Helpdesk Research Report: Cross-party Caucuses
08/05/09

Query: What is the international experience in cross-party caucuses in Parliament, especially those of marginalised communities? How do cross-party parliamentary forums/caucuses work in other countries and what lessons do they have to offer?

Enquirer: DFID Nepal

Contents

1. Overview

The majority of the information available on party caucuses focuses on women's initiatives – there is very little information available on cross party caucusing around regional, ethnic or other interests. This emphasis on women's caucuses may be in response to the increasing numbers of women in parliaments and concerns about the quality of their participation in the political process.

Caucuses are widely believed to be important forums for bringing parliamentarians together across political party lines – so that they may share information, discuss policy issues, channel common interests and concerns, and engage civil society. Many commentators highlight how women's caucuses in South Africa and Rwanda, for example, have been successful at influencing parliamentary or legislative activities and providing oversight. Some women's caucuses have been noted for their unique approach towards fostering good governance. The Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians (FFRP), for example, adopts a consultative and collaborative approach and has taken a strategic decision to involve constituents, civil society and male colleagues in the process of lobbying for legislative change. In some conflict contexts, caucuses have also proven useful in forging regional identities that cut across ideological and party lines.

Caucuses can undertake several functions. These may include:

 ➢ Influencing government and political processes by helping to shape the agenda and by providing information and advocacy;
 ➢ Raising awareness of an issue by acting as a catalyst for communication on certain issues between government and civil society, and by providing information and advocacy;
 ➢ Acting as a watchdog for certain issues by ensuring that concerned individuals and groups are aware when relevant legislation is up for review;
 ➢ Providing a platform for members of caucuses to act as spokespeople for their issues, thereby streamlining information and raising awareness;
 ➢ Providing oversight of the budget;
 ➢ Promoting the legislative implications of international human rights instruments;

- Initiating gender-based or minority legislation; and
- Ensuring relevant legislation is enforced.

However, various barriers to their effective functioning also exist. For example, in some cases party systems may discourage working across party lines, and the advocacy efforts of minority caucuses may only be heard if they are consistent with the ruling party's own priorities. Lack of basic administrative support can also be a barrier. Some commentators are also concerned about the potential of cross-party caucuses to disrupt political processes. For example, in systems with strong parties, they may challenge the party rule in parliament and disrupt party discipline and cohesiveness by constantly advocating for marginalised communities. It may be, they argue, that the interests of marginalised communities may be better achieved through other mechanisms.

There seems to be limited documentation on international experience with caucuses. However, the literature below highlights some models of cross- and single-party caucuses in different countries. The lessons learned from these case studies include:

- Caucuses have to address tendencies of the majority-group leadership of the various political parties to inject partisan politics into caucus work. It is important therefore to have a limited and well-articulated agenda, one without issues that will cause cross-party disputes and covering only those issues that are of common interest to all involved political groupings. Non-partisan leadership of these caucuses can be difficult to achieve, but is essential.
- The very fact that parliamentarians have organised around a particular issue in the form of a caucus increases visibility and legitimacy.
- The caucus provides support to its group; informally in terms of friendship - but also in terms of formal mentors, training and capacity building. With this support and training, it can strengthen the confidence of the group to act/legislate. This confidence-building is particularly important in conflict contexts.
- Minority interests are rarely monolithic and even where priority interests are agreed, it is often difficult for caucus members to agree on the best way of addressing them.
- In the US, even though representatives of the minority party have no control over the agenda, they are still able to use their voice to introduce ideas and concerns into the legislative process. Even if they are unable to achieve the outcome they are seeking, it remains important to have their voice included in the process.
- Minority representatives must often balance many competing interests as minority legislators inside majority institutions. In the United States, black legislators are expected to advocate for black community concerns without alienating white colleagues, white constituents, and being essentialised as representing only black interest policies.
- In some contexts, attempts to create a multi-party forum, such as for women MPs in South Africa, have floundered. This was because of a combination of factors, including distrust between the parties, administrative and financial barriers and lack of support from majority leaderships. As a result, in South Africa, it has been single party caucuses, such as the ANC Women's Caucus, that have more effective in efforts to eliminate gender discrimination.
- Caucuses facilitate communication within parties and within regions. The experience in Bosnia and Uganda shows however, that they cannot in themselves overcome problems of inter-regional cleavages and might even cement these differences.
- Minority parliamentarians, and through them, their caucuses need technical support. In some case, activities to strengthen party caucuses in the legislature can mirror those that strengthen legislative committees. Care should be taken to be as inclusive among the parties as possible. In terms of work with women parliamentarians, activities can include conducting research to inform legislative priorities; clarifying the separation of powers and the roles, responsibilities, and opportunities of legislators; teaching skills such as public speaking and lobbyin; and encouraging women to run for office and providing campaign strategies and related skills and knowledge.

Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008, 'Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments', Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva
http://www.ipu.org/english/surveys.htm#equality08

This study, based on an extensive international survey of parliamentarians, briefly discusses experience with women's caucuses, with examples from Rwanda, Kenya and Namibia. Of the 77 parliaments for which the survey collected data, just under half reported the existence of a women's caucus (p. 80). These are important forums for bringing women together across political party lines, both to channel the interests and concerns of women, and to engage civil society. A majority (61 percent) of the survey's respondents believe that women's caucuses have been successful at influencing parliamentary or legislative activities and providing oversight.

Caucuses undertake several functions. In Namibia, the Women's caucus addresses: (1) the budget; (2) the legislative implications of CEDAW; (3) ensuring people understand their rights; and (4) ensuring all acts are enforced. The caucus may also come up with motions and issue collective statements on behalf of women where necessary. In Kenya, if a bill of interest to women is tabled, the women's caucus usually has a workshop to examine it (sometimes donor-organized). But because there are only 18 women parliamentarians, and some of them are ministers or have other responsibilities, this is not always possible.

Whilst women's caucuses have for the most part been successful in uniting women across party lines, in some cases (e.g. Cambodia) party systems may hinder or actively discourage working across party lines. Lack of basic administrative support can also be a barrier: "In many instances, women's caucuses do not receive parliamentary support, such as financial resources, support services or even the office and meeting spaces needed to organize their work. Meeting arrangements can be difficult and must be organized around the formal business of the parliament." (p.80)

The report discusses the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians (FFRP) in more detail. This forum has been working since the 2003 election to revise existing discriminatory laws, and pushed for the inclusion of a gender perspective in new laws. In 2005, it adopted a new five-year strategic plan in support of its strategic goal of developing "policies, laws, programs, and practices [that ensure] equality between men and women and gender equity". The strategic plan addresses four priority areas: building the institutional and organisational capacity of the FFRP; enhancing gender equality within the parliament; initiating gender-sensitive laws; and improving gender-based governmental oversight.

'The hallmark of the FFRP's legislative process is a consultative and collaborative approach and its strategic decision to involve constituents, civil society and male colleagues in the process' (p.63). For example, the FFRP recently lead the development of a bill to combat gender-based violence (GBV), introduced in parliament in August 2006. This legislative campaign was highly coordinated with representatives of civil society. It also involved collaboration with men: 'The primary method the FFRP used to enlist men's support was inviting the involvement of male colleagues at every stage of the policy-making process, and asking key male allies to play leadership roles. The FFRP made the strategic decision to share early drafts with male colleagues, to ensure that men felt included rather than alienated by the introduction of the bill, and to enlist men in sponsoring the bill, which proved effective.' (p. 82)

Crucially, 'the FFRP first considered GBV legislation when the caucus was founded in 1996, but it did not have the capacity to undertake the project for another 10 years, until women reached critical mass and the FFRP had become an effective institution in parliament' (p.82). Women have increasingly been able to assert their legislative agenda as their numbers have grown, and as the FFRP has matured.

National Democratic Institute, 2008, 'Women's Caucus Fact Sheet', NDI, New York
http://www.iknowpolitics.org/files/NDI-Womens%20Caucus%20Fact%20Sheet_0.pdf

This briefing note describes the activities, governance and impact of women's caucuses, based on National Democratic Institute's experience in supporting them. It argues 'women who are organized into a caucus can serve the same purpose as a "critical mass" of women, even where women do not make up a significant a portion of the legislature' (p.1).

