation opportunities within the legislative process. During the last session, they worked together to

identify potential mitigation solutions to the most common challenges identified by participants in the 1st Co-Creation Meeting.

BUILDING WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE	PROMOTING A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE WITH CIVIL SOCIETY	ENSURING EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY IN PARTICIPATION	RECONCILING VARIOUS INTERESTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Outreach to citizens ⇒ Clear demonstration that citizens' input matters and is reflected in the outcome ⇒ Presentation of information in a way that is relevant to citizens' frame of reference, translation of complex legislative nuances to their language ⇒ Strong educational system that promotes active civic-minded citizens ⇒ Integration of citizen participation practices in parliamentary standing orders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Registry of civil society organizations with requirement for independence and non-partisanship ⇒ Budgetary support for civil society organizations that meet registry criteria ⇒ Witness testimonies by civil society organizations to parliamentary committees on issues in which they have expertise ⇒ Workshops for parliamentarians organized by civil society organisations on issues in which they have expertise ⇒ Process to invite questions from civil society to be addressed in parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Representation of marginalized voices through the Senate, particularly in parliamentary systems where senators do not need to campaign for majority votes to maintain their seat, more time can be dedicated to marginalized groups and the respect of all rights ⇒ Identification of appropriate participation channels for different stakeholder groups ⇒ Respect of international charter on rights and freedoms ⇒ Integration of civil society and citizens in the design of a citizen participation strategy to create an equilibrium, recognizing that the convening organization holds the power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Acknowledgement, openness and honesty about conflicting interests, allowing a thorough exploration of all arguments ⇒ Education of citizens on all arguments presented as going against the party line can play against parliamentarians in the public eye ⇒ Adopting measures to provide a certain level of anonymity for citizens who fear repercussion from their participation, such as secret ballots or digital tools

Next Steps

September 25 to October 8, 2017
Online Consultation and Validation Process



October 8 to 18, 2017
Updating the Working Document and Final Review by the OPN Executive Committee



October 19 to November 15, 2017
Designing the Toolkit Publication



November 21-22, 2017
Launch of the Toolkit at the [Open Government Partnership's Regional Gathering of the Americas](#) in Buenos Aires, Argentina

PARLIAMENTS IN ATTENDANCE



BARBADOS



BELIZE



GRENADA



GUYANA



JAMAICA



SAINT LUCIA



SAINT VINCENT
AND THE
GRENADINES



SURINAME



TRINIDAD AND
TOBAGO

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS



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PARLAMERICAS



ParlAmericas is the institution that promotes **PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY** in the **INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM**



ParlAmericas is composed of the **NATIONAL LEGISLATURES** of the member States of the OAS from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean



ParlAmericas facilitates the exchange of parliamentary **BEST PRACTICES** and promotes **COOPERATIVE POLITICAL DIALOGUE**



ParlAmericas mainstreams **GENDER EQUALITY** by advocating for women's political empowerment and the application of a gender lens in legislative work



ParlAmericas fosters **OPEN PARLIAMENTS** by advancing the principles of transparency, accountability, citizen participation, ethics and probity



ParlAmericas promotes policies and legislative measures to mitigate and adapt to the effects of **CLIMATE CHANGE**



ParlAmericas works towards strengthening democracy and governance by accompanying **ELECTORAL PROCESSES**



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