PART 2

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION OF E-PARLIAMENT

Chapter 4

Envisioning, Planning, and Managing for e-Parliament

ICT can help a parliament achieve its aspirations for transparency, accountability, accessibility, and better communication with the electorate, but an institutional commitment to develop an explicit e-parliament vision is a necessary first step. An inclusive vision must evolve out of the collaborative efforts of the leadership of parliament, its members, senior officials, and staff. It should translate into a policy statement providing guidance on the e-parliament goals to be pursued by the institution, as well as address more specific issues such as when and how to engage the public in the policy making process, what channels of communication to support, and how to overcome the many challenges posed by the digital divide. Related objectives need to be established so that ICT can be implemented in accordance with best practices and standards. These may range from the use of technology to improve the efficiency of parliamentary operations to ensuring the security of systems and the appropriate degree of privacy for members' and citizens' communications.

As highlighted in the *World e-Parliament Report 2008*[1], the vision should embody the fundamental values of the parliament and address such concerns as:

- Achieving *transparency and openness* for both the parliament as an institution and the members as individual representatives of their constituencies;
- Providing *universal access to authoritative public documentation* for citizens regardless of their personal resources or abilities;
- Improving the mechanisms for *accountability* of parliament and its members to their electorate;
- Enabling *dialogue* between the parliament - and its members - and the citizenry;
- Ensuring *access* to authoritative information and the *security* and *privacy* of personal information;
- Supporting the *work of the parliament* in an efficient and cost-effective manner;
- Participating in the *global Information Society*.

Box 4.1

The strategic planning and management of the use of ICT in parliament is integral to and must proceed from an overall effort towards the strategic management of the legislative framework, its systems and processes. For this reason, ICT programme planning, management and oversight must be built on a clear and comprehensive vision of what we want or hope our parliaments to be.

Marilyn B. Barua-Yap, Secretary General, House of Representatives of the Philippines
Statement at the World e-Parliament Conference 2009

1 United Nations, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, *World e-Parliament Report 2008,* [New York]: United Nations, 2008, p.16, [http://www.ictparliament.org].

An effective policy statement must also take into account the nature and role of the parliament, its institutional context, and its capacity to adopt innovative technologies. It has to place a high value on improving support for parliamentary functions through the use of technology, rather then considering ICT advances as ends in themselves. It must also delineate, implicitly or explicitly, the enabling environment for its accomplishment.

To move from the articulation of the vision to its implementation requires the engagement of the Presiding Officers, the members, the Secretary General, the Director of ICT, and key parliamentary staff. Without the support of the President/Speaker – or designated parliament leadership – it is likely that ICT will remain marginal to the overall institutional development. Also, technology is disruptive to current practice and operations, it requires changes in behavior, and it demands financial and staff resources over time. Without support at the highest level, these challenges will continue to be substantial barriers to e-parliament. Members must also be engaged both to identify their priorities and to be willing to review, test, and then employ solutions that meet their needs.

The Secretary General has a vital role in informing and advising the leadership and the members of the benefits and the limitations of technology and in overseeing its planning and implementation by the technical managers and staff. The Director of ICT should ensure that the ICT staff understand the nature and needs of legislatures, especially as they differ from other public and private sector entities. They must also have expert knowledge of the technologies most likely to be useful to the legislature. Other officials of the secretariat have an important role in ensuring broad-based interaction and involvement of staff in carrying out the e-parliament transformative process throughout the institution.

The organizational structure for implementing ICT should encourage ideas and contributions at all levels and foster a high degree of cooperation and collaboration. There are various ways to achieve these objectives through mechanisms with various degrees of formality, such as committees, working groups or ad hoc meetings. It is especially important that all stakeholders possess the motivation to work together, recognize their interdependence, and be focused on the needs of parliament as a whole before their particular department or organization needs.

Implementation requires strategic planning and the discipline of formal project management. Strategic planning links the goals and objectives of the vision to projects and proposals of members, stakeholders, and other users, assesses their feasibility and cost, and outlines plans, schedules, and resource requirements. The strategic planning process enables a parliament to establish priorities and to allocate resources accordingly. It also ensures that tradeoffs and compromises among competing requirements are made taking into account the probable consequences of those decisions.

