

Making Effective Submissions

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Understanding the Lawmaking Process

- Parliament makes laws and exercises oversight. Oversight function includes looking at implementation of legislation
- Different categories of Bills: section 75, section 76 Bills, Bills amending the Constitution; Money Bills
- Bills (draft laws) must be considered by both NA and NCOP
- Bills typically drafted by the Executive and introduced in NA/NCOP by responsible Minister.
- Bills have accompanying memorandums
- Section 75 Bill – Introduced by Minister in NA and then referred to PC for discussion and amendment
- Debated and passed in the NA
- Tabled in the NCOP
- Referred to Select Committee
- Debated in the NCOP – passed; passed with amendments; rejected
- Back to the NA
- To President for assent.
- Commencement

People's Parliament

- Constitution says that Parliament must facilitate public involvement in its legislative and other processes, and conduct its business in an open manner and hold its sittings and committee meetings in public
- Can attend committee meetings (generally meetings are open)
- Contact MPs; Committees, etc, to tell them about your concerns.
- Make submissions – written and oral
- Problem - unless the Committee specifically asks for public input, generally opportunities to speak/make inputs during a Committee meeting are very limited.
- SO:
 - Ø Work behind the scenes very important - Can lobby MPs, Committees, Parliamentary support staff about issues want addressed.
 - Ø Written submissions and public hearings are key for putting across your views

Plan your Strategy

- Carefully plan your strategy beforehand
- Identify the issues you want to address. Have a common understanding about what you want to achieve (the outcomes you want)
- Be realistic – prioritise and push hard on essential issues.
- Look at resources available and allocate for best effect
- Formulate a concrete plan with assigned tasks and timeframes

Consultation

- Consult widely if possible (and be ready to answer questions)
- NGO's often get asked about their mandate
 - Ø Who representing?
 - Ø How much consultation?
 - Ø On what issues?

Partnerships/Alliances

- It makes sense to form partnerships with other like-minded organisations
- Allows for pooling of resources and avoids duplication
- Allows access to wider collective constituency, giving additional weight to views (critical mass)

Know Your Stuff

- Ensure that your submissions are factually correct
- Draw on available research – international (Try to include developing countries) and local
- Ensure that you know are aware of the political context/ applicable government policies, etc

Communication

- Make contact with parliamentarians – no's are available on website
- Ask to speak with the chairperson (key person), committee whip of the majority party, multiparty delegation
- Don't forget opposition members
- If can't arrange a meeting, then try to talk on the phone or write letter
- Ensure that any delegation is representative
- Be clear about the purpose of the meeting and what you want from the Committee
- Don't forget that parliamentary staff (Researchers, Content Advisors, Committee Secretaries) can also help get your views to the Committee/Chair

Making a written submission

- Ensure that written submissions are relevant to the issue/bill being discussed, concise and specific
- Include an executive summary, structured logically, easy to read language
- Contain easy to identify recommendations
- Indicate whether want to make an oral submission as well
- Technical issues – make sure that comment on the right documents/version of the Bill, etc.
- Check that refer to correct clause (double check – very easy to make a mistake)
- Get your terminology correct – Distinguish between Bills (draft legislation) and Acts (legislation that has been passed); Bills have clauses, Acts have sections.
- Try to get your submission in on time so that Members (and support staff) have time to look at them

Making oral submissions

- NB – you have very limited time to make your point, so be strategic
- Prioritise
- Present your case clearly and logically, clearly identify the issues you will address, make concrete recommendations
- If formed civil society partnerships, can have a common thread, but assign focus areas so that can cover as many aspects as possible
- If possible, ensure a presence throughout the process. If a matter/bill is going to take some time to finalise, appoint representatives to attend the committee meetings. Make sure that the Committee know who they are.
- Know who the committee members are and talk to committee members at tea and lunch breaks
- Don't forget the support staff (researchers, content advisor, committee secretary)
- Have your power point presentation available well beforehand – but try to be engaging – speak to the slides, don't just read
- Representivity - ensure that members understand what constituencies you represent – far more powerful if views have been canvassed widely and are supported by broad spectrum (urban/rural; male/female; etc)
- Personal stories can be very powerful

Follow up

- Try to follow up on the outcome of your submission
- Was your recommendation included or not
- If not, why?
- What other recommendations did the Committee make
- Can write letter, telephone, make an appointment, etc
- Try to keep dialogue open