'Caucuses are able to extend influence over several realms simultaneously:

> ➢ They impact the government and political process by helping to shape the agenda and by providing information and advocacy
> ➢ They impact the constituency by raising awareness about an issue, by acting as catalyst for communication on certain issues between government and civil society, and by providing information and advocacy
> ➢ They act as a watchdog for certain issues by ensuring that concerned individuals and groups are aware when relevant legislation is up for review
> ➢ Members of caucuses often become the spokespeople for their issues, thereby streamlining information and raising awareness.' (p.1)

A number of different models and structures of women's caucuses can be used to best suit the local political context:

> ➢ 'The Rwandan Women Parliamentary Forum has five governing structures: *The General Assembly* is the highest body and its membership includes all members of the forum. The *Executive Committee* has nine members and is in charge of the management of the forum. The third governing structure is the *Standing Committees*. There are five committees: Women capacity-building and empowerment; Partnership and advocacy; Gender and legislation; Monitoring of policies, gender strategies and budgets; and Research, documentation and ICT. The fourth structure is the *Audit Committee,* composed of three members who are in charge of the forum's accounts, ensuring that the General Assembly's resolutions are implemented and the resolution of conflicts that may arise in the forum. The last governing structure is the *Executive Secretary,* which is in charge of the forum's daily management'.
> ➢ 'In Malawi, the caucus meets at least once per session on the first Wednesday of each session. Additional sessions can be called by the caucus chair. Out of session meetings can be called by the Chair in consultation with other members. With assistance from NDI in finalizing its structure the caucus polled its members on potential priority areas. The resulting priority areas were: Widow & Inheritance, Custody & Maintenance of Children, Citizenship, Marriage and Divorce. Having priority areas allowed the caucus to focus its efforts on the issues that the membership felt was important. This allowed the group to move forward with consensus'.

Some noteworthy achievements of women's caucuses around the world include:

> ➢ 'The Uganda Women Parliamentarians Association was instrumental to lobbying for gender equality clauses in the Ugandan Constitution, including provisions on non-discrimination on the basis of sex, equal opportunities for women, a quota for women of 1/3 for local government seats, and the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Commission'.
> ➢ 'In Afghanistan, the Network of Women Parliamentarians and Civil Society through their aggressive lobbying campaign prevented the abolishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs'.
> ➢ 'The Indonesian Women's Political Caucus (KPPI) working with women's NGOs succeeded in getting a quota passed into the election law starting with the 2004 legislative elections. This caucus is actually a multi-party organization that includes female politicians, civic organizations and trade unions that works with the Indonesian Women's Parliamentary Caucus for increasing women's effective engagement in politics'.
> ➢ 'In Brazil, the women's caucus votes as a bloc. This has allowed them to pass a quota law and a law on violence against women. In addition to promoting bills important to the caucus, this caucus mobilizes to assure that the Brazilian budget includes funding

for social programs and gender equality initiatives. The caucus was also instrumental in assuring that the Brazilian constitution of 1988 included women's rights, a clause known as the "lipstick clause" due to their hard work' (p.3).

Ballington, J., and Karam, A., 2005, 'Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers', International IDEA, Stockholm
http://www.idea.int/publications/wip2/upload/WiP_inlay.pdf#page=228

This report advocates the case for women's caucuses, arguing that women should organise both inside and outside political parties. 'The strength of newly-elected women legislators can lie in their solidarity and capacity to unite, beyond their party structures, to tackle specific gender issues' (p. 227). Within political parties, where women commonly do a considerable amount of the essential party work, a women's caucus can lobby for improved representation. Caucusing also allows women to share information, ideas, resources and support. It is 'part of both learning and using the rules' (p. 198). MPs interested in a particular issue might meet to identify important upcoming votes and committee discussions and decide on tactics and strategies to influence the outcome. Being organised, the report argues, increases visibility and legitimacy.

