

The Capacity to Change

Building Parliaments' Capacity to
Oversee the Oil and Minerals Sectors

By Nancy Drost

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and use of revenues from oil
and minerals.

Ghana

Sierra Leone

Tanzania

Uganda

Briefing

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Building Parliaments' Capacity to Oversee the Oil and Minerals Sectors / Ghana, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda

By Nancy Drost

Introduction

From 2008 to 2010, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, RWI conducted capacity-building pilot projects for parliamentarians, civil society organizations (CSOs) and media in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda. RWI believes that when parliaments are provided with capacity and incentives, they can significantly improve the maximization, collection and use of revenues from oil and minerals.

The pilot aimed to demonstrate this by helping parliaments improve the legal and regulatory framework governing these sectors in their countries. And because effective law-making and oversight require parliaments to collaborate with outside stakeholders, the pilot also engaged CSOs and the media, expanding on previous work by RWI and its partners.

Each of the four countries RWI chose provided timely engagement opportunities, such as reviews of contracts and proposed legislation. RWI decided to focus on the early stages of the oil and mineral value chain, especially contracts and regulatory frameworks, where the bulk of its expertise lies. The Ghana and Tanzania projects ran from late 2008 to the end of 2010, while the Sierra Leone and Uganda projects were confined to 2010.

RWI worked to equip parliaments with the knowledge and skills to carry out their three basic functions.

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- **Oversight:** Parliament is responsible for holding the Executive Branch accountable for its execution of laws and policies.
 - **Representation:** Parliament needs to convey the views of populations to the executive, including the views of civil society and community organizations.
 - **Lawmaking:** Parliament amends and ratifies laws.

At the start of the pilot, baseline assessments found that parliaments were failing to use their powers effectively due to a combination of political and procedural constraints. Parliamentarians also lacked technical understanding of the oil and mineral sectors, and had limited awareness of available tools and best practices for sector management. This was compounded by the media's lack of informed reporting, and a lack of effective civil society oversight.

The pilot projects were not meant to overcome external constraints stemming from dominant party systems and weak parliamentary systems. Still, the pilots in all four countries improved parliamentary performance and policy outcomes. RWI expects these changes to outlive the duration of a single legislature, demonstrating the sustainability of such interventions. RWI also plans to build on the success of the pilot programs by expanding them to other countries.

The RWI model of change

RWI developed a model of change for parliamentary pilot projects, as well as a set of indicators to track the projects' impacts through independent monitoring and evaluation. The core assumptions were:

1. The pilot program's capacity building and technical assistance interventions will increase parliament's capacity to monitor the Executive Branch on its management of extractive industries.
2. This increased capacity will let parliament more effectively hold the Executive Branch accountable for its management of extractive industries.
3. Once parliament can hold the executive accountable more effectively, the executive's management of extractive industries will become more effective, responsive and participatory.

Over time, the Executive Branch's increased performance will enhance service delivery and improve well-being for the population.

Context in pilot countries

Ghana

Ghana is the second-largest gold producer in Africa and has large deposits of other minerals. Ghana's mining sector contributes about 12 percent of the country's total corporate tax payments, 34 percent of total exports, and some 11 percent of government revenues. The sector's share of GDP increased from 1.3 percent in 1991 to 6.7 percent in 2007. The Jubilee offshore field, discovered in 2007, is Ghana's most significant, viable oil deposit. Estimates of its reserves vary widely, from 800 million to 1.3 billion barrels. Oil production is estimated to rise from 120,000 barrels per day in 2011 to 250,000 barrels per day in 2015. The government's oil revenues are expected to outstrip those from mining.

Natural resource revenues could provide the basis for a robust economy, but Ghana's management of the mineral sector has suffered from numerous governance challenges, as documented in the

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Ghana Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) reports. RWI began the parliamentary pilot project as oil production was approaching and the Executive Branch was intent on developing new oil and gas legislation.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is rich in diamonds, gold, bauxite, rutile, iron ore and other minerals. Mining produced 30 percent of its GDP in 2007 and 80 percent of exports in 2008, with diamonds contributing 85 percent of the total. Mining and quarrying employ about 14 percent of the total labor force. There also is evidence of significant offshore deposits of oil and gas.

