

# **THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN LAWMAKING**

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# DEFINITION(S) OF ICT

- Information technology (IT) processes, stores and transfer (communicates) information.
- Information can take many different forms such as text, audio, video, graphics and animation.
- In order to transfer or communicate information, information technologies often use computers, telecommunication networks and other communication devices.



## WHY THE “C” IN ICT?

- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a term is preferred to Information Technology (IT) because of the “communication” component of the latter.
- Communication, i.e. exchange or transfer of information, is a vital aspect of the information management process and therefore, the process cannot be complete without communication, hence the ‘C’ in the ICT.



# COMPUTER BASED INFORMATION SYSTEMS (CBIS)

- (CBIS) is a framework for understanding the elements involved in the operation of the computer as the driver of data processing and how these elements interact to produce information. CBIS is an information system that exists on the platform of a computer.



# ELEMENTS OF CBIS

- CBIS is composed of six elements which combine to make the *computer world* possible. These are:
- **Hardware** – the physical components of the system (the main system and accompanying peripheral devices)
- **Software** – the instructions that drive or control the hardware (often called programmes or apps)
- **Data/Information** – number, text, images, sound etc. that are fed into the computer in forms that it can process or store for future use
- **People** – individuals or group of individuals who create and use hardware and software, feed data into the computer and take decisions about when, where and how to use the information and how.
- **Procedure** – the set guidelines and rules that people (users) must follow to achieve desired results using the computer. Procedures come in user manuals, documentations, tutorials, etc.
- **Communication** – sharing of information with other users as either sender or recipient.

When Combined they make it possible to use computers to process data and transform data into information for decision making.



# PARLIAMENTS AND LEGISLATION (LAWMAKING)

- Legislators are elected representatives of the people whose functions are:
- Representing different segments of society, encouraging expression of different views and interests,
- Negotiating the needs and priorities of citizens, formulating laws that regulate society,
- Allocating public resources,
- Oversight of executive powers.



# LINKING WITH THE PUBLIC

- While carrying out these functions, parliaments/legislative assemblies inform and instruct citizens about the affairs of government, thereby educating them in the process.
- While they negotiate the priorities of their constituents, parliaments work to build consensus among different interests and groups and therefore help entrench democratic values and principles.



# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- In order to effectively carry out the functions of legislation, representation and oversight, legislators need to ensure **Public Participation**. This requires that they connect with the public.
- To do this they have to **exploit the possibilities offered by ICT**.





# WHAT THE PUBLIC WANTS

- More timely answers to questions posed at their representatives
- Online access to information relating to issues and subjects of interest
- Access to information about legislative process and procedure
- Effective interaction with representatives.



# RATIONALE FOR ICT IN LAWMAKING

- **Governance** is the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are taken or not taken.
- **Good governance** refers to a functional government with stable institutions and with such fundamental characteristics as:  
*Participation, Rule of law, Transparency, Responsiveness, Orientation towards consensus and equity.*



# RATIONALE FOR ICT IN LAWMAKING

## PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE

- **Access to information** promotes good governance
- It is the duty of the government to keep the citizens informed of its activities to ensure and provide good governance.
- To deliver on the Vision 2020 objectives, for example, good governance must be entrenched through the use of ICT.
- **Consequently, application of ICT tools will further closer link between government and citizens and make other development goals easier to achieve.**



# RATIONALE FOR ICT IN LAWMAKING

## ACCESS TO READY-TO-USE, RELIABLE DATA AND SPECIALIZED INFORMATION.

- ICTs today have a tremendous impact on all aspects of life.
- ICT can, and is having impact on parliamentary democracy today. Parliaments can make use of ICT just like other public institutions do.
- Concepts such as e-voting, e-government, e-participation, e-parliament, etc. are now part of the lexicon on governance and democracy.
- ICT can be put to use in politics and political processes.
- ICT can play a vital role in providing both the representatives and the citizens they represent with access to **ready-to-use, reliable data and specialized information.**



