



# “Democracy at the Click of a Mouse”<sup>1</sup>

An Evaluation of NDI’s Technology Assistance Program  
With the South African Parliament



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International Affairs  
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## **Executive Summary**

In response to the South African Parliament's request for assistance in streamlining the legislative and communications processes of its second chamber, the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), NDI developed a unique information management system called "NCOP Online!" This report evaluates the impact NCOP Online!, an internet-based information management system has had on the communication problems between the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), provincial legislatures, and civil society. The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), in partnership with the NCOP, designed and deployed the system. Development started in October 1998; the system was launched in November 1999. Costs of the project were covered by the NCOP, the US Agency for International Development and NDI's Democratic Century Fund, along with in-kind contributions by Microsoft SA.

The NCOP, as the second house of Parliament, comprises permanent delegates and special delegates who rotate in from each of the nine provinces according to the issues under consideration. In addition, the NCOP includes ten non-voting delegates from local government. The mandate of the house is to ensure that national policy is sensitive to provincial and local government concerns. The NCOP meets in Cape Town several times annually, for sittings each lasting four to five weeks. These cycles represent the timeframe in which legislation must pass through the house. Certain bills must also be considered by the provincial legislatures, still within the four weeks. Each province must debate a bill, consult public stakeholders, negotiate with other provincial delegates and develop a mandate outlining the province's position before the bill is voted on in the NCOP. In the first years of the NCOP, this complex process was difficult to manage. For example, politicians in the provinces would receive bills, amendments and schedules via fax or courier, then travel thousands of kilometres from the provinces for hearings in Cape Town, only to find the meetings had been cancelled, or that they had an outdated version of a bill. NCOP Online!, with a website and pro-active email messaging service, was developed as a response to these problems. The website address is [www.parliament.gov.za/ncop](http://www.parliament.gov.za/ncop)

This evaluation, conducted after the system had operated one year, explores its impact on the legislative process, the participation of provinces in the NCOP and public participation. The research is based on a documents review, review of the NCOP Online! website and more than 40 key informant interviews in the provinces of Western Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape. [The appendices include the terms of reference, and lists of interviews and documents consulted.]

After just one year, NCOP Online! has become the primary source of information for many NCOP and provincial staff members. The system has improved the legislative process substantively and administratively, and has increased the capacity of elected leaders and parliamentary staff. Continued efforts are needed to maximise the potential benefits of the system, but the collaboration between NCOP and NDI has yielded significant results.

*It is difficult to prioritise this above the many successful activities we have undertaken together over the last few years, but NCOP Online! may be the most valuable contribution NDI has made to development of the NCOP.*

Hon. Enver Surty, NCOP Chief Whip

## Findings

NCOP *Online!* is well on its way to achieving its original objectives. Nearly all respondents offered very favourable reviews of the system. NCOP *Online!* has improved the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the NCOP legislative process by smoothing the flow of information to the provinces and cutting communication and travel costs. It has helped strengthen policymaking in the NCOP through improved provincial access to information; and has had some effect on facilitating public participation in the legislative process. NCOP *Online!* has contributed to transformational changes within the NCOP.

NCOP *Online!* was designed and implemented well, despite obstacles such as infrastructure partnerships falling through. The consultation process was inclusive within the NCOP, encompassing staff and MPs at every level, but was less inclusive of provincial legislatures. Designing NCOP *Online!* as a web-based information system (rather than an internal parliament network) kept costs down and spread the ability of people to access NCOP information. The restructuring of the NCOP staff divisions, which resulted in the creation of new positions to support the system and re-design of some existing positions, was critical to the success of the project.

After one year, NCOP *Online!* has a strong base. Between October 1999 and March 2000, the system received an average of 25,000 “hits”<sup>2</sup> per month. The numbers decreased in April-May 2000, but peaked at 26,933 in June 2000 when Parliament was active. The number of hits increases sharply when Parliament is sitting. Some 310 users are registered for Epaks, the electronic courier packages of documents sent via email, with just under half being national and provincial staff members. Nearly 206 subscribers come from NGOs, the media, political parties, educational institutes and private sector companies.

While NCOP *Online!* has been successful to date, the system has greater potential to reach more users. The system requires considerable ongoing support. Continued development and maintenance is necessary for NCOP *Online!* to reach its full potential in promoting participatory governance in South Africa.