Sierra Leone adopted a new mining and minerals law in 2009 that held out the prospect of better governance through greater transparency and accountability. Although the law included new financial safeguards, the mining sector continues to suffer from corruption and weak oversight.

Sierra Leone's Parliament is uniquely positioned to help improve the governance of extractive industries: It has authority to approve all contracts into which the government enters. However, Parliament is hampered by its limited ability to understand and analyze the contracts.

Tanzania

Tanzania is the fourth-largest gold producer in Africa, and is richly endowed with diamonds and other minerals. The mining sector attracted some \$2.5 billion in investment from 1998 to 2008, and accounted for 75 percent of foreign direct investment and 40 percent of the country's exports in 2008. Still, mining contributed only 3.6 percent of tax revenues and 2.7 percent of GDP. Among the reasons are weak regulations, the sector's poor integration with broader national development goals, and a general lack of transparency, despite public demands for better governance following a number of scandals. One such scandal led to dissolution of the cabinet in February 2008.

To correct these weaknesses, the Tanzanian government launched a review of its policies, laws and contracts. Between 2001 and 2009, four special commissions examined the mineral sector, laying the groundwork for the amendment of the Mining Policy of 1997 and Mining Act of 1998. Approval of a new mineral policy in late 2009 was to be followed by the passage of a new mining act. This gave RWI the opportunity to help Parliament, civil society and media effectively engage in the legislative review process.

Uganda

With estimated recoverable oil reserves of 800 million barrels, Uganda may soon earn \$2 billion a year from oil—more than the \$1.7 billion a year the country receives in foreign development assistance. Oil revenue could be an important tool for reaching Uganda's development goals. However, the potential for corruption is high, due in part to the lack of transparency and the weakness of oversight bodies. In 2010, when RWI began its project, Uganda's government was expected to introduce legislation in Parliament on the administration of oil and gas exploration and production, and on the management of revenues.

RWI's partners

Ghana

RWI worked in partnership with the *Parliamentary Centre* and *GIZ Ghana*, the German development and technical assistance agency. It engaged leaders of Parliament and some 30 members of the parliamentary subcommittees on Mines and Energy, Finance and Public Accounts, Local Government and Rural Development, and Lands and Forestry. RWI also engaged the editors and

parliamentary reporters of seven media organizations, as well as senior managers from four leading civil society groups.

Sierra Leone

RWI worked with the *National Advocacy Coalition on Extractives* (NACE), the leading national civil society and media coalition in the sector. NACE held seats in the Sierra Leone Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) multi-stakeholder group, the contracts renegotiation forum and the task force on the new mining legislation. It was therefore ideally suited to lead parliamentary engagement. Through NACE, RWI engaged some 20 civil society organizations and media practitioners. In Parliament, RWI and NACE worked closely with the Committee on Mines and Minerals and other committees for a total of 30 legislators and four parliamentary staffers.

Tanzania

RWI partnered with the Dar es Salaam-based *Policy Forum*, a network of about 100 civil society groups. Policy Forum led all project activities on policy analysis, advocacy and awareness, and supported capacity building for civil society and media. RWI also had an agreement with Parliament for capacity building on extractive industries. Due to the project's emphasis on the mining bill review, the Energy and Minerals Committee and other parliamentary champions were the project's main targets. The project also provided training, mentorship and small grants to 20 civic groups and journalists. It supported Publish What You Pay Tanzania as a framework for civil society engagement and coordination in the EITI. RWI also worked closely with Norwegian Church Aid in Tanzania in building the capacity of Interfaith Committee, a high-level forum bringing together leaders of major religious faiths.

Uganda

RWI partnered with the *African Institute for Energy Governance* (AFIEGO), based in Kampala. The project targeted Parliament's Natural Resources committee, as well as legislators from oil-rich areas and members of other parliamentary committees—a total of some 40 lawmakers. It also assisted some 30 civil society organizations and media outlets.

