

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PARLIAMENTARY FORUM (SADC PF)

On 6th May 2005, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) signed a Grant Agreement of US\$2,600,000. The grant was approved at the 32nd ACBF Executive Board Meeting in December 2004.

Prior to the approval of the grant, ACBF had provided support of US\$50,000 for the needs assessment study of networking among parliamentarians in the SADC and East Africa Region.

Established in 1996, the SADC PF is an independent institution that was created to strengthen the capacity of SADC by involving representatives of the people in the implementation of SADC programs and projects. The SADC PF comprises of 1 800 parliamentarians in 12 SADC member states which include, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Key constraints of the SADC PF were highlighted in its Strategic Plan 2000-2005 and these related to the lack of institutionalized and well coordinated training for parliamentarians and staffers; lack of access and effective utilization of information and communication technology; lack of policy oriented research analysis, knowledge management skills and outlets at the SADC PF Secretariat and member parliaments and inadequate human resources and institutional infrastructure at the SADC PF Secretariat.

The institutional strengthening and capacity building project aims at creating a facility and institutional framework for equipping members of parliament, parliamentary staffers and parliamentary institutions in the SADC region with knowledge, skills and information that enhance their professional performance in implementing their mandates. The project has three main components, which are leadership training and development of members of parliament and parliamentary staffers, research resources dissemination and networking using information communication technologies and institutional support to the Secretariat of the SADC PF.

In his speech at the signing of the grant, the Executive Secretary of ACBF, Dr. Soumana Sako emphasized that, " parliament is a legitimate institution of democratic governance which should be capacitated to check the powers of the executive, initiate credible legislation and maintain adequate consultations with its constituents. Strengthening democratic governance is one of the key objectives of the Millennium Development Goals and parliaments have an

importance role to play to ensure that the necessary conditions for development are implemented.”

Dr. Sako further emphasized that policy analysis capacity of national parliaments and parliamentary institutions is one the Foundation’s core competence areas. Since 2001, ACBF has supported other projects that strengthen parliaments in Benin, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe; and in addition through a technical advisory panel and network on national parliaments and parliamentary institutions (PARLIANET). PARLIANET comprises African and non-African professional with vast knowledge of issues relating to the building of capacity of national parliaments to guide the Foundation operations in this area.