Following the Myanmar national election held on 8 November 2015, newly elected MPs took their seats in the Myanmar Parliament in Nay Pyi Taw on Monday 1 February 2016.

This marked the first time in Myanmar’s recent history that there has been a transfer of power from one elected parliament to another. Neither the Parliamentary leadership nor the administration have had practical experience of such a transition previously.

There has been a high turnover of MPs since the last parliament. Not only will new MPs be less familiar with their new roles and responsibilities, they will have less access to institutional knowledge from long-serving Members.

UNDP has supported the Myanmar Parliament to prepare an induction programme to provide insight, experience and guidance into how MPs can effectively undertake their lawmaking, oversight and representation duties and on equal opportunity for women as MPs.

This will directly contribute towards achievement of the Parliament’s Strategic Plan (2014-2018).

The key objectives of the induction are:

**Help MPs understand their duties and functions:** sharing a national and international perspective on lawmaking, representation and oversight

**Help Women MPs be more effective:** understanding the challenges and opportunities and make recommendations.

**Show MPs where to turn for assistance:** enable them to access sources of knowledge and support

The induction programme will take place from 15th-19th February in the Parliament complex in Nay Pyi Taw, facilitated by experienced MPs and parliamentary staff.

National and international resource people and MPs from Myanmar and around the world will give keynote addresses, participate in panel discussions, and facilitate interactive sessions with the new MPs about key topics. UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union will also act as a resource.

The design of the programme was informed by UNDP’s survey of 69 MPs from the previous parliament, which highlighted three things:

- MPs had very little knowledge or experience of their parliamentary roles and how to engage with the institution;
- Pre-conceptions of what MPs wanted to achieve affected how they saw their duties;
- Women MPs faced unique challenges.
Day 1 - Democracy, Public Leadership & the Role of MPs

The objective is to address the role of political leaders in democratic systems of government, where the power to govern is derived from citizens and where those with authority are answerable to citizens. The programme will discuss the opportunities MPs have to influence change, in policy and administration and on local and national issues.

Day 2 - Separation of Powers: Checking & Balancing Power

The objective is to address the implications of one of the most important principles in all modern democratic systems of government (including Myanmar) – the separation of sovereign power into three components: legislative, executive and judicial power. The constitutional enshrinement of this arrangement has far-reaching implications for the way each branch of government operates.

Day 3 - Representing Constituents

The objective is to address the fundamental duty of MPs to represent the interest of constituents. The MPs will have a chance to discuss how constituency interests can be identified, managed and represented.

Day 4 - Law-making / Being an MP: Coping with Complex Responsibilities

The objective is to discuss the typical steps involved in making laws. This will include issues related to determining policy and deciding on legislative approaches, drafting proposed legislation and reviewing, amending and voting on Bills.

A second part of the day will address the complex and demanding responsibilities, involving weighty responsibilities, stressful situations and long hours of MPs.

Day 5 - Women MPs: Strategies for Success.

The objective is to discuss with the MPs about the particular challenges facing women MPs and to develop options for providing greater support to enable women to be effective MPs.

International Experience

Induction programmes are common in Parliaments across the world, who recognise that the effectiveness of a Parliament depends ultimately on its members. Many parliaments will have younger members who do not have experience in performing public roles, or new members who have never been in Parliament before. Orientation and induction programmes generally make sure that members have a basic understanding of their roles, and understand processes in order to work within committees and the house.

Hearing from MPs and Parliamentary staff from other countries is particularly beneficial to Myanmar, which does not have a longstanding Parliamentary tradition, and has few returning Members of Parliament. Although each Parliament has a unique identity, and in each country the three key functions of legislative development, representation and oversight are understood and carried out slightly differently, there are still common lessons to be gathered from Parliaments around the world.

During Myanmar’s induction, members of legislative institutions will come from South Korea, Philippines, Malaysia, Timor Leste, Bhutan, Pakistan, United Kingdom and Australia.

What’s next?

Within the induction programme, there are several measures to help MPs retain and use their new knowledge, and continue to have discussions about the role of Parliament and the best ways to perform their duties. MPs will be provided with further learning resources, have the chance to develop international networks, and have a greater familiarity with Parliamentary staff and the services available.

UNDP hopes to continue to support the professional development of MPs through the Learning Centre, and by providing technical advice to committees, to better equip them to perform their respective roles and responsibilities and understand wider democratic governance principles and reform practices. In particular, UNDP hopes to continue dedicated support to Myanmar’s female MPs.

The Parliament’s Strategic Plan, launched in 2014, has 4 key objectives. UNDP will continue to support the achievement of these objectives, including through support for the development of a modern ICT infrastructure, and technical advice to the parliamentary and administrative leadership on aspects of Strategic Plan implementation.

Myanmar Experience

The new Parliament will benefit from effective leadership, and from building on the experiences and lessons of the previous Parliament. Former and returning MPs, and the incoming leadership, have much insight into what the Parliament’s needs are, what the challenges are, and potential ways to improve the way that parliament works, and the way MPs perform their duties.

For more information, visit:
www.mm.undp.org or contact
Emma Morley
Team Leader Democratic Governance
Emma.Morley@undp.org