# RATIONALE FOR ICT IN LAWMAKING

## E-PARLIAMENT AS A DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENT

- *e-parliament* – a parliament **empowered to be more transparent, accessible and accountable through ICT**
- *fundamental characteristics* of a democratic parliament are the *ability to represent different segments of society, be transparent, accountable, accessible and effective*
- Consequently, today's parliament, being one of the major institutions of democratic society, must be able to make effective use of technology to be able to perform their duties



# ICT AND PUBLIC POLICY

- Since 2010 ICT has increasingly innovated and grown to become indispensable for many public and private institutions as well as individuals. The technologies make life and work easier but also make it possible to scrutinize public institutions. **This is where technology and public policy intersect.**



## DESPITE OPPORTUNITIES...

Studies show that despite all the advances in technology, there are still parliaments where:

- **members lack personal computers provided by the house;**
- **members are not connected to the parliament's LAN (local area network);**
- **libraries lack the technology that enable them to provide better information services, such as the open document format(XML);**
- **use of new media in conducting two way communication is not understood or practiced.**



# RECOGNIZING ICT (UNECA)

- The importance of making ICT work in parliaments has been recognized as one of the various means of achieving development goals.
- UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, 1996) recognized the need to:
  1. Train MPs and parliamentary staff to use ICT to access information,
  2. Extend the deployment of ICT infrastructure,
  3. Develop strategies to raise awareness within parliaments on the benefits of ICT for development, national and sub-regional e-strategies,
  4. Enhance parliament-constituents interaction and outreach with ICT,
  5. Deploy ICT applications and tools for better hearings, debates and questions to governments,
  6. In addition, the AISI emphasized the need to promote ICT for good governance and effective democracy through learning from best practices in e-Governance and e-Democracy.





## RECOGNIZING ICT (EU PARLIAMENT)

- European Union has policies for e-Government services (described in its Action Plan 2006-2011 of the Manchester Declaration and the Action Plan 2011-2015 of the Malmo Declaration) with the common objective of providing **Transparency in government** and ensuring **Citizens' participation.**



## COMMONLY HELD VIEW

- *In all the discussions on the role of ICT in parliament, the commonly held view is that ICT enables parliament to:*
- Fulfill legislative, oversight, and representative responsibilities,
- Achieve the goals of transparency, openness, accessibility, accountability, and effectiveness, and
- Be active participants in the global information society.



# THE RATIONALE PROPER

## *Some of the advantages of employing ICT in the lawmaking process:*

- An elected representative with real time access to information is a best practice representative.
- With a well-utilized ICT platform a parliament is able to know the information it needs, know where to find it, and how to share/use it.
- ICT provides the opportunity to connect with existing information systems and networks that can enhance the work of legislators.
- ICT enhances and facilitates interaction between constituents and their parliamentarians, making the latter able to influence the process of lawmaking in matters that are of concern to them.
- ICT helps legislators to keep abreast of the needs of the constituents and stay responsive to them since constituents are able to express their concerns directly to their representatives and demand for action and outcomes.



# WHAT IS AVAILABLE FOR USE IN LAWMAKING?

Some of the ICT tools that are available for use by the individual members and the general house are:

- Blogs,
- personalized websites,
- citizen portals,
- knowledge repository,
- webcasting/webinars,
- online radio streams,
- public access points,
- database,
- e-mails,
- e-forum (e.g. community of interests), etc.



## GLOBAL STATE OF E-PARLIAMENT

- Many international, national and private/non-governmental organizations are involved in efforts to make ICT an essential part of parliamentary operations.
- Among such organizations are the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), an international organization of parliaments created in 1889;
- The Global Center for ICT in Parliament, launched by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in 2005 in partnership with the IPU.