Finally, adopting ICT is an investment that requires adequate financial and staff resources. Funding is always insufficient to meet demand; sound management and planning processes enable parliaments to assess the full scope of the requirements and to allocate appropriately. Staff resources require particular attention due to the special nature of parliamentary bodies and the need to involve ICT experts who understand the way parliament works.

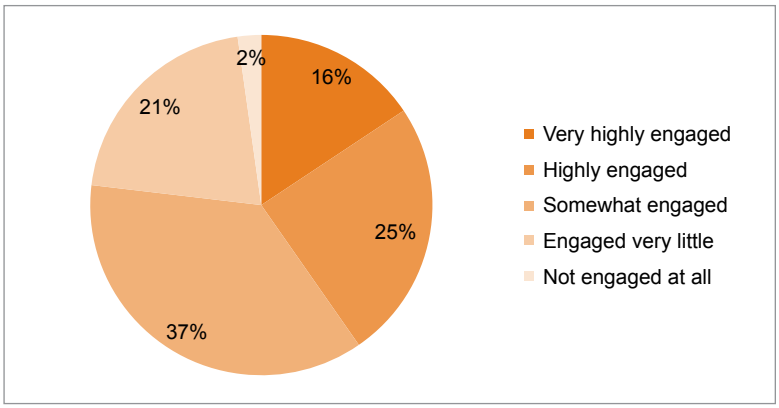
RESULTS AND FINDINGS FROM THE 2009 SURVEY

The 2009 Global Survey of ICT in Parliaments focused on five key aspects related to envisioning, planning, and managing for e-parliament: 1) the extent of engagement of the parliamentary leadership; 2) the involvement of stakeholders in proposing ideas and setting goals and objectives; 3) the modalities of oversight and direction; 4) visions statements, strategic planning and project management; and, 5) the resources committed to ICT, including both staff and funding.

Engagement of leaders

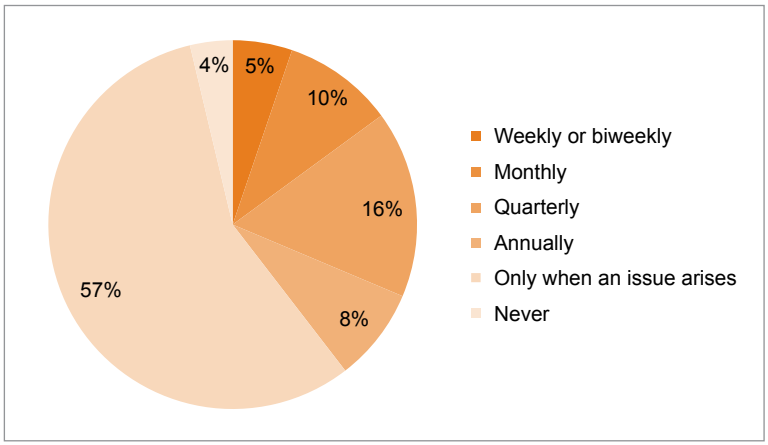
41% of parliaments reported that political leaders - at the level of the Speaker/President or the Vice Speaker/Vice President - were engaged in ICT "very highly" or "highly"; 23% reported that they were engaged "very little" or "not at all" (see Figure 4.1). The fact that almost twice as many parliaments reported that political leaders were engaged at the highest levels is positive. While this does not translate into the commitment of a significant amount of time devoted to ICT by the leadership, it does not necessarily need to. Nearly two thirds of parliaments reported that political leaders were engaged with e-parliament issues either "annually" or "only when an issue arises" (see Figure 4.2). This reflects the reality of the time constraints of those in leadership positions. However, with competent senior managers, this does not mean less effective decision making or weak guidance if the political and institutional support is felt throughout the organization.