The following is a summary of key findings:

- **Provincial participation on national issues is easier and better**

*NCOP Online! has without question added value to the legislative process, particularly to standing committees. I continuously refer the provinces to the home page to keep track of what is happening with our meetings and legislation, particularly on Section 76 bills.*

Hon. Mohseen Moosa, Chairperson of the NCOP Standing Committee on Economic and Foreign Affairs

*NCOP Online! has been pivotal in facilitating better participation by provincial and local governments in national policymaking.*

Judy Masekela, Northern Cape Provincial Legislature

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<sup>2</sup> A “hit” is logged any time a user connects with the system and opens at least one document.

NCOP *Online!* has made it easier for provincial legislators and staff to participate in the NCOP, and improved the quality of their inputs. Provincial programmes<sup>3</sup> are now tied to NCOP programmes, facilitating consideration of bills in the provincial legislatures. Access to information on national issues is easier through the website and Epaks: there is no longer one person or a few people who control the information flow. NCOP members make more informed contributions to legislative debates, particularly through committees, and with respect to representing provincial views. Parliamentary staff in the provinces and Cape Town generally received good training on the use of the system. They are able to devote more time to legislative issues and functions because NCOP *Online!* has reduced their administrative tasks. “Early warning” of bills to be tabled in the NCOP allows provinces to plan, thus leading to more and better province-specific research and public consultation. There is evidence that provincial government departments increasingly get information from NCOP *Online!* While inter-provincial dialogue has not been greatly affected by NCOP *Online!* provinces are at least aware of other provincial mandates, if not actually considering them in their own deliberations.

- **Legislative processes are more organised**

*NCOP Online! has resulted in more orderly administrative operations, and it has also helped tremendously in improving my relationships with provincial (legislature) speakers. We used to get lots of complaints from speakers because they thought the NCOP was arbitrarily making last minute changes. Now they can see for themselves when and why changes are made to the programme, and it helps them organise the provincial programme. NCOP Online! has helped us work more collaboratively.*

Hon. G. Naledi Pandor, Chairperson of the NCOP

Each province must be fully informed about new legislation so that it can debate a bill, consult public stakeholders, negotiate with other provincial delegates and develop a mandate outlining the province’s final position before the bill is voted on in parliament. The ability of the NCOP to complete this all in periods of four weeks has been aided by NCOP *Online!* The system has been catalytic in helping synchronise the programmes in the NCOP and the provinces. NCOP *Online!* has helped ease political tensions about NCOP between government spheres, largely because scheduling has improved dramatically. The NCOP still faces challenges with legislation tabled by the executive on short notice, but overall the administration and organisation of parliamentary sittings and the legislative process have become more routine and predictable. This helps provinces in planning and preparing, for example, pro-active research. NCOP *Online!* has helped reduce unnecessary travel between the provinces and Cape Town. Provincial members have increased access to the most recent versions of bills and other documents. Seven out of nine provinces routinely send their mandates via the system, making for quicker reporting and allowing those provincial points of views to be considered in committee sessions.

- **NCOP *Online!* has increased administrative efficiency and cost savings**

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<sup>3</sup> The “programme” is the legislative schedule, outlining dates and times for committee meetings, public hearings, plenary sessions, etc.

*Without NCOP Online!, my committee clerk would go back to spending six hours per day faxing papers to the provinces, instead of sitting with me, doing the things he's qualified for, and helping the committee function better. NCOP Online! is a cost-efficient alternative and one that has made us more productive.*

Hon. Mohseen Moosa, Chairperson, NCOP Standing Committee on Economic and Foreign Affairs

*I have just begun to realise how valuable this system is. It has saved us both time and money. We no longer have to spend time trying to track down committee secretaries as they pick-up and deliver documents all over parliament. We don't have to track them down, because they are always in the office now. It is dramatically cutting down on the amount of paper work that we have to deal with. I am already adjusting my budget for next year's paper purchase.*

Calvin Neluvhola, Parliamentary Unit Manager of Committees, Legislation and Oversight

Travel, courier and fax budgets have decreased as a result of NCOP *Online!* Although many people still double check the website and Epaks, the amount of time necessary to verify information has decreased drastically. The system makes it easier to track information. Although paper bills still are available in Cape Town before the electronic versions, access to the electronic versions in the provinces has cut hours of standing at fax machines and reduced miscommunication about outdated drafts of bills and other documents. Better communication has improved relations between staff and members of the provincial legislatures (MPLs) because staff members are providing more reliable information. In addition, the decrease in mundane administrative tasks has transformed NCOP staff positions: employees now spend more time on issues of substance. Individuals say they think more in their jobs and that morale is better.

