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**PARLIAMENT'S
PUBLIC EDUCATION
PROGRAMME**

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OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME.

The South African Parliament has set up a programme to inform and educate the public about Parliament and to build democracy.

Our country has only recently become a democracy. Previously, people were not allowed to vote nor participate in making decisions that affected their lives. Organisations such as Parliament were not open and did not answer to the public. As a result, the majority of the people do not have the experience and the skills to participate in the new democracy.

This places a major challenge on all those who are committed to developing democracy in the country. The growing democratic culture can only be built upon if the public participate in issues that affect them.

This requires that people are made aware of what is happening in organisations like Parliament and understand how they can become involved. People need to know how to raise their concerns when decisions affecting them are being taken. Once decisions are made, the public should be informed about their rights and responsibilities and how to hold government accountable.

In building a democratic culture, the right of individuals to hold differing political views must be promoted.

Parliament, as a national representative body, has a responsibility to contribute to deepening the democracy we have achieved. To do this the public education programme that has been set up will:

- * inform people about what happens in Parliament and about democracy generally;
- * educate people about how Parliament and democracy work and about their rights and responsibilities;
- * motivate people to participate in democratic processes and engage with decision making bodies, especially Parliament; and
- * promote a culture of democracy and human rights.

To achieve the above, the Public Education Department (PED) has been established to co-ordinate the implementation of the programme. The PED will undertake a number of activities including workshops, public meetings, the distribution of publications and audio-visuals, campaigns, outreach to the youth and educational tours of Parliament.

In undertaking the programme, Parliament will work closely with Provincial Legislatures, Government Departments, civil society and the media. To consult with these agencies and to build support for the programme, a national conference will be held early next year.

Prior to this conference, preparatory conferences will be held in each province. The provincial conferences will also design strategies for outreach to the different sectors within the province and plan for the implementation of joint activities.

Parliament calls on all members of the public, organisations and the different sectors of society to become actively involved in the programme and the drive to deepen democracy in our country. Individuals and organisations requiring more information or wanting to make an input into the programme can telephone the PED on (021) 403 2460.

ACTIVITIES OF THE PROGRAMME

1. WORKSHOPS

Three different kinds of educational workshops will be held:

i) *Community workshops* will be held to reach out to the urban and rural poor as well as to individual members of the public. The workshops will cover the following content: how democracy and Parliament work; how a law is made; the separation of powers; the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups; the rights of people to hold different political views; and how people can engage in democratic processes. The workshops will be organised at a district level so that local communities can be grouped together. Workshops will be convened by Parliament or preferably in co-operation with Provincial Legislatures and civil society organisations.

ii) *Specialised workshops* will be held to address the needs of interest groups. The content will be similar to community workshops but will be adapted to educate interest groups how to raise their concerns and influence democratic decisions. Wherever possible these workshops will be planned and implemented jointly with organisations representing specific interest groups.

iii) *Youth workshops* will be held to make youth aware about democracy and Parliament and prepare them for future participation. The content of the community workshops will be adapted and simplified. These workshops will be held at a local community level and be implemented together with youth organisations.

Communities and interest groups will be encouraged to hold their own workshops to which speakers from Parliament will be sent.

2. PUBLIC MEETINGS.

Public meetings will be held to provide an opportunity for dialogue and feedback. Such meetings will provide a means of taking Parliament to the people and giving the public an opportunity to raise their concerns and needs. They will preferably be organised in co-operation with other stakeholders.

As with the workshops, communities will be encouraged to organise their own meetings to which speakers from Parliament will be sent.

3. PUBLICATIONS.

The following publications will be produced for use in the programme:

- A manual on how Parliament works, how laws are made, the rights and responsibilities of people and how people can participate in democratic processes. The manual will be regularly updated to cater for on-going developments.

- Pamphlets and leaflets will be produced to inform communities, interest groups and NGOs about policy and legislative issues as they arise, and will include information on how they can make an input into Parliament.