Figure 4.1: Level of engagement of political leaders of the parliament in ICT



(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 4; 134 respondents)

Figure 4.2: Frequency of political engagement with the issue of ICT in parliament

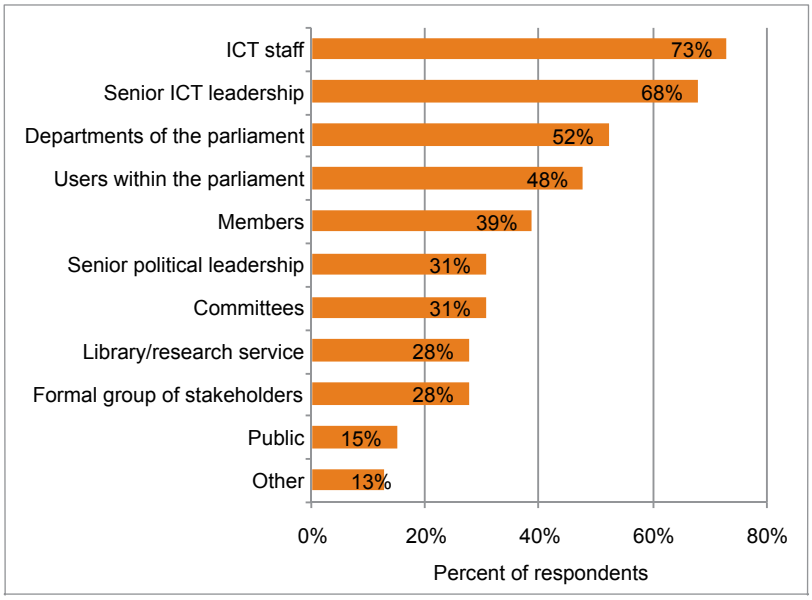


(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 5; 134 respondents)

Involvement of stakeholders in proposing ideas and setting goals and objectives

In many parliaments ideas and proposals for technology goals and projects come from a range of officials, staff, and users. ICT staff and senior ICT leadership are mentioned in 73% and 68% of parliaments respectively. Others involved include departments of the parliament (52% of parliaments), users (48%), and members (39%). Senior political leadership of the parliament is mentioned by 31% of parliaments (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Source of ideas and proposals for ICT goals and projects



(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 3; 134 respondents)

While it is understandable that many legislatures would seek the views of ICT leadership and staff, given their knowledge of the field and the increasing complexity of technology, it appears encouraging, but certainly not fully satisfactory, that departments and users are mentioned by about half of parliaments.

It is of some concern that members are mentioned as contributing ideas by only 39% of parliaments. In the 2009:2007 Compare Group[2] the percentage of parliaments reporting that members contribute ideas went from 47% in 2007 to 37% in 2009. The survey does not include any questions that might help to explain this decrease. Chapter 2 noted that the challenge in using ICT for communication reported by the most parliaments was that members were not familiar with the technology. At the World e-Parliament Conference 2009, a number of participants cited the need of members for training in the use of technology.[3] On the other hand, some members are increasingly knowledgeable about technology and demand more from their parliament's administration. A variety of conflicting factors are at work in this instance but the effective management of ICT in a legislature requires being able to address members at both ends of the knowledge spectrum and with very different sets of requirements.