- **Public participation has improved**

*As a result of NCOP Online!, we now have the time to help translate “parliamentese” to outsiders, improving the information that we can give to public.*

Lindikhaya Sipoyo, Manager, NCOP Liaison Unit

While activities around *NCOP Online!* in the first year were intended primarily to help improve the legislative process, the system has had effects on increasing public participation. People and organisations outside Parliament can access information freely, parliamentary staff can provide information more easily and provinces can plan better for public consultation. A few dozen NGOs, media organisations and individuals are registered for Epaks. However, some consulted in this evaluation said they had difficulty registering. Respondents in some provinces said that *NCOP Online!* enabled them to hold more public debates. The increased administrative efficiency has freed up some staff to focus more on public education. Some NGOs stated that they have been able to get more accurate government figures through *NCOP Online!* than other public sources. While the vast majority of South Africans do not have access to internet or Email, government is promoting the use of information technology, and *NCOP Online!* has great potential to facilitate more public participation and education.

## Recommendations

There are several possible routes to follow for future developments. The following recommendations can be viewed as a package or separately.

### **Option A—Complete Current Phase of NCOP Online!**

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To complete the original vision of *NCOP Online!* the NCOP should continue taking over full responsibility for the vision, accuracy, and legitimacy of the system within parliament, the provinces and public, as well as finish and fine-tune certain features. Specific tasks might include:

- **Identify a person within NCOP to further the vision of *NCOP Online!*** With NDI decreasing its involvement in developing and maintaining the system, the NCOP will require a manager to be responsible for the system's overall effective functioning, as well as its long-term sustainability and continued development. This will assist in ensuring proactive problem solving around delays or blockages.
- **Market *NCOP Online!* within the NCOP as well as in the provinces, in government departments and in the National Assembly.** NCOP leadership can help to encourage use of the system and encourage the perception that *NCOP Online!* is the authoritative place to find official information on the NCOP. This can be done through the Speakers' Forum, the South African Legislative Secretaries Association, new employee manuals, regular "advertisements" in NCOP news and other parliamentary newsletters and emails to employees.
- **Institute on-going training mechanisms** for new employees and elected members, including advertising the availability of training throughout the NCOP and the provincial legislatures. As more members gain access to computers, this need grows in importance.
- **Expand system functionality and content** by merging the NCOP website with the parliament website, making the research and committee report pages functional by training, making researchers and committee members accountable for content, and improving Epak registration accuracy.
- **Follow up on committee section training and monitor timely publishing of reports.** Like the research papers, this is an area where there is widespread provincial interest.

- **Evaluate NCOP Online! again** in a year focusing on the system as an internal communication tool, as well as a technical assessment of the site and Epaks.

### **Option B—Maximise the potential of NCOP Online! in next phase**

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This option sets forth a more expansive course of action, moving beyond completing the first phase of NCOP *Online!* to maximising the full potential of the system. The recommendations outlined make use of the financial commitments already made by the NCOP without the need for significant additional resources.

- **Create inter-unit working group** in order to combine the ideas and vision of NCOP users like the IT, Liaison Unit, the provincial liaisons, the researchers, the committee clerks, etc. This group would contribute ideas to redesign and vision changes.
- **Promote NCOP Online! externally.** Augmenting traditional marketing methods, NCOP *Online!* can help increase awareness of the NCOP and improve dissemination of parliamentary information through a marketing campaign to the media, government affairs sections and NGOs.
- **Redesign the web page for a public audience.** As a government body it is still new even to the people who work within it and a little more explanation of the types of information available on the site would be helpful. This might include the history of the NCOP, profiles of MPs and frequently asked questions.
- **Add web casting of NCOP debates.** Since television stations are not airing all NCOP debates, NCOP *Online!* could add a video feature for live or archived debates.
- **Evaluate impact of NCOP Online! on public participation** once the site is further marketed and an effort has been made to reach out to other parts of government, civic organizations, the private sector and the public.



## **Introduction**

In 1999, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the South African National Council of Provinces (NCOP) launched *NCOP Online!*, an internet-based data management and communication system, to assist the NCOP in carrying out its constitutional mandate—ensuring that provincial and local government and the public are represented in national policymaking. This report analyses whether *NCOP Online!* addressed the NCOP communication problems and explores the impact of the system on the legislative process. Lastly, the report sets out options for future steps for NDI and the NCOP.

