SUMMARY OF THE REPORT ON THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (CPA) AND STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (SUNY) SPONSORED CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND WORKSHOP WHICH TOOK PLACE FROM 8TH TO 11TH OCTOBER, 2012, IN DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA
INTRODUCTION

The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Workshop took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from 8th to 11th October, 2012. The purpose of the workshop was to build on the CPA Principles and Guidelines for CDF by developing a tool for CDF participatory mechanisms and designing a framework for a comprehensive CDF tool box that will assist MPs in making CDFs responsive to community needs, transparent in their operations, effectively administered and managed, and held accountable. The Workshop was organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the State University of New York (SUNY)/Centre for International Development (CID). A total of 21 participants mainly Members of Parliament (MPs) attended the workshop.

Official Opening

The Chairperson of the CPA Tanzania Branch, Hon Mussa Azzan Zungu, MP, gave the official opening speech on behalf of the CPA Chairperson, Rt. Hon. Sir Alan Haselhurst, MP, and the CPA Secretary General, Dr William Shija. In his opening speech, Hon Zungu thanked the participants for availing themselves to attend the workshop which would chart the way forward for the effective utilization of CDFs in Commonwealth countries. He also thanked the Speaker of the Tanzania Parliament for agreeing to host the workshop despite the pressure of parliamentary work.

Hon Zungu informed the participants that the workshop was a continuation of efforts by the CPA and the SUNY to investigate the role and effectiveness of the CDFs as a tool for parliamentarians to assist constituents. He hoped that the two day workshop would give the participants an opportunity to have robust discussions on the CDFs as they applied to their respective branches and the broader world context. He concluded by wishing the participants effective deliberations.

WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

Comparative Survey of CDFs – Prof Mark Baskin (SUNY)

The presenter began by giving a definition of the CDF. He said that the CDFs were a policy tool that dedicated public money to benefit specific political subdivisions through
allocations and/or spending decisions influenced by their representatives in the national parliament. The presenter also alluded to the fact that CDFs were called by different names in different jurisdictions. He noted the following regarding CDFs:

i. CDFs were highly popular with MPs;

ii. there was great variation among CDFs depending on the country;

iii. CDFs formally linked national representatives with development in constituencies; and

iv. most international development agencies were not in favour of CDFs and viewed it as a form of bad governance.

The presenter outlined two views of CDFs emanating from different stakeholders: CDF as a development tool; and CDF as a form of bad governance. He explained that those who held to the view that the CDF was a development tool believed that the CDFs fostered community driven development and participatory budgeting. It also strengthened national-local linkages and achieved what the government ministries and local governments had failed to do; such as building schools, clinics and small infrastructure. On the other hand, the proponents of CDF as a form of bad governance felt that it was a source of clientelism and corruption. They further argued that CDFs were a violation of the principle of separation of powers and made it unconstitutional for MPs to be involved in the execution/implementation of policy. The presenter added that anti-CDFs groups felt that CDFs detracted parliamentarians from their oversight responsibility in Parliament.

The presenter made reference to the CPA workshop in Jamaica in June, 2011 as the first workshop which initiated the need to develop tools which could improve the effectiveness in the administration and management of CDFs in Commonwealth countries. He outlined the following issues which emanated from the workshop and which it was agreed would form the basis for the toolbox for participatory CDFs:

i. rules and procedures of CDF operations;

ii. participatory mechanisms for project identification;
iii. tendering and contracting;

iv. implementation and operations; and

v. monitoring, evaluation and auditing of projects.

The presenter urged the participants to analyse the contents of the toolbox and to make whatever changes they deemed fit which would apply to the African situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed:

1. Parliaments and Governments should be encouraged to apply the CPA toolbox for CDFs so that the utilization, management and administration of CDFs could be improved since it appears that the CDFs will not be disappearing any time soon in countries where they exist;

2. due to interest in the CDF on the part of parliamentarians from West Africa where this initiative does not exist, there would be need where possible for exchange visits so that the countries in West Africa could explore whether the CDF is something that can work in their jurisdiction;

3. there is need for a follow up workshop to develop the remaining tools of the CDF;

4. national Parliaments and governments should take time to learn best practices from the Kenyan experience; and

5. there is need for MPs and civil society organisations to engage seriously on the CDFs so that the positive aspects of the Fund could be strengthened and the negative ones rooted out.
THE CDF TOOL BOX

The participants modified the tool box and made two additions. They added another tool, that of sourcing and financing. They also added ‘impact assessment’ to the tool on monitoring and evaluation.

CONCLUSION

The workshop was enlightening and it could be observed that the participants appreciated the opportunity to share their views. All indications are that the CDF is still very popular amongst MPs in Africa. The Members of Parliament in Africa are strongly committed to making the CDF work. Therefore, the CDF tool box developed thus far will go a long way in helping them fulfil this commitment.