Pilot activities

Comprehensive intellectual support: Trainings were combined with expert advice, briefings, written analyses and guides. In Tanzania, RWI and partners offered training on legal frameworks, produced analyses of the draft bill, answered questions from members of parliament (MPs), and provided written guides. In Sierra Leone and Ghana, contract review trainings included fact sheets on pertinent questions to ask during the review. In Ghana and Uganda, RWI and partners brought experts to explain draft petroleum legislation and answer questions. RWI and Parliamentary Centre also provided MPs in Ghana with a guide to the country's nascent oil sector.

Building relationships among stakeholders: To remedy the antagonism among parliament, civil society, and in some cases media, RWI brought together members of these groups for joint trainings and events whenever possible. This led to constructive collaborations: civil society assisted legislators with timely information, and media generated public support for parliamentary action.

Connecting MPs and citizens: RWI and partners facilitated meetings between MPs and their constituents to foster dialogue and create incentives to take action. In Ghana, parliamentarians went on a road show to discuss new oil legislation in town halls. In Sierra Leone, NACE took busloads of MPs, civil society representatives and journalists to mining areas to learn about the challenges communities face. In Uganda, AFIEGO organized meetings between MPs from oil-producing

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regions and their constituents.

Mutually empowering partnerships: RWI and local partners jointly implemented activities in each pilot. This allowed RWI to build partners' technical expertise and trust with parliaments. Thus equipped, local partners should be able to conduct trainings independently in the future.

Resources for action: RWI provided grants to CSOs to work with legislators on addressing the concerns of communities affected by extraction. In Tanzania, for example, the project offered 10 CSOs competitive grants of up to \$5,000 to support Parliament through research.

Sharing learning and experiences: In May 2010, RWI assembled partners for a meeting to discuss challenges and lessons learned. Fifty MPs, CSOs and journalists from pilot countries were able to share experiences in reviewing legislation, promoting contract transparency and analyzing contracts. In November 2011, RWI and partners promoted a global conference in Ghana to disseminate lessons learned and tools generated by pilot projects to more than 80 parliamentary practitioners, donors, MPs, CSOs and journalists.

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation: RWI contracted independent consultants to track changes in capacity and performance as a result of the pilot projects. The consultants used comprehensive quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Ongoing learning and documentation: RWI and partners produced biannual reports, case studies and other written pieces to capture lessons and impacts. These were disseminated among partners personally and through the RWI website. RWI also produced two training videos and five briefings that condensed the lessons of the pilot projects for use in future trainings.

“Personally, my capacity has improved, and I am [now] in a position to make meaningful contributions to debates in the extractive sector within and outside the country.”

– Hon. Amadu Kanu, Sierra Leone

Highlights from evaluations

The pilots had the following impacts on MPs, CSOs and the media:

Members of Parliament

- MPs' knowledge of the oil and mineral sectors improved in all four countries. However, they need to keep learning to become better legislators and overseers.
- MPs in most countries made increased use of academics and experts, CSOs, government information sources and the media. Use of Internet sites and petroleum company reports went down in Tanzania, but up in Uganda.
- MPs' interaction with colleagues on extractive issues intensified in all four countries. In Uganda, MPs increased their interaction with other stakeholders through workshops, and in Sierra Leone, field visits produced the same result.
- In Ghana, MPs acquired the ability to ask questions, initiate debates and provide input into new legislation, particularly the Petroleum Revenue Management Bill. This is also the case in Tanzania, where MPs' demands significantly improved the mining bill.
- MPs are seeking to influence policymaking more actively. In Ghana, MPs are organizing cross-party consultations, proposing resolutions and seeking to influence party leadership. In Uganda, MPs initiated individual inquiries and held consultations with stakeholders.
- In all four countries, MPs are still not using the media to their full advantage. They are frequently afraid of offending their parties or the speaker of the house by voicing points of view that are contrary to the party line.
- MPs are frustrated by the weaknesses of entities such as the auditor general and commissions that are supposed to expose corruption and poor governance. Because

CSOs and media are playing the role of giants in ensuring transparency and accountability in the extractive industry sector. Whenever we pass a bill and the CSOs feel that it is not favorable, they use the media to make their concerns known, and also to sensitize people.