## **Background**

The National Council of Provinces (NCOP), South Africa's second house of parliament, held its first sitting in February 1997. The NCOP was created to ensure provincial and local government participation in the national legislative process and institutionalise the concepts of participatory democracy and cooperative governance.

The NCOP comprises delegates from each of the nine provinces as well as non-voting delegates from the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). The underpinning rationale of the NCOP is to ensure that national policy is sensitive to provincial and local government's needs and concerns. It also requires that provinces do not act alone or in isolation – they are integrated in the national legislative process through the NCOP. This set-up was intended to give equal voice to all regions of South Africa regardless of economic, racial and ethnic makeup, and offset the separation of the country under apartheid.<sup>4</sup>

The NCOP sits in Cape Town during a series of legislative cycles throughout the year, each lasting four to five weeks. These legislative cycles represent the timeframe that legislation must pass through the house, from tabling, to consideration by legislative committee, to a final vote in the plenary.

The process of building consensus among provincial delegations requires a great deal of consultation and communication. Each province must be fully informed about new legislation so that it can debate a bill, consult public stakeholders, negotiate with other provincial delegates and develop a mandate outlining the province's final position on the bill before it is voted on in parliament. The result is a highly complicated legislative process. All of the above often must take place in all nine provinces within only four weeks.

In the first few years of the NCOP, legislation was often passed without provincial input and some committee meetings in Cape Town were cancelled at the last minute. Politicians in the provinces would receive bills, amendments and programmes via fax or courier, often travelling thousands of kilometres from the provinces for hearings in Cape Town, only to find they had relied on an outdated version of the programme, had received an outdated version of a bill, or that the meeting had been cancelled. Often these cancellations were due to a lack of quorum or because the National Assembly had not finished its work on a given bill. The common problem was that members did not always have up-to-date information.

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<sup>4</sup> National Council of Provinces 1996-1999 In Review, 4.

The need for a communications system to help manage this complex process became clear during the NCOP's strategic planning in 1995-97. NDI, an international democracy assistance NGO that had been working with the NCOP since 1995, was asked to assist. NDI and the NCOP conducted extensive consultations with members of the national and provincial legislatures, parliamentary staff, civil society representatives and others to provide a detailed scope of the problem. Ultimately, the solution was seen as an information-technology system that would allow an efficient flow of information between the NCOP in Cape Town and the provincial legislatures.

Launched in October 1999, the NCOP *Online!* information management system consists of a website and email system that automatically distributes parliamentary information around the country. NCOP *Online!* was designed so that national and provincial legislators and staff – along with members of the public and interest groups – would have instant access to the latest bills, committee and public hearing schedules, parliamentary programmes and other legislative information.

The launch of NCOP *Online!* followed two years of design, development and planning, undertaken jointly by NDI and the NCOP, with project management by NDI staff. The development phase coincided with a major staff restructuring in the NCOP, and ultimately new staff were hired and jobs re-designed to accommodate the system. Those arrangements were critical to the viability of the project. Some of the system design was contracted privately by NDI, but the NCOP provided the network and cabling infrastructure. Microsoft SA donated software and Telkom South Africa donated a computer training room. NDI provided extensive training to parliamentary staff (in both legislative and information systems departments) in Cape Town as well as the provinces.

In the seven months following the launch of NCOP *Online!* NDI and the NCOP received anecdotal evidence of the utility of the system to parliamentarians, staff and civil society actors. However, NDI and NCOP sought to more formally investigate the qualitative impact of the system and in June 2000 commissioned this evaluation. As the NCOP takes over the day-to-day management, monitoring and development of NCOP *Online!*, this evaluation is meant to analyse the results of the project after one year and outline future options.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Determine whether NCOP *Online!* achieved any or all of its stated objectives, including examining if those objectives addressed the stated problem and fit into NDI's mission
- Identify the successes and areas of improvement of NCOP *Online!* including whether the programme was implemented as designed
- Analyse the overall impact of NCOP *Online!* (sustained changes to individual and institutional understanding and behaviour, including public participation)

Specifically, this evaluation seeks to determine the impact of NCOP *Online!* on the:

- Delivery of relevant parliamentary information to targeted audiences in a timely fashion;
- Quality of legislation and related legislative participation, particularly with respect to provinces;
- Administrative efficiency and cost savings to the NCOP and parliament in general; and

- Public participation (specifically through NCOP *Online!*).