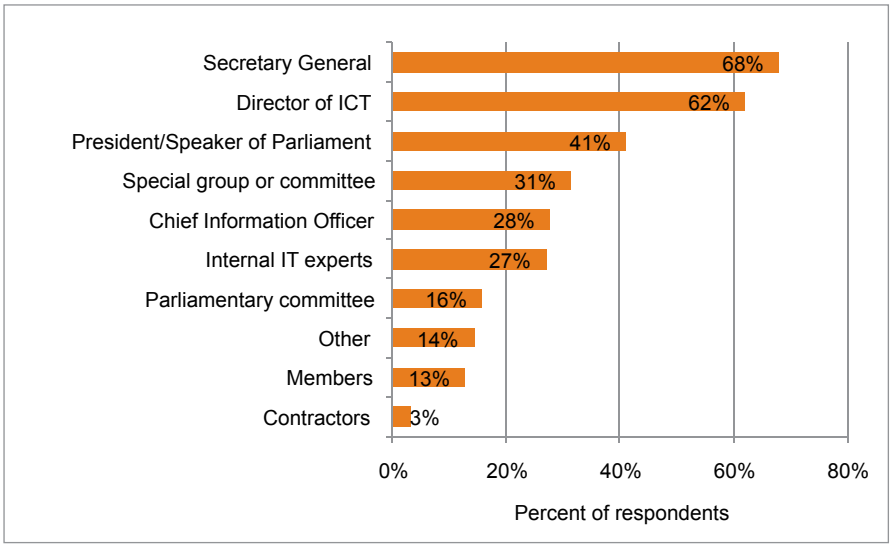
Although ideas for ICT come from many individuals and groups, the lead responsibility in most parliaments for translating the policy directives into specific goals and objectives rests with the

2 As described in the Introduction, the 2009:2007 Compare Group is a subgroup of parliaments that responded to both the 2009 and 2007 survey. This group consists of 87 chambers.

3 World e-Parliament Conference 2009, High-level panel "Connecting Parliaments and citizens: new technologies to foster openness, transparency and accountability".

Secretary General (68%) and the Director of ICT (62%). 41% of parliaments report that the President/Speaker is also involved. Others are mentioned by less than a third of parliaments (see Figure 4.4). Results from the 2009:2007 Compare Group indicate an increase in the number of parliaments reporting that these three officials bear this responsibility.

Figure 4.4: Establishment of goals and objectives for ICT in parliament/chamber



(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 2; 134 respondents)

Box 4.2

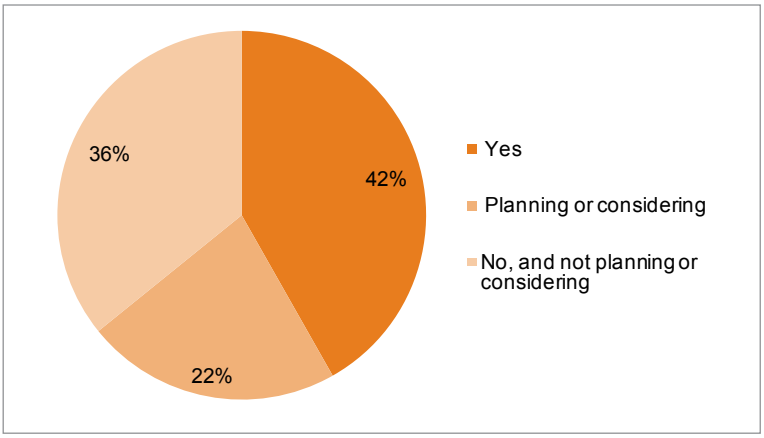
When creating a strategy, it is important to involve all players in the development and implementation of the vision, including parliamentarians, ICT Directors and other parliamentary officials.

Anders Forsberg, Secretary General of the Parliament of Sweden
Statement at the World e-Parliament Conference 2009

Oversight and management

While the Secretary General and the ICT Director have the primary management responsibility for technology in most parliaments, the 2009 survey found that over 60% of parliaments have established, or are considering establishing, a specially designated committee or group that provides direction and oversight for the use of ICT (see Figure 4.5). Staff are part of this group in 74% of parliaments and members in 51%.[4] Given the imperative for ICT to accommodate the needs of many users, such a mechanism can be an effective vehicle for channeling different views and requirements in an inclusive way. However, it would be preferable if a larger percentage of parliaments included members as part of such committees.