– Hon. Alhaji Y. Tullah, Sierra Leone

there is no effective recourse to such bodies, MPs are afraid to take undue risks.

- In all four countries, MPs' interaction with affected communities improved—particularly in Sierra Leone and Uganda, where RWI organized visits to those communities.

Civil Society Organizations

- CSOs' knowledge of the sector increased. In all countries, they acquired the ability to see shortfalls in legislation and agreements, and bring these to the attention of parliament. They also interacted more with high-level policymaking bodies, both in their countries and internationally.
- Relationships between CSOs and other stakeholders have improved. However, in all countries, the relationship between government and civil society remained precarious.
- CSOs varied in their use of the media. In Sierra Leone, they used it effectively, ensuring that articles and manifestos told true stories of affected communities to counterbalance the overwhelming presence of mining company propaganda and advertising. CSOs in Uganda worked closely with media to promote and protect human rights for those trying to expose injustices in oil-producing communities. Overall, CSOs are still struggling to use the media in ways that strengthen their advocacy campaigns.
- All RWI's CSO partners succeeded in influencing oil and mineral legislation or decision-making processes.

Media

- The media in all four countries became more familiar with oil, gas and mining issues. Some media representatives in Uganda have become known as experts and are sought after to talk about oil and gas issues on television.
- Media in all countries except Ghana interacted more with CSOs, mining companies, MPs and other stakeholders.
- In Uganda, media came to depend more on CSOs and oil companies as sources of information, and less on MPs and local communities.
- Journalists in Sierra Leone and Uganda have become so passionate about extractive issues that they have risked their lives to expose injustices in mining and oil-producing communities and make a case for better legislation and policies.

Key successes in the four countries

Ghana

Before the pilot began, significant amounts of revenue were leaking from the extractive sector, and communities in mineral-producing areas were struggling with negative socio-environmental spillovers. This did not bode well for parliamentary oversight of the nascent oil sector. However, the pilot brought about the following changes:

- A parliamentary joint committee was formed to submit reports on bills for revenue management and exploration and production. MPs held strategic discussions on the two bills and consulted with their constituents and committees.
- Parliament passed the revenue management bill, in large part because of the expert review it received as part of the pilot and because of the debate in Parliament, where MPs relied on RWI fact sheets. The lead government expert in charge of drafting the bill repeatedly acknowledged RWI inputs and incorporated some RWI best practices in the final draft.
- In a dramatic move, Parliament rejected the petroleum and exploration bill as unconsti-

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tutional and sent it back to the Executive Branch for redrafting. RWI's workshops were crucial in helping Parliament develop an informed opinion about the bill and respond to the consensus among civil society and media that the bill was flawed.

Sierra Leone

Before the pilot, Parliament's role was limited to rubber-stamping government decisions, as demonstrated by the approval of the 2009 mining act. During the 2010 pilot, however, RWI and partner NACE spurred major changes:

- MPs deepened their understanding of the Mines and Minerals Act and put in place new mining regulations.
- RWI's training on EITI revived the momentum to complete the first EITI report and sustained Sierra Leone's progress toward EITI compliance. After an RWI training session, the chairperson of the Mines and Minerals Committee requested parliamentary membership in the EITI Multi-Stakeholder Group.
- Legislators and CSOs participated in a fact-finding mission to mining areas to determine how the new law was being carried out and communicated their findings to government.
- Civil society found conflicts between the London Mining and African Minerals agreements and the new national law. Initially, the Executive Branch pressured its parliamentary majority into approving the agreements, but CSOs and a number of parliamentary champions generated intense public debate and ultimately secured a review of these contracts.

“Before RWI training [these issues were] like Chinese, something unknown to me—and, I believe, to most of my colleagues. But thereafter, I am kind of an expert in these issues.”