In addition, the evaluation will touch on the effectiveness of current efforts to sustain the system, as well as recommendations for increasing its use and expanding its functionality.

### **Methodology**

Erica Breth, a Masters in Public Policy candidate at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, conducted the evaluation from June to August 2000. The evaluation was based on terms of reference drafted by Erin Martin, Director of NDI South Africa, with additional input from Senior Programme Officers Julie Hughes and Chris Spence. The evaluation is based on a documents review, review of the NCOP *Online!* website, and key informant interviews.

Interviews were conducted in four provinces that represented differing technological capacity, training and economic resources: Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape. Budget and time constraints prevented interviews in the other five provinces.

Ms. Breth drafted the interview questionnaire, with input from Ms. Martin, Mr. Spence and Ms. Hughes. While the interviews were conducted in such a way as to encourage candid responses, most interviewees were asked all questions, generally in the same order. Interviews were held with 42 individuals in the NCOP, provincial legislatures and non-governmental organisations, as well as NDI. While most interviews were one-on-one, a group interview took place with five people in KwaZulu-Natal, along with three paired interviews in the provinces. Interviewees represented varying levels of political and staff experience and seniority. Analysis of website and email usage is based on monitoring statistics generated by the NCOP Information Technology (IT) department as provided by Mr. Spence. Website monitoring began in July 1999.

### **Outline**

Part I describes the early communication problems that hampered the legislative capacity and smooth operation of the NCOP; explains how NCOP and NDI developed a solution using information technology; and details the system. Part II analyses the impact of the system on the legislative capacity of the NCOP; examines the successes and suggests areas for improvement. Part III details options for further development of the system with recommendations for future action.

## **Part I: Identifying the problem and developing a solution**

### **1.1 Identifying the problem**

During a typical legislative cycle, NCOP delegates travel frequently between Parliament and the provinces to determine mandates<sup>5</sup> on bills under consideration by the NCOP. Within a four-week period, each bill must be considered by the nine provincial legislatures, and by local government. The process of building consensus among provincial delegations and soliciting public input requires a great deal of consultation and communication. This communication ensures that each province is fully informed of the content of the legislation and able to consult public stakeholders and develop a mandate in time.

The NCOP relied on courier services, email attachments, fax machines and telephones to manage the arduous communication process. Given the size of the country, and the varying quality of infrastructure from province to province, this was an enormous challenge. The result was an overwhelming amount of paper arriving around the country by multiple mediums (courier, fax, etc.) at various times, causing confusion and making the consideration of national legislation at the provincial and local levels very difficult.

In addition, time and resources were sometimes misdirected as communication shortfalls resulted in unnecessary or ill-timed travel and poor meeting coordination. The NCOP recognised the need to automate these information flows and the NCOP legislative process as much as possible.

In 1996, a series of NCOP provincial workshops supported by NDI reinforced the need for better communication. Subsequently, the NCOP asked NDI to provide technical assistance in the conceptualisation and development of a solution. NDI's objective was to work with the NCOP to "improve communication and coordination of processes and procedures between the NCOP, provincial legislatures and local government"<sup>6</sup>

NDI had been working with the NCOP since the establishment of the NCOP Preparatory Committee in 1995, conducting numerous workshops, comparative studies, staff and member training, study missions, and reports. Calling on a global network of volunteer experts, NDI provides practical assistance to civic and political leaders advancing democratic values, practices, and institutions. NDI currently operates in 38 countries worldwide, and has been in South Africa since the early 1990s.

### **1.2 Building a solution**

In 1998, NDI worked with NCOP members of parliament (MPs), provincial legislators (MPLs), and staff, (from the committee section and Regis House) to document information flows. Those consultations and the experience of the provincial workshops resulted in the publication "*Provincial Comparative Study, Report of the National Council of Provinces.*"

As the white boards filled up with the complex route parliamentary information takes to get from Cape Town to the provinces and back, the emerging question was how to enable easy access to timely information when stakeholders were spread over 1.2 million square kilometres. During a two-month period, NDI worked on mapping the information flows and began to research technology options. The NCOP management continuously informed this process.

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<sup>5</sup> A "mandate" is a vote from a provincial legislature, required on Section 76 bills.