# E-PARLIAMENT REPORT

The six categories/criteria for measuring performance are:

- Oversight and management of ICT
- Infrastructure, services, applications and training
- Systems and standards for creating legislative documents and information
- Library and research services
- Parliamentary websites
- Communication between citizens and parliaments



# E-PARLIAMENT SCORES IN 2009 AND 2012

CATEGORIES	ALL RESPONDENTS		CHANGE
Oversight and management of ICT	52.7%	51.3%	2.7%
Infrastructure, services, applications and training	61.9%	66.0%	-6.3%
Systems and standards for documents and information	48.0%	46.0%	4.3%
Library and research services	43.3%	42.7%	1.5%
Parliamentary websites	44.5%	45.0%	-1.1%
Communication between citizens and parliaments	30.5%	27.5%	10.8%
Total e-parliament percentage score	45.9%	45.4%	1.1%

# ILLUSTRATING THE WAY ICT FUNCTIONS IN LEGISLATION

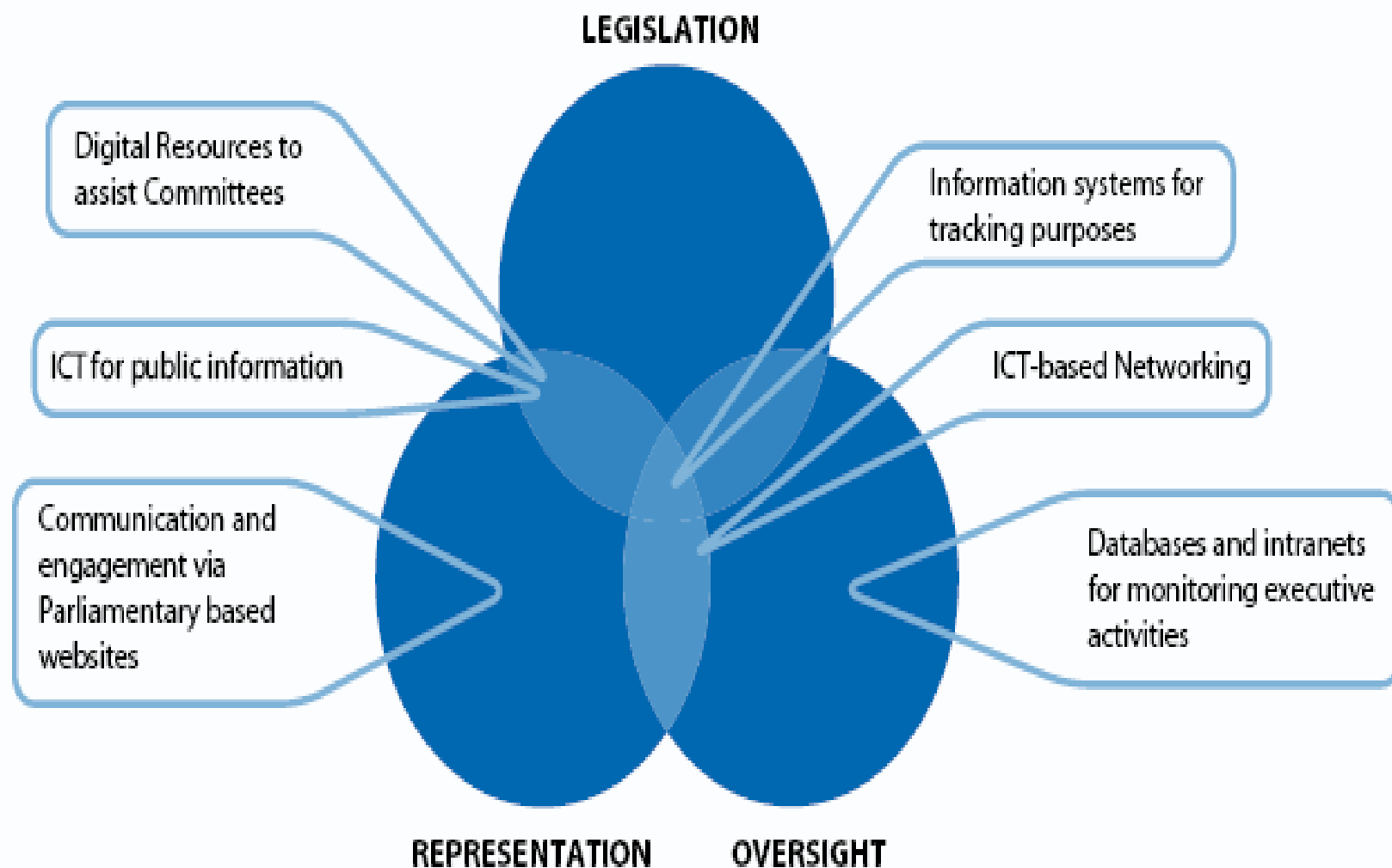
The model recognizes the main functions of parliaments as:

