



CSOs engagements with Legislatures, what have we learned?

Reflection on our experiences in the North West,
the Northern Cape and Limpopo.

Civil Society Participation in Provincial Legislatures Project (CSPPL)

Theory of Change: If CSOs are cable to improve their advocacy skills and if Provincial Legislature staff include CSO participation in their deliberations, then accountability will be increased.

Project ran from March 2018 until January 2021 (including a 3 month no cost extension)

Project was co-funded by the European Union and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy

Main Activities:

1. Learning events for Civil Society Organisations (CSO): within provinces, cross provincial learning events, ongoing mentoring and coaching
2. Support Advocacy and Participation activities
3. Innovative knowledge co-creation events with Members of Provincial Legislatures
4. Facilitating engagements between MPLs and CSOs

Target groups: CSOs representing key population groups such as women, youth and people living with disabilities.

Thematic Coverage: access to quality health care, equality and quality in education, social development and safety and security in particular Gender Based Violence.

Provincial coverage: Limpopo, North West and Northern Cape

Major stumbling blocks

Access to MPLs and Portfolio Committees

- Gate keeping and political manoeuvring
- Impact of elections 2019
- Distinct political environments and pressures
- continued unavailability of public officials

This impacted the MoUs, development of engagement platforms, and capacity building sessions for MPLs in North West and Limpopo.

Main Achievements and successes

CSO partners in all 3 provinces

- understand how legislatures work and how to strategically communicate with and engage them;
- requested oversight by reaching out to provincial legislatures through official and unofficial channels;
- developed networks for advocacy collaboration.

Highlight: The Northern Cape Province

- Partnership with Provincial Legislature to conduct online training with MPLs;
- facilitated closed sessions between MPLs and CSO partners;
- collaborated on public participation events;
- created ongoing communication channels between CSOs, MPLS and PL support units;
- First online screening of a house sitting shared through social media and private channels.

Highlight: The Northern Cape Province

CSO partners network

- exceeded expectations in terms of their appetite for and skills for engaging with PLs.
- Succeeded in engaging in “invited” and working towards “invented” spaces for participation.
- actively sharing information pertaining to public participation and empowering each other.
- Succeeded in some instances using petitions to hold the executive accountable

Lessons learnt:

1. CSOs are key partners to deepen democracy: continue to advocate for increased access.
2. Power of the relationships
3. The importance of parliament's technical support staff and their managers
4. Integrated communication is essential (digital divide)
5. Distil process skillset: the “how-to’s” amongst the network
6. Building on relationship in the NC with provincial / local executives

Resources Produced:

1. Podcast documenting the experience of the partnership built with the NC PL.
2. Case studies sharing CSO experiences of working with PLs.
3. CSO Toolkit

All available at www.democracyworksfoundation.org