Figure 4.5: Special committee or group provides direction and oversight for the use of ICT in parliament

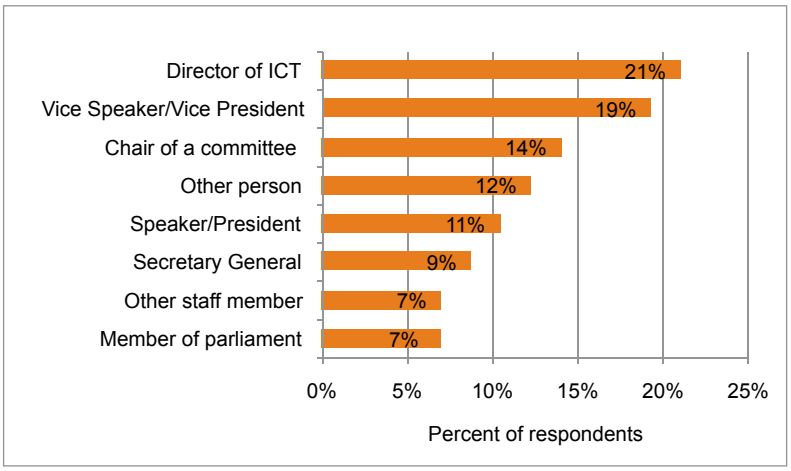


(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 6; 134 respondents)

4 Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 7.

It is interesting to note the variety of people who chair these groups. As shown in Figure 4.6, no single individual or official predominates.

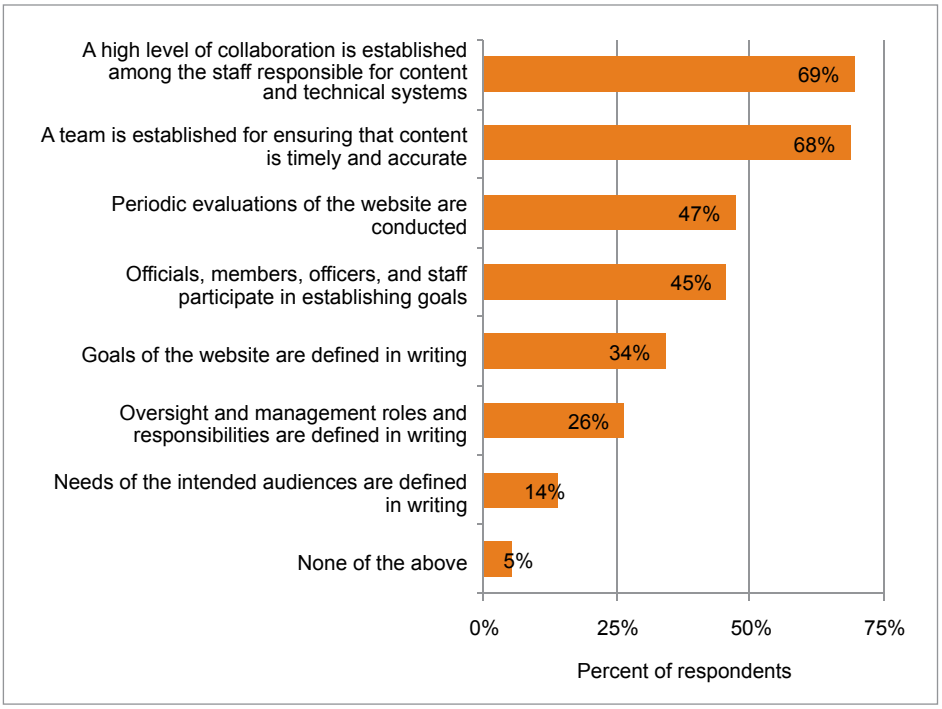
Figure 4.6: Chairs of specially designated committees for ICT



(Source: 2008 Survey, Section 1, Question 8; 57 resp. – 42% responding yes to Question 6)

This collaborative approach to overseeing ICT in general is reflected in the management of parliamentary websites. As shown in Figure 4.7, 45% of parliaments report that officials, members, officers, and staff participate in setting the goals for the website. In addition, 69% have established a high level of collaboration among the staff responsible for content and the staff responsible for technical systems; and 68% have established a team for ensuring that content is timely and accurate. These indicators of collaboration in the operation of websites are positive, and a good model for the operation of ICT throughout the legislature.