<sup>6</sup> NDI South Africa Work Plan April - September 1999

The NCOP leadership was keen on improving communication. South Africa was anticipating a grant from the European Union's parliamentary support programme to provide technology infrastructure in the national and provincial legislatures. Then-NCOP Chairperson Mosiuoa Lekota envisioned information systems. When EU negotiations began to take longer than anticipated, the Secretary of the NCOP, Marion Sparg, requested permission from the NCOP Management Board to continue with implementation on its own.

NDI played an integrating and advisory role to make sure all the pieces of the system fit together, as well as designing the system, managing its development and roll-out, and conducting training for Parliament staff.

NDI and NCOP made several assumptions in the start-up phase of the project:

- The system, in the first few years, would be primarily an internal communication tool. The system would have public participation benefits, but they would be secondary because of the paucity of computers and internet access in South Africa. Although South Africa has more computers than other countries in Africa, a very large population has no computer access. As a result, other public participation methods would still be necessary.
- Initially, the NCOP and the provincial legislatures would all be wired. Anticipating lack of networking, the system would be internet-based, rather than intranet-based. Thus, someone in Ulundi would need only a computer and an internet connection to access the NCOP information. The system would also be designed to work even on computers running older software, due to potential delays in replacing old computers.
- Training efforts would be considerable. To ensure the success of the system, users would need computer and internet training, in addition to research training.
- Staff, rather than members of the national or provincial parliaments, would be targeted for training.
- Funding for the project would be available. Funding and support came from NCOP, NDI (through its USAID grant and its private Democratic Century Fund), and Microsoft South Africa. In mid-1999, NCOP got computers and a network (R500,000). The server was purchased through the parliament budget. NDI matched NCOP funds for cabling in order to connect the Information Technology (IT) Department and the computer training centre to the internet.

At the time the project started, the NCOP did not have staff to build or maintain the information system. The NCOP's subsequent restructuring was shaped in part by the need to dedicate staff to manage, maintain and contribute to NCOP *Online!* Initially, the NCOP Liaison Unit was staffed with two liaison officers and nine provincial liaison officers based in Regis House. After the restructuring, a management position was added, along with two information service officers to draft content for the site and ensure the quality and accuracy of information on the site. In addition, the jobs of all the liaison staff were re-designed to give them responsibilities for overseeing the effective operation of the system. In addition, a system administrator was hired within the parliament IT section to be dedicated to technical oversight and maintenance of NCOP *Online!* In designing the new configuration, NCOP management consulted with parliament divisions such as joint services, library and information services, committees and research. The addition of staff and realignment of existing positions was critically important in ensuring the NCOP had a technical and editorial skill base to sustain the project without NDI support.

NDI made an effort to keep the solution “South African.” This included extensive consultations with the NCOP, contracting with South African service providers and vendors for software and hardware. In the development cycle, consultations took place with the primary software developer, Idion Consulting; the manager of the NCOP Liaison Unit, Lindikhaya Sipoyo; and the developers of the National Assembly website. NDI was accountable to Secretary of the NCOP, Ms. Sparg, and Mr. Sipoyo.

Microsoft South Africa donated the server software and 50 copies of Windows 95 and Microsoft Office.

Obstacles to the project included the delay of the European Union’s hardware tender in early 1999, as well as a private sector company’s withdrawal of a substantial offer to donate computer equipment to parliament. The project design was adapted accordingly. The system went live in July 1999 and was officially launched October 1999.

The solution itself was a location-independent information depository on the internet ([www.parliament.gov.za/ncop](http://www.parliament.gov.za/ncop)) featuring an email/fax/telephone document delivery system. Documents would be published on the site, not centrally, but by the originators of the documents. Electronic courier packages, or Epaks, would be sent pro-actively to registered users, free of charge. The system would be monitored by the NCOP Liaison Unit -- with the manager of the Liaison Unit having overall management responsibility -- and maintained by the NCOP IT unit. The system was originally intended to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the NCOP legislative process by smoothing the flow of information to the provinces and cutting communication and travel costs; strengthen policy making in the NCOP through improved provincial and local government input on legislation; and by extension, increase public awareness of and participation in the legislative process by providing extensive, up-to-date information on such issues as legislation in parliament and committee meetings, hearings and minutes and public submissions.<sup>7</sup>

The solution was soon given a name: *NCOP Online!* The challenge then became one of getting people to use the system. NDI and NCOP would have to help people think about ways to change their work habits, in environments where there was limited experience with such technology. The strategy for achieving this was through training and outreach, led by the leadership of the NCOP.