– Tanzania MP

Tanzania

Before the pilot, the vast majority of parliamentarians were not able to articulate a shared vision of the reforms needed in the mining sector. Now:

- Parliament and CSOs are working together to oversee Executive Branch performance across the extractive industry value chain. The 2010 mining act has improved licensing procedures and fiscal regimes. MPs debated the bill more thoroughly than any other during that session: 23 MPs contributed on the floor and 61 submitted their views in writing, about a quarter of the membership of parliament. Most of the inputs of MPs and CSOs were incorporated into the final version.
- RWI coaching and training strengthened the voice of civil society members of the EITI multi-stakeholder group. CSOs won rules requiring companies to report royalty and tax payments on a company-by-company basis. They also secured an independent governance structure for EITI.
- Work by RWI and its partners reduced loopholes in taxation and royalties to be paid to the government. If correctly administered, these changes will increase mineral revenues, boosting spending and growth.
- MPs interviewed at the final evaluation were four times more likely to request information from national CSOs than at baseline—an important achievement given MPs' distrust of CSOs when the project began.

Uganda

Before the pilot, Parliament had virtually no understanding of the nascent oil industry. Legislators were unable to articulate priorities or a strategy for the sector, or to reach out to civil society for support. As a result of the pilot, the following changes took place:

- MPs formed a Parliamentary Forum on Oil and Gas to coordinate advocacy.
- A group of legislators repeatedly raised the threat of a petition requesting public disclosure of oil contracts. In June 2010, Uganda's president responded by submitting seven signed

oil contracts for MPs to review privately. MPs pledged to disclose the contracts publicly, boosting the efforts of CSOs and journalists who are seeking access to these documents through Uganda's Access to Information Act.

- RWI's analysis of the draft petroleum bill and capital gain taxation generated heated debate in civil society, and was featured in articles by national and international media. The analysis also contributed to an important amendment of the income tax rules.

These results demonstrate that the pilot projects have had a significant impact. MPs are now better able to perform their roles. Since many of the laws and contracts are new, however, it remains to be seen how effective they will be. Oversight by civil society and media is crucial to ensure that parliaments fulfill their promises and the government adopts enforcement procedures.

Lessons learned

Working with Parliamentarians

Constraints to parliamentary performance

It takes time to build trust with MPs, and an election may shake up previous gains. Parliamentary elections in sub-Saharan Africa bring an average of 50 percent turnover. In Tanzania, the Energy and Minerals Committee of Parliament elected in 2011 has only one member from the previous committee. Uganda's key extractives committee experienced similar turnover. In both countries, MPs who questioned their governments' approach in the extractives sector were effectively marginalized. In Sierra Leone, the government can invoke emergency procedure on approval of all laws and contracts. This severely restricts Parliament's ability to influence legislation. In some countries, "standing orders" and the "whipping system" prevent MPs from speaking or voting outside of party lines. Such constraints can neutralize parliamentary oversight no matter how informed and motivated MPs are.

Cognizant of these challenges, RWI invested heavily in promoting changes to laws and contracts that would outlive parliaments, and in building the capacity of partners who would be able to train new MPs in future parliaments. Looking ahead, parliaments need to strike a better balance between party discipline and independent thinking. Also, parliaments need to develop internal staff and research facilities to support new MPs.

Navigating complex institutions

In each country, RWI encountered different kinds of MPs and staffers. Each parliament is likely to have a group of reformers who are genuinely interested in moving their countries forward and value capacity building. Self-interested change makers generally seek the prestige and visibility that may win them reelection. RWI promoted capacity building to them in ways that resonated with their interests. Briefings and trainings emphasized what MPs themselves had to gain, in addition to what was at stake for the country. Bringing these MPs on board was instrumental to creating critical mass for change.

Finally, obstructionists are MPs and staffers who are interested in preserving the status quo. They are usually well integrated in the ruling party apparatus, or have a conflict of interest: it is not unusual to meet MPs who sit on the boards of mining companies or otherwise financially benefit from the sector. The impact that building capacity has on this group is limited or nonexistent. Worse, obstructionist MPs can restrict capacity-building interventions to the rest of parliament.