- Educational posters, stickers and badges will be targeted at communities, the youth, women, workers, NGOs and the different interest groups. Themes will either relate to specific interests or be general in nature. General themes will include: Parliament belongs to all of us; I love Parliament - it protects my rights; Parliament builds democracy and our right to be heard; how a law is made (graphic illustration) etc.
- Factsheets which explain in detail different aspects of Parliament's functioning (eg. role of Committees, the work of a member, the role of Presiding Officers, the different houses of Parliament, the separation of powers, debate and decision making etc).
- A **parliamentary directory** that will enable organisations and interest groups to contact people in Parliament. The directory will contain: photographs, CVs and contact details of Presiding Officers, Whips and members; list of Committees, members, functions and contact details; Secretariat members and contact details; and a list of Sections in Parliament, their functions and contact details.
- A **weekly diary** will be produced to inform the media about what is going to happen in Parliament and to draw the attention of organisations and interest groups to important issues that affect them.
- Occasional **parliamentary updates** will be produced and distributed to opinion makers and organisations on key debates, laws, rule changes, public participation and relevant analytical articles.

4. AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIAL.

Videos, audio tapes and slide presentations will be used at the workshops, public meetings, the national campaign as well as by parliamentary tour guides and be loaned or sold to organisations who undertake public education programmes. Audio tapes and slide presentations will be used particularly in urban informal and rural communities.

Initially, the following audio visuals are planned:

- How democracy works
- Building a democratic culture
- Rights and responsibilities
- How Parliament works
- How a law is made

The videos will be adapted for use by each Provincial Legislature.

As the programme develops, an assessment will be made about further audio visuals required and these will be proposed for production.

5. CO-OPERATION WITH THE MEDIA.

Co-operation will be developed with the media with the objectives of promoting democracy and providing ongoing news of activities of Parliament. Press statements will be released, briefings provided, and TV and radio will be encouraged to air informative and educational programmes.

Parliament will support the media to access information and provide weekly diaries to facilitate the work of the media.

Given that there are low literacy levels in rural communities, radio advertising will be done on a regular basis to inform and educate rural people. Advertisements will also be placed in newspapers to draw the attention of communities and interest groups to important debates and developments that affect them and inform them how they can participate in these debates.

In working with the media our objective will be to facilitate rather than exercise editorial control.

6. CAMPAIGNS.

The first campaign will be organised across the country during the first session next year. This campaign will focus on the work of Parliament and the importance of democratic processes to achieve our national objectives.

The campaign will include workshops, public meetings, advertisements, exhibitions, cultural events and an appropriate schools competition.

The national campaign will provide an ideal opportunity for all interested groups to co-operate to extend democracy in the country.

Once this campaign is over, an in-depth evaluation will be conducted to assess its impact and to consider which future campaigns should be organised. Such campaigns would then be incorporated into the programme.

7. OUTREACH TO YOUTH AND SCHOOLS.

To facilitate the education of youth, the following activities have been planned:

Youth workshops will be held in local communities.

Visits will be organised to schools to make youth aware of democracy and Parliament. During the visits, youth will be addressed by members which will increase interaction between youth and parliamentary representatives.

A schools pack will be produced and will contain 3 handbooks for the different standards. There will be a publication for standard 7 and above educating youth about democracy, rights and responsibilities, how Parliament works and laws are made and an overview of laws affecting youth. The second handbook will be for standard 3 to 7 outlining the above in simpler form. The third one will be for below standard 3 which will explain about democracy and Parliament in cartoon form. The pack will also contain the factsheets (for standard 7 and above), youth posters, badges and stickers, a timetable illustrating how a law is made and a pamphlet suggesting types of activities that could be organised at schools and by youth.

Simulation games as well as speech contests, debates and other competitions will be organised to encourage youth participation in our programme.

Consideration is also being given to whether the Youth Parliament held earlier this year by Streetlaw should become an annual event. It could be held at schools, communities and within provinces first before the annual event at Parliament.

8. TOURS OF PARLIAMENT.

Presently, there are approximately 60 000 visitors who to come to tour Parliament and to attend sittings, listen to debates etc. Most of the visitors are from historically disadvantaged communities and schools providing an important opportunity to undertake educational work. Tour guides are to be trained and a brochure has been produced to assist with the tours.

9. PARLIAMENTARY SHOP.

A shop will be established that will sell educational items as well as items that encourage people to identify with Parliament and the processes aimed at promoting democracy.

The shop will support small businesses in the following ways:

- * They will be commissioned to produce and supply material.
- * Once material is available consideration will be given to franchising outlets to small businesses.

It is intended that the shop will be self-financing over a period of 2 years and a plan is being commissioned to guide this.