Figure 4.7: Activities that take place in the management of the parliamentary website



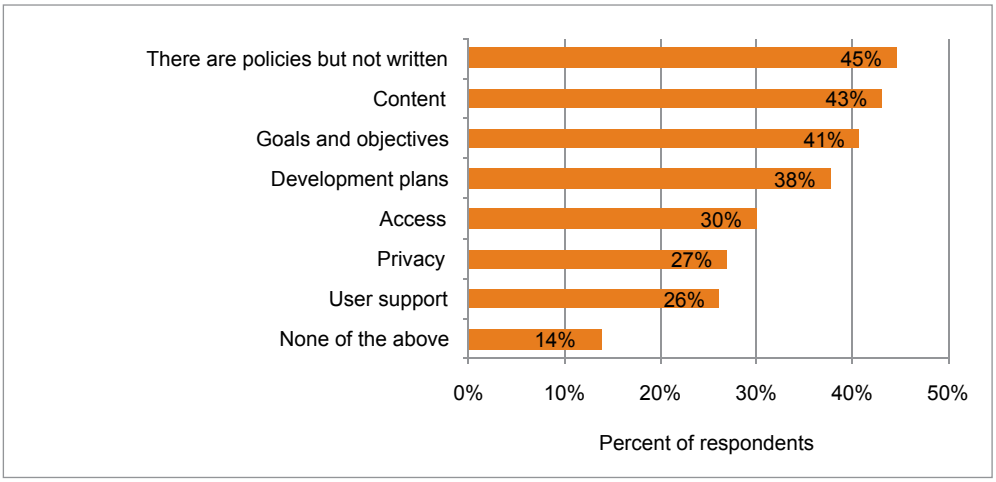
(Source: Survey 2009, Section 5, Question 15; 130 respondents – 97% responding "yes" to Question 1)

Vision statements, strategic planning, and project management

A vision for ICT is a critical requirement, but to be most effective it needs to be a written policy statement so that all those who implement or use technology can understand the goals and objectives of the legislature. In the 2009 survey 43% of parliaments reported that they have a written vision statement for ICT; 40% stated that they are planning or considering one; 18% said they did not have one and were not planning or considering one.[5]

In the 2007 survey, 61% of parliaments stated that they had a vision statement, from which it may appear that a significant decrease took place in the past two years. However, as the question posed in 2007 did not specify a "written" statement, it is likely that more parliaments have established a vision by some means, even if it has not been formally written. For example, the 2009 survey asked whether there were written policies for the website in six areas (content, goals and objectives, development plans, access, privacy, and user support). While over 40% of parliaments reported having written policies for several of these areas, 45% of parliaments reported that they did have such policies, but they were not written (see Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8: Written policies for the parliamentary website



(Source: Survey 2009, Section 5, Question 3; 130 respondents – 97% responding "yes" to Question 1)

While some may argue that a policy statement articulated by the President/Speaker is sufficient to delineate the vision of the institution, the reality is that Presidents/Speakers can change and interpretations of verbal statements can shift over time and be understood in different ways by different individuals. In some parliaments, the President/Speaker's term is limited and there may be a reluctance to commit to a vision that could be short lived. This constraint does not obviate the importance of an agreed vision; in some cases it makes it even more important. Visions that can change in a short period of time make it difficult to manage the long term investment that ICT require.

In other cases, an unwritten vision statement may be seen as politically more flexible and therefore useful when there is disagreement over goals and priorities. Nevertheless, such disagreements must be resolved before there can be adequate planning and allocation of resources for technology.

5 Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 9. These percentages add to more than 100% because of rounding.

59% of parliaments report that they have a strategic plan with goals, objectives, and timetables for ICT.[6] A data analysis using the 2009:2007 Compare Group indicates that there has been a decline over the past two years as in 2007 75% of parliaments possessed a strategic plan while in 2009 the number decreases to 64%. In 2007 and 2009 over 80% of those who do have a strategic plan reported that it was regularly updated.[7] In a question newly introduced in the 2009 survey, 61% of parliaments reported that they had established criteria to measure the success of the plan.[8] In a related finding, 47% indicated that they conduct periodic evaluations of the parliamentary website.[9] Taken together these findings suggest that in parliaments in which it is utilized (approximately 60%), strategic planning is well managed by most; however, it needs to be employed on an urgent basis in many more parliaments.