- Legislation
- Representation
- Oversight





**Fig. I: ICT to empower Parliaments Main Functions**



- The three functions overlap one another
- Indicated under each of the functions is the manner in which ICT intervenes to enhance the process of law making.
- At the representation level, ICT is useful for communication and engagement with constituencies through websites, blogs and social media platforms.
- At the oversight function level, databases and intranets, accessible to all members of the house and their assistants can be used for monitoring executive activities for oversight.
- At the intersection between oversight, representation and legislative functions, information systems could be created to track the movement of bills.
- At the intersection between representation and oversight, ICT based networks could be created to link up committees with the executive agencies under their watch.
- At the intersection between representation and legislative functions, committees could be provided with digital resources to assist them in their deliberations and also employ ICT for public information through social media and other web based platforms such as e-mail and websites.

## POINTS TO NOTE

- It is clear that ICT can only ease the work of lawmaking to the extent of the infrastructure that is available.
- Therefore, we need to make good and maximum use of available **National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI), Sectoral Information and Communication Infrastructure (SICI) and Village Information and Communication Infrastructure (VICI)** to engage constituents on the ICT platform that are available to us.



# RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *On the Managerial Level:*
- Formulate an e-strategy
- Engage in information and knowledge development in areas relevant to constituents' needs
- Engage in constant outreach and communication
- Engage in partnership and networking with relevant groups



# ON THE TECHNICAL LEVEL (BASED LARGELY ON THE 2008 E-PARLIAMENT REPORT)

- Implement a parliamentary e-information system (if there is none yet) to cover all bills, amendments, plenary debates, votes, committee documents and actions, etc.
- Set up and operate an effective, engaging, authoritative, accessible and up-to-date **website** that provides a complete and understandable view of parliamentary activities and documents and offers multiple formats and channels of access.
- Adopt **open standards** (XML) for all legislative documents to facilitate wider citizens' access and the creation of a comprehensive legislative information resource that can be shared and integrated with other materials both internally and externally.
- Build a coherent **knowledge base/database** for parliament to link all relevant internal and external information resources into an organized system that facilitates search and retrieval of needed information for members, staff, and the public.
- Continue to explore ICT tools to engage **citizens** and **civil society**, perform assessments of their utility, and adopt those that support fruitful **interaction** between parliament and the public.
- Develop common guidelines for parliament, committee and member websites.
- Establish a common interactive capability for communicating with citizens through training of legislators and legislative staff.
- Learn from parliaments with developed ICT systems



# FINALLY ...

Five key institutional areas are strategic to the smooth running of any parliament. These are:

- Its Constitutional functions: – Legislative, representative and oversight functions
- Communication and information dissemination: – Free flow of information between parliament and citizens
- Parliamentary operations: – Predictable and orderly performance of daily operations within calendar and schedule
- Human resources: - Well recruited, highly trained, professional and motivated staff
- Information technology management:- Availability and accessibility to high quality information and accessibility to parliamentary documents.



- **The last of the institutional areas has proven to be the driver of all the other areas.**
- **It assists in the performance of the legislature's constitutional duties;**
- **It facilitates the process of communication and information dissemination;**
- **It facilitates predictable and orderly operation of parliament; and enhances effective use of human resources.**



LOG OUT

**Thank you for your attention.**