RWI carefully selected reformers and potential change makers for capacity development to maximize impact. This required negotiation with parliamentary offices, which usually preferred to

"The workshops have given media participants capacity on how to report and how to explain issues to the public concerning their needs, expectations, rights and responsibilities."

– Richard Sky of Citi FM, Ghana

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“The performance [of the Energy and Mineral Committee] is unprecedented. Mining companies brought their representatives to the committee for the purpose of manipulating them, but with RWI knowledge, we were on a par with them.”

– Tanzania MP

pick MPs regardless of the MPs’ interest or specialization. RWI also attempted to engage reformist MPs across party lines. This was essential to bringing all parties on board and ensuring that RWI and partners would be perceived as independent organizations with no hidden agenda. Cross-party support also ensures the sustainability of legislation beyond the mandate of a legislature.

Learner-centered methods

Learner-centered methods meet learners where they are and appeal to their experience. Many MPs do not have advanced degrees and are challenged by assignments requiring expertise and analysis. Field visits were effective with MPs because they are participatory and experiential. Hands-on activities keep parliamentarians focused on identifying problems and finding solutions.

At the same time, providing a dignified learning environment is essential for the credibility of high-level capacity development. In workshops, MPs were impressed with the caliber of the experts present. They were particularly interested in analyses of how their countries compared internationally. Presentations by experts were followed by exercises that challenged participants to reflect on and apply their new knowledge.

Training is just the beginning

Building the capacity of MPs is more effective when it involves targeted technical assistance. Capacity development does not stop after workshops or taking trips: it may involve writing MPs’ speeches, attending meetings, or picking up a copy of an agreement at a moment’s notice when MPs need information the most. It is equally important to devise tools for independent use. Creating easy-to-use, step-by-step tools, checklists and templates allows MPs to analyze legislation and agreements they might otherwise dismiss as being only for “experts.”

Target MPs who will share knowledge

Choosing key MPs for training and trips inspires sharing and leadership within parliament. The projects’ final evaluations indicated that MPs were sharing valuable knowledge with colleagues who did not take part in the pilot.

Assess the opportunity of engaging clerks

While clerks could serve as a source of institutional memory for new MPs, RWI’s experience suggests that MPs usually relegate them to administrative functions and do not value their input. This raised a challenge for the pilot projects, forcing RWI and partners to reorient training resources away from clerks and toward MPs. In the future, however, it is essential that parliaments make full use of professional staff, both in committees and research departments.

Involve MPs in planning

Involving parliamentarians in planning of capacity-building events encourages them to attend, because they choose timeframes, venues and schedules that are attractive and relevant to them.

Working with Civil Society Organizations

The constraints on parliaments underscore the importance of an independent, capable civil society. RWI partners with a range of CSOs. In Ghana, it worked with an organization devoted to improving the effectiveness of parliaments, in Uganda a specialist NGO on energy issues, and in Sierra Leone and Tanzania, civil society advocacy coalitions.

RWI’s work with civil society can raise tensions with parliamentarians. They perceive CSOs as antagonistic oversight bodies with no democratic legitimacy. In Tanzania, for instance, relations between Parliament and civil society have been strained by civil society campaigning against a parliamentary discretionary fund. Though the campaigning was generally constructive, it led Parliament to cut off

dialogue with civil society on all policy issues. This created huge challenges when RWI proposed to deliver the capacity-building program through a civil society counterpart. In the end, RWI had to manage the effort directly, providing separate programs to Parliament, CSOs and media to gradually rebuild trust among these groups. In Ghana, by contrast, RWI's country partner, Parliamentary Centre, enjoyed the trust of Parliament because it was known not take stances on policy issues.

For this reason, RWI worked hard to help its partners maintain political neutrality and gain credibility with parliaments while not renouncing their policy advocacy objectives.

The ability of RWI's partner organizations to access information and influence policy was largely dictated by their country's political circumstances. Also, civil society coalitions that focus on oil and mineral governance are at times weakened by their members' competition for resources. Weaknesses in advocacy efforts also arise from limitations in direction, coordination and management.