40% of parliaments reported that they employ the methodology of project management for ICT initiatives; another 40% reported that they are planning or considering it. While this is substantially less than the 66% who said they use project management in 2007, that survey did not include the option of "planning or considering". The percentages from 2009 are probably a more accurate reflection of the situation in parliaments.

Staffing

The 2009 survey sought to compare the number of users of ICT in parliament (actual or potential) with the number of ICT staff available to support them. Users were defined as members or staff, either internal or external (contractors or consultants). Figure 4.9 shows the ratio of staff to users for four different groups, based on the number of users. As this Figure illustrates, the ratio staff to users tends to get smaller as the number of users increases. That is, the more users, the fewer the number of staff there are to support them. This finding reflects the economy of scale that one would expect to find for technology. For example, the number of staff needed to develop and maintain a website does not increase in direct proportion to the number of people who use that site, although the number of staff needed to install and maintain PCs to access the site will increase. On the other hand, there is a certain minimum number of staff needed to maintain basic ICT services, which is reflected in the higher staff to user ratios in parliaments with fewer users.

Figure 4.9: Ratio of ICT staff to users

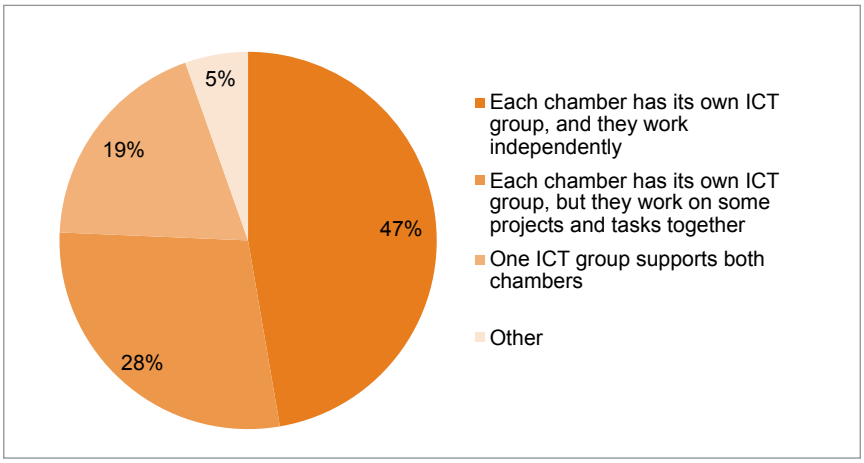
Number of Users	Average number of users	Average number of ICT staff	Ratio of staff to users
Less than 300 users	258	20	1:8
300-500 users	390	28	1:14
500-1100 users	818	45	1:18
More than 1100 users	3219	113	1:29

(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Questions 14 and 15; 134 respondents)

Figure 4.10 shows the degree to which ICT staff are shared between chambers in bicameral parliaments. Even though there may be legal, political, and constitutional reasons for having separate groups that do not work together in bicameral systems, these figures imply that there are missed opportunities for collaboration and shared costs for almost half of the bicameral parliaments that responded to the survey.

6 Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 10.
7 Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 11.
8 Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 12.
9 Source: Survey 2009, Section 5, Question 15.

Figure 4.10: Provision of ICT support for bicameral parliaments



(Source: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 1; 74 respondents)

Funding

Obtaining valid data on ICT budgets presented a number of challenges in the 2009 survey as it did for the 2007 survey. Some respondents did not include all costs for the parliament or for ICT and some treated staff costs differently. Nevertheless, to present meaningful results it was possible to use the information provided by 112 chambers, which represents a substantial increase over the 56 chamber used in the 2007 survey.