IPU, 2007, 'One-day parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women: Beijing+10', Inter-Parliamentary Union
http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/csw49/report.pdf

This paper briefly discusses the experience of women's caucuses in Uganda, Kenya and Botswana: 'Uganda pioneered a non-partisan women's caucus in 1994/95, when the country was drafting a new constitution, and the experiment was very successful. However, the conditions were very specific to the making of a new constitution. Similar experiences have been seen in Kenya and in Botswana. But outside such special circumstances, there is a temptation for the ruling party to dominate the caucus, making the opposition parties suspicious and less interested in participating. Thus the precondition for successful use of this strategy is gender sensitivity on the part of party leaders, to allow and encourage the women of their parties to join a cross-party caucus. Also important is to have a limited and well-articulated gender agenda, one without issues that will cause cross-party disputes and covering only those issues that are of common interest to all involved political groupings. Non-partisan leadership of these caucuses, which can be difficult to achieve, is essential and leaders who are committed gender activists have the greatest chance to succeed.' (p. 9)

Waylen, G., 2008, 'Enhancing the Substantive Representation of Women: Lessons from Transitions to Democracy', Parliamentary Affairs, Volume 61, Number 3, pp. 518-534
http://pa.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/gsn013v1

This article considers how far the substantive political representation of women has been enhanced during democratization processes. It assesses when women actors have been able to articulate gender issues, place them on the political agenda and then translate them into positive gender outcomes during transitions.

Within the case study countries, the author finds that a crossparty organising among female legislators has taken a variety of forms. The form that it takes can be the result of several factors, namely whether it is organising on an issue-by-issue basis or into a more formal women legislators' block or grouping. Firstly, the character of the party system and the strength of party discipline are important. Women's cross-party organising can be easier in contexts where parties' systems are fractured and party discipline is weak. "A bancada femenina has therefore been possible in Brazil, facilitated by low party discipline and a multiplicity of parties, in ways that proved problematic in cases with higher levels of party discipline such as in both South Africa and Poland. A Women's Parliamentary Group (WPG) was founded in 1991 in Poland. Women of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), which included reformed communists and the more right-wing Democratic Union, were the most active within it. The WPG campaigned around issues of family welfare, divorce and abortion law reform within parliament and tried to set up links with wider networks of women outside of parliament. However Siemienska reports that when the WPG developed a joint position on an issue,

problems with agreeing strategy and tactics often followed […] The impact of relatively strong party discipline can also be discerned in South Africa. Attempts to set up a multi-party women's caucus, the WPG, early on in the South African parliament were not very successful. The WPG did not have the support of the minority parties—the leadership of the National Party was opposed to it and it was seen as an ANC front. Racial, class and ideological divisions have been seen as more salient for women legislators than any unity gained through shared interests as women in South Africa." (p. 521)

Even so, the author finds evidence that organising among women legislators has often been more successful on a case-by-case basis and in certain issues. So for example, while cross-party organising has often proved problematic around reproductive rights, particularly abortion, women from left-wing and right-wing parties have often been able to form alliances around less contentious issues such as child maintenance, quotas and even domestic violence.

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3. Case studies

Uganda

Benigna, M., 2007, 'Alliances for Gender and Politics: The Uganda Women's Caucus', Chapter 7 in Women's Political Participation and Good Governance: 21st Century Challenges
http://www.iknowpolitics.org/files/Women%20Political%20Participation%20-%2021%20century%20challenges.pdf

This chapter describes the formation of a 'Women's Caucus' by the women delegates elected to Uganda's Constituent Assembly in 1994, as a way of increasing their political clout and broadening the support base for women's issues. The caucus also developed a series of strategic alliances, joining with representatives of youth, workers, and disabled persons' delegates, establishing an alliance known formally as "The Constituent Assembly Women's Caucus, Working with Youth, Workers, and People with Disabilities (PWD)." The Caucus was strictly non-partisan in nature and took positions only on issues of fundamental importance to women, youth or the disabled. In addition, membership was voluntary and informal.

As the work of the Constituent Assembly progressed, Caucus members identified certain issues that were of fundamental importance to their interests, including using gender-neutral terminology throughout the Constitution and framing a constitutional provision that specifically declared equality between men and women under the law. To ensure that these and other similar principles were included in the new Constitution, the Caucus held a series of "Gender Dialogues," to which they invited men and other non-caucus members who were experts on a particular issue. Whenever a position was taken in the Dialogue, a brochure was issued to all the Assembly delegates to inform them and lobby them for support. The report argues that these Gender Dialogues were a basic and successful tool for building consensus.