Under effective leadership, capacity development can be a good way for coalitions to come together. In Tanzania, the RWI training fellowship created a forum for the most effective CSOs to unite in their own informal network. The most knowledgeable fellows formed a core group that reviewed the law under the capable leadership of Policy Forum. The CSOs were able to demonstrate to parliamentarians that they were not playing politics, but providing knowledge. Instead of feeling attacked, MPs understood that the coalition wanted to help and had the expertise to do it.

Working with Media

The journalists in the pilot countries faced a range of challenges. Very few journalists are paid a regular salary by media houses; most are freelance, paid by the story. The price of a story does not include the journalist's own investment in gathering information. And since most journalists are untrained, thus it is easier for them to write stories based on stereotypes and speculation than investigative or analytical pieces.

The evaluation shows the most enterprising journalists were in Sierra Leone; the least so were in Ghana. Many Ghanaian journalists were reluctant to take risks to get stories, though they recognized the importance of in-depth reporting. In Sierra Leone, there were well-informed journalists who were willing to risk their lives to tell the truth. Although mining companies invited them on trips, they preferred to investigate independently. However, most did take advantage of the sponsored trips to gain information and access.

In all countries, journalists' ability to report was undermined by economic necessity, media owners with vested interests in the mining sector, political pressures on owners and editors, and the abuse of political power to silence the media.

Because of political pressure or fear of retribution, sources often want to be off the record, or retract strong quotes. In Sierra Leone, for example, a leading MP retracted a statement he made in the media after it was criticized as "reckless" by mining companies.

Newspapers and reporters are attacked from all sides when they release sensitive information. One award-winning story from Sierra Leone provoked condemnation from a mining company. Some editors will avoid certain mining stories because their papers depend on mining company advertising.

RWI has incorporated these lessons into its spin-off projects with the media.

Challenges and Merits of Convening MPs, CSOs and Journalists

In conclusion, RWI targeted three groups for its interventions: parliamentarians, civil society

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organizations and the media. Attempts to bring all three together for capacity building were challenging. Civil society and the media often work together in exposing politically sensitive issues about extractives. Journalists admire civil society actors for having the guts to tell the truth about what see. However, this is precisely what raises tensions with parliamentarians. As a result, RWI sometimes needed to provide separate activities for each of these groups.

For some activities, such as field trips and certain trainings, keeping MPs, CSOs and media together allowed the groups to start relating to each other. Parliamentarians were initially resistant to cooperate with “troublemakers,” but eventually learned that they all had something in common: the cause of the people and the country. The more the three groups learned about each other, the less antagonistic and more cooperative they became.

Conclusion and future directions

The RWI pilot demonstrated that parliamentarians, civil society organizations and the media are able to work together, although in some case tentatively, in order to promote change, accountability and transparency in the extractives sector. They need information, technical assistance and support to do so. Each of the four countries made strides in either improving their legislation or gaining access to oil and gas agreements.

Engagement with MPs needs to be sustained—if not, the opportunities created by the pilot will be lost. The former chairperson of Uganda’s Natural Resources Committee, offered advice on how RWI and other organizations should work with parliaments. First, they should recognize that the parliament’s work is often not straightforward, but erratic in its development. It may not be in sync with the way that NGOs or CSOs work, i.e., with restricted funding for specific work plans. If organizations like RWI want to work with parliament, they need to be flexible and responsive, to work fast and even “fly in consultants” if they need to. If they cannot be flexible, they may not “capture the urgency” of the moment, and may lose out on the opportunity that they have been waiting for: to influence the policy-making process.

In the future, RWI should engage parliaments with strong support services in multiyear partnerships reaching across mandates. It should build parliaments’ capacity to deal not only with legislating, but also with budgeting and spending. Ultimately, parliamentarians should be able to envision themselves as change makers in all aspects of natural resource governance—and as public servants devoted to making oil and minerals drivers of national growth and development.



The Revenue Watch Institute promotes the effective, transparent and accountable management of oil, gas and mineral resources for the public good. Through capacity building, technical assistance, research, funding and advocacy, we help countries to realize the development benefits of their natural resource wealth.

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