Interestingly, the average and median figures for ICT budgets as a percentage of the total budget of the chambers were almost the same in 2009 (4.3% and 2.6% respectively) as they were in 2007 (4.4% and 2.8%).[10]

There is a wide difference, however, between the high and low end of the range of responses. 25% reported that the ICT budget was less than 1% of the total budget for parliament, while 25% reported that it was 5% or more. This represents a very wide range that has obvious impacts on the capacity of many parliaments to initiate and sustain the use of technology.

As challenging as it can be to fund ICT, the results from the 2009 survey suggest that the level of financial support in parliaments may not be all that different from some private sector organizations. For example, a recent survey by Ziff Davis, the publisher of CIO Insight[11] revealed that in 2010 approximately 58% of IT departments had budgets of less than 3% of corporate revenue. While corporate revenue is higher than public funding would be, the comparison is still informative.

10 Sources: Survey 2009, Section 1, Question 17 and Survey 2007, Section 2, Questions 19 and 20.
11 See http://www.cioinsight.com.

SUMMARY

An institutional commitment to develop an explicit e-parliament vision is a necessary first step in using ICT to help a parliament achieve its aspirations for transparency, accountability, accessibility, and better communication with the electorate. E-parliament builds on the pillars of active engagement, a clear vision, broad based management and adequate resources. The highest political leaders of the parliament need to be involved in establishing the vision and setting the goals for ICT in the legislature. The vision should be translated into a policy statement so that it can be widely shared and supported. While direct management can be delegated to the Secretary General and the Director of ICT, the President or Speaker must continuously affirm the objectives of the parliament in its use of technology. Ideas and proposals for using ICT to enhance the work of the plenary, committees, members, the secretariat and other users, should be widely encouraged. In support of this objective, a specially designated committee or group can provide direction and oversight to help ensure that ICT address the parliament's most important needs and supports its goals for transparency, accessibility, and efficiency. Effective management also requires the use of specific tools, techniques, and documents. A strategic plan needs to be drafted in concert with the principles enunciated in the vision and regularly updated on the basis of established criteria; project management techniques must be employed to ensure the timely completion of initiatives within staff capabilities and allotted financial resources.

In light of these requirements, some of the findings from the 2009 Survey of ICT in Parliaments showed that many chambers are doing well, while other findings underscored the need for substantial improvements on a world-wide basis. 41% of parliaments reported that political leaders at the level of the President/Speaker were very highly or highly engaged in ICT, but 23% reported that they were engaged very little or not at all. To some extent the establishment of a special committee or group to provide oversight and direction, along with leadership by the Secretary General and the Director of ICT, can compensate for absence of involvement at the top. It is positive that over 60% of parliaments have established such groups and that the Secretary General and the Director of ICT establish goals and objectives in 68% and 60% of parliaments respectively. In addition, a number of parliaments seek ideas and proposals for the use of ICT from a wide range of users. Unfortunately, fewer than 50% of parliaments receive ideas from those other than the staff and leaders of ICT. Members are reported to be a source of proposals in less that 40% of parliaments.

The availability of a written vision statement in only 43% of parliaments is a significant concern. While many would state that they do possess a vision, the fact that it cannot be published means that it cannot be widely shared and known. It also means that it will be more challenging to determine which technology initiatives should have the highest priority. A higher percentage of parliaments state that they have a strategic plan that is regularly updated, although this is lower than the percentage of legislatures that reported having plans in 2007. The conclusion is that strategic planning appears to be well managed by the parliaments that exercise it, although many more parliaments still need to implement it.

The size of the staff (internal and external) depends in part on the number of users (members + staff), although the ratio of staff to users decreases as the number of users grows. This is a natural result of the economies of scale that can be achieved through technology. The ratio of staff to users based on the mean is reported to be approximately 1:22; based on the median, it is approximately 1:33.

The reported funding for ICT as a percentage of the total budget for the entire parliament averages just above 4%. The range is from less that 1% to 5% or more among those with the lowest and highest percentages. Additional research will be required to provide a more detailed and more precise picture of the funding for technology in parliament. As with staffing, more analysis will also be needed to determine an optimum range for parliaments, which will likely vary according to the types of technologies implemented.