Amongst the lessons learned were:

➢ The leadership's insistence on a non-partisan approach was not an easy task, as many Caucus members were attached to political parties whose male leadership tried to inject partisan politics into Caucus work. The Caucus leadership found that constantly identifying and articulating its common agenda helped to counter these tendencies, as well as to remind members not to attempt to press other on issues that could not win consensus. When issues proved potentially divisive, the Caucus opted not to take a public stance rather than jeopardise its unity.
➢ Caucus leaders found that moving cautiously and thereby avoiding mistakes was a key to effective political action. They also discovered that Caucus activities were most effective when they had a high profile and were enjoyable. Most politicians benefit from publicity and this is no less true for women, particularly those who may be less known at the national level. Thus an activity that offered both favourable publicity and a degree of relaxation was a welcome break for the parliamentarians. It helped the Caucus function as a unified group.
➢ After the completion of the Constituent Assembly, the Caucus members and others formed a new organisation, Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), which is

now a registered NGO. FOWODE's aim is to provide support and training for women and other marginalised groups as they seek to become involved in decision-making positions. The Forum has provided training services to women parliamentarians and activists in several Sub-Saharan countries including Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia. Uganda's example of forming and sustaining a women's caucus has contributed to the establishment of comparable groups in these countries.

United States

Gamble, K. L., 2009, 'Incorporation and Representation: Congressional Black Caucus Leadership in the Committee System', Paper prepared for presentation at the Woodrow Wilson International Center, Washington DC, January 12
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/gamble1.pdf

This paper highlights doubts about the ability of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) to provide political benefits for black Americans. It is argued that as a numerical minority within majority white institution black legislators would have limited influence and would play only token roles inside the institution. In addition, with increased political incorporation black legislators may find it difficult to act as strong advocates for issues relevant to blacks and other marginalised groups.

The author also points out that an additional challenge is defining what is meant by black interests. The African American community is not a monolithic group, and differences exist in gender, income, ideology, region, religion, and sexual orientation and make for a diversity of policy concerns. Even where there is agreement about policy priorities, i.e. racialised socio-economic disparities, this does not always translate into agreement on policy solutions.

In terms of how to increase influence, one of the top priorities of the Congressional Black Caucus in the 1970s was to work to get black representatives key committee assignments. This would ensure that no major legislation left the committee without having been seen by a member of the Caucus. The author argues: "The best place to analyze the effects of race on political deliberation and voice is within the committee system. Even when in the minority party, representatives have the ability to offer amendments and speak during committee markups and offer questions during committee hearings. While representatives of the minority party have no control over the agenda, they are still able to use their voice to introduce ideas and concerns into the legislative process. Even if one does not get the outcome they are seeking, it remains important to have ones voice be included in the process." (p. 5)

The author's research also finds that black legislators were on average more active than their white colleagues on a range of policy issues: "Black legislators were more likely to offer amendments and speak during committee markup meetings [...] (T)he history of exclusion and additionally challenges faced by black legislators may actually result in them participating more rather than becoming "tokens" or "invisible" inside the institution as suggested by some. Research on legislative behavior also finds that committee and subcommittee leaders are also much more active during committee markups (Hall 1996; Gamble 2007), therefore black legislators serving as ranking members of committees and subcommittees are expected to be particularly engaged in the committee process." (p. 8)

On how black legislators will navigate the realities of working within politics whilst at the same time remaining conscious of the need to represent black interests, the paper concludes: "Black representatives must often balance many competing interests as minority legislators inside majority white institutions (Haynie 2005). They are expected to advocate for black community concerns without alienating white colleagues, white constituents, and being essentialized as representing only black interest policies. They are expected to advocate for black community concerns while also functioning as skilled insiders; this balancing act will only become more difficult as black legislators gain more leadership positions inside the Congress. I believe this will result in more members adopting a more deracialized approach to political debates, especially given the success of deracialization in the election of Obama. Black legislators, I contend, will continue to work as advocates for the black community, but may strategically avoid using racial frameworks. Black representatives for strategic reasons may adopt liberal policy frames and speak in support of policies relevant to black Americans,

but not mention specific groups to avoid being labeled race-men or race-women or being labeled as representatives that focus only on racial issues." (p. 14)

Canada

Steele, J. F., 2001, 'An Effective Player in the Parliamentary Process: The Liberal Women's Caucus, 1993 – 2001', Institute on Governance, Ottawa
http://www.iog.ca/publications/alfhales2001.pdf

This paper argues that the Canadian Liberal Women's Caucus (LWC) exerts significant influence in ensuring that women-friendly policies and practices are adopted in Parliament. For the past eight years, the LWC has promoted important changes in the representation of women in public policy initiatives and within the Liberal Party of Canada.

The author states: "Many women MPs admit that simply asking questions, rather than agreeing with the proposed solution, has contributed to important shifts in the political culture on Parliament Hill. Asking how budget cuts would impact on women, challenging the exclusion of women in new research initiatives, or rephrasing the discussion so that children are seen as the country's future, and not as a social burden, are all important ways that women have been inserting their voices and values to warm up the cool climate on Parliament Hill [...] Within the framework of the Liberal Women's Caucus, a core group of 10-25 women is working strategically, tactically, and some would argue subversively, to ensure that the realities of Canadian women are reflected in government policies, and to demand that the faces of Canadian women are represented in the bodies that generate those policies, and in the delegations that present them abroad.

The networking process of the women's caucus enables them to strategize as a group, and then fan out as separate individuals. This collaborative approach turns their individual energy into momentum toward specific goals for women's rights and is what makes the caucus effective. The successes they see achieved through the women's caucus act to counterbalance the personal and professional stresses of life on the Hill, and encourage them to have faith in their ability to achieve a female-friendly institution by influencing the maze of departments, party structures, and political culture. [...] (The LWC's) use of cooperative tactics to realize key outcomes has enabled the Liberal Women's Caucus to carve out its niche as a networking circle that promotes Liberal women on Parliament Hill, and as an internal feminist policy watchdog that promotes the interests of Canadian women and equality-seeking men alike." (p. 19)

Goetz, A. M., 1998, 'Women in Politics & Gender Equity in Policy: South Africa & Uganda', Review of African Political Economy, Volume 25, Issue 76, pp. 241-262
http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/64756_731245331_769330937.pdf
Note: I have not been able to review this article. The summary below is taken from the publisher's abstract.

There are more women in politics in Uganda and South Africa today than in many more developed democracies. This significant achievement owes to explicit affirmative action interventions in political institutions and processes to favour women's participation. This article analyses these measures for their effectiveness in bringing more women into government, and for their impact on the perceived legitimacy of women in power. It goes on to stress that there is a difference between a numerical increase in women representatives, and the representation of women's interests in government decision-making. The one does not automatically lead to the other, not just because individual women politicians cannot all be assumed to be concerned with gender equity, but because of institutionalised resistance to gender equity within the apparatus of governance. This problem is exacerbated in the context of structural adjustment, which rules out social welfare measures to subsidise women's reproductive contributions to the economy and thereby level the economic playing field between women and men. In spite of these obstacles, women in power in Uganda and South Africa have taken significant steps to articulate women's interests in politics, with a particular focus on problems of violence against women.

South Africa

Hassim, S., 2003, 'Representation, Participation and Democratic Effectiveness: Feminist Challenges to Representative Democracy in South Africa' Hassim, S. and Goetz, A. M., (eds.), 'No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making', Zed Books, London, pp. 81-109)
This book is available from the DFID Library. Please email library@dfid.gov.uk
A preview is also available at Google Books:
http://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=y1OaRYxe7vgC&oi=fnd&pg=PA81&dq=south +africa+women%27s+caucus&ots=8T4wc2xSSB&sig=6zRGU0aZ-GE1cR7l6qNStJSuKOk#PPA93,M1

This chapter aims to assess the extent to which women have been able to turn their political presence into policy leverage. It highlights early attempts to create a multi-party forum for women MPs. An example included the Parliamentary Women's Group (PWG) which failed as a result of tensions between the DP, ANC and NNP. "The opposition parties constantly questioned ANC MPs' leadership position in the PWG, despite the track record in women's organizations of the particular ANC MPs concerned. Anna van Wyk, National Party MP, suggests that 'the small 'number of women in opposition parties militates against cooperation'. These tensions were exacerbated by the fact that the PWG operated without a budget, parliamentary rules were often used to undermine attempts to convene meetings, and, in some instances, male leaders of parties were critical of the existence of such a structure […] Women are not a homogenous constituency. Even where women MPs are committed to broad principles of gender equality, their definitions of what this means, their strategies for achieving equality, and the constituencies of women they represent, may be vastly different." (p. 93)

As a result, it has been single party caucuses, such as the ANC Women's Caucus, that have more effective in efforts to eliminate gender discrimination. The author argues that this reflects' the different weight given to gender equality by different political parties. Individual feminists in other parties have found it difficult to overcome the ideological resistance and lack of effective internal structures within their parties" (p. 93)

Britton, H., 2006, 'South Africa: Mainstreaming Gender in a New Democracy', in Bauer, G. and Britton, H. (eds.), 'Women in African Parliaments', Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, pp. 59–84
This book is available from the DFID library. Please email: library@dfid.gov.uk
Note: I have not been able to review this book. The summary below is adapted from the publisher's abstract.

Working together across religious, ethnic, and class divisions, African women are helping to formulate legislation and foster democracies more inclusive of women's interests. This book explores this phenomenon, and examines the impact and experiences of African women as they seek increased representation in national legislatures.

The book includes a number of case studies which allow cross-national comparisons of the range of strategies that African women have used to achieve greater involvement in national politics. A unique feature of the work is the voices of African women themselves, who explain how they achieved or continue to fight for electoral success, how they learned to work with lifelong adversaries, and how they have begun to transform their parliaments.

Rwanda

Powley, E., 2008, 'Defending Children's Rights: The Legislative Priorities of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians', The Initiative for Inclusive Security, Hunt Alternatives Fund

http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/7859_defending_children_s_rights_the_legislative_prio rities_of_rwandan_women_parliamentarians.cfm

This paper argues that women's parliamentary caucuses are a valuable organising tool, and are essential for increasing women's strength and effectiveness in legislatures. Some critics of female leadership in Rwanda claim the increasing number of women in parliament makes it

easier for them to advance their policy priorities, this can only happen when these are consistent with the agenda of the RPF (Patriotic Front of Rwanda) leadership. However, the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians (FFRP), a cross-party caucus, has proven itself an important vehicle through which women parliamentarians have advocated for legislation protecting children.

The multi-party and multi-ethnic FFRP was formed in 1996. All female parliamentarians are members of this caucus, which works across party lines on issues of common importance to women. In recent years, the FFRP has focussed increasingly on its legislative role and on constituent service. The caucus thus reviews existing laws and introduces amendments to discriminatory statutes, examines proposed laws for gender sensitivity, and conducts meetings and trainings with women's groups to sensitize and advise the population about legal rights.

"A hallmark of the FFRP's work has been its use of consultative processes—both internally and externally with constituents. This finding is in line with research showing that relationship building with constituencies is a strength of female legislators internationally. In particular, the FFRP frequently employs site visits to conduct research and inform its work." (p. 8)

The author argues that as women's numbers in Rwanda's parliament have increased and the FFRP has matured, between 1994 and 2006 its ability to influence policy has also increased. The caucus' advocacy on behalf of children has become more proactive and they have enacted legislation that reflects their stated priorities, including three key pieces of legislation, on inheritance, children's rights law, and gender-based violence.

Sudan

Blog: Barker, R. and O'Neill, J., 'Women Parliamentarians: Caucusing for Equality and Effectiveness', Governance Village
http://www.governancevillage.org/blogs/%7Bf2daa35a-864b-4b02-ab4c-96d3a9fe3829%7D/womenparli

In this blog, the authors argue: "Around the world, women's parliamentary caucuses are establishing themselves as effective bodies for strengthening democratic governance. In conflict-affected societies in particular, women's caucuses are helping bridge social divisions, bolster marginalised voices, and strengthen legislative branches of government.

They describe the formation of the Sudanese women parliamentarians' cross-party caucus, which worked with civil society to achieve a quota guaranteeing women a minimum of 25 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. Its members reviewed the budget to ensure its sensitivity to gender issues. They also convened a conference with women legislators in state and local bodies from across the country. Looking ahead to elections, they were traveling around Sudan to encourage other women to vote and run for office.

The blog also highlights women parliamentarians' unique contributions to fostering good governance. The caucus took a participatory approach to developing gender-based violence legislation and convened Rwandans for public discussions across the country. Their consultations gathered data for the bill, built widespread support for its introduction, and strengthened connections between citizens and their representatives. The caucus then invited male parliamentarians to co-sponsor the bill, further broadening its support and appeal.

However, the authors argue: "Numbers alone, however, are insufficient. Women parliamentarians – and through them, women's caucuses - need technical support."

Dutta, N., et.al., 2007, Strengthening Legislatures for Conflict Management in Fragile States, Woodrow Wilson School of International and Public Affairs, Princeton University, Princeton
http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3106

Chapter 1 of this paper argues that one key way in which the international donors can help a country's legislature can to increase its ability to manage conflict issues, is by helping to establish sub-structures within the legislature, such as legislative committees and cross-party caucuses. These strengthen the legislature's ability to build compromises to resolve conflict issues, as well as enhance successful communication between various groups by facilitating exchanges of information between regions and across parties. However, caucuses can also serve to block effective communication. The paper provides some lessons learned:

> ➢ Bosnia and Uganda: Caucuses facilitate communication within parties and within regions, but they do not in themselves overcome problems of inter-regional cleavages and might even cement these differences.
> ➢ Bolivia: Caucuses can be useful to forge regional identities that cut across ideological and party lines.

Inter-Parliamentary Union/ United Nations Development Programme, 2007, 'Report on the UNDP-IPU Consultation on Minority Representation in Parliament', IPU/ UNDP, Geneva
http://www.ipu.org/dem-e/minorities/ipu-undp07.pdf

This document summarises the main recommendations of a consultation on minority representation in parliament. These include:

> ➢ Facilitating the creation of regional networks at the parliamentary level by supporting the creation of parliamentary caucuses (for example the national parliamentary caucuses on pastoralist issues in some East African States and the development of a regional network of MPs involved on pastoralist issues) together with the support to lobbying activities at the regional level.
> ➢ More support to parliamentary committees and caucuses that are addressing minority issues or working on issues of promoting political inclusion. Under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (articles 25 and 27) governments are required to report on minority participation. Reporting obligations under UN Human Rights Treaties and addressing minority participation can be used as an occasion for parliamentary hearings to evaluate progress on minority inclusion.
> ➢ Development of a toolkit on promoting inclusive parliaments, including good practice on minority caucuses and support by parliament to such caucuses.

Center for Democracy and Governance, 2000, 'USAID Handbook on Legislative Strengthening', United States Agency for International Development, Washington DC
http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/pnacf632.pdf

Section IV of this handbook 'Designing Legislative Activities' highlights various recommendations for improving mechanisms for debate and decision-making. It states: "In a number of situations (e.g., in parliamentary systems or in legislatures where parties are centralized and well-disciplined), party caucuses take on several, if not most, of the functions of legislative committees. As a result, specific activities to strengthen party caucuses in the legislature can mirror those that strengthen legislative committees. Care should be taken to be as inclusive among the democratic parties as possible. Agency policy states that assistance to political parties be non-partisan in nature and that it not overtly benefit one party over others." (p. 41)

This section also includes a brief case study of USAID's work with caucuses in Malawi: "As a result of training they received, members of the Women.s Parliamentary Caucus became an

important legislative actor. The caucus proposed several bills, of which at least two have become law: the Marriage Act, which established age of consent, and the Affiliation Act, which provided support for children born out of wedlock. In addition, the caucus provided key support in the passage of the Wills and Inheritance Amendment Bill, protecting women after the death of a husband or father." (p. 42)

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5. Additional information

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