### **1.3 Implementation**

As the system was built, NDI and NCOP began preparing for incorporating *NCOP Online!* in the daily workings of the NCOP. NDI consulted regularly with NCOP management and staff on the rollout and implementation of *NCOP Online!* including the implications of the system on staffing. These conversations were very relevant to the simultaneous NCOP restructuring process. There was less direct consultation with the provinces and local government.

#### ***Project management***

NDI played an integrating and advisory role to make sure all the pieces of the system fit together, as well as designed the system, managed its development and roll-out, and conducted training for Parliament staff.

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<sup>7</sup> USAID grant document

## **Training**

The first level of training was in computer literacy. In June 1999, NDI conducted a computer skills assessment for 90 NCOP staff, which prompted computer skills courses taught by NCOP staff member Ben Coffman. In July, NDI conducted seven training workshops for 55 NCOP, provincial legislature and SALGA staff on *NCOP Online!*

By August 1999, NCOP staff had taken over regular updating of information on the system and management of daily electronic courier packages. The network in the NCOP was up and running and the first computer was installed in the Secretary's office.

Training continued through November with 38 training sessions on the *NCOP Online!* system for NCOP members and staff in Cape Town and provincial executive members, legislators and staff. A handful of provincial local government association officials also took part. In total, NDI reached more than 300 people—including 100 members of the provincial legislatures—in eight provinces. (Training for Mpumalanga was cancelled three times by the legislature and to date has still not taken place.) The provincial programme was intended to introduce the system and develop provincial capacity to manage and access information on the website.<sup>8</sup>

The training was mostly general computer training, accompanied by an introduction to the internet and the NCOP system. Staff responsible for publishing documents, such as committee secretaries, provincial liaisons and researchers, were trained specifically on web publishing. Mr. Spence and NDI program officer Foster Mijiga conducted most training. NDI also did "training of trainers" courses in March 2000 to enable the NCOP Liaison Unit and provincial information systems staff to provide future *NCOP Online!* training. Participants interviewed in this evaluation agreed that the training was comprehensive and few felt there was anything else that would have been helpful to have. The absence of training in Mpumalanga hindered the ability of the province to use the system.

Training manuals were developed and used. One NCOP staff member was able to learn the system just by reading the manual.

*When I got here, in September 1999, I got a brief rundown of the system and was given the manual. Since I hadn't had the complete training, reading the manual was very instructive.*

Darwin Franks, NCOP Researcher

Mr. Spence worked in Parliament full-time as a resource and "walking help line": he offered one-on-one and informal training to people ranging from the NCOP Secretary to the private assistants to develop specific skills and answer their questions. This support would not be possible through the private sector—it would have been too expensive.

The training was well-planned and organised. The July 1999 staff training programme received universally positive evaluations from participants. After training for information systems managers in the provincial legislatures and SALGA, Mr. Spence was given a standing ovation. In addition, one participant from the SALGA commented, "*The computer training session was great. We were really impressed with the system. I've been asked to provide a demonstration on the system to all staff during our next staff meeting.*"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Oct 99- March 30 USAID report

<sup>9</sup> (July 1999 NDI SA report)

## **Outreach**

On October 25, 1999, the NCOP leadership launched *NCOP Online!* at parliament in Cape Town. The launch was attended by 125 people including NCOP Chairperson Naledi Pandor, USAID Mission Director Stacy Rhodes, Microsoft's Sibonelo Ngubane, MPs, journalists, parliamentary staff and NGO representatives. E-TV, SABC Radio, Radio 702, Punt Radio and several newspapers throughout the country<sup>10</sup> covered the launch. SABC Radio featured the system on its Monday morning IT segment *Cybersurf*.

To promote use of the system, NDI produced and distributed 500 mouse pads and 2,500 posters. NDI accessed a Telkom education project to place 1,000 posters in schools across the country that are connected to the internet, and gave another 100 posters to the Government Communication and Information Service for distribution in their provincial multi-media communication centres.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Chairperson Pandor emailed the provinces announcing the launch of the new system.

These outreach efforts were effective in letting NCOP insiders know about the existence of *NCOP Online!* Many of the people interviewed for this report heard about the system through Chairperson Pandor's email or the launch. As of this writing, posters and mouse pads were visible on the walls and desks of many of the legislative staffers interviewed for this report. Some of these same people, however, didn't know about the Epaks. They said they would register if they knew how. Part of this may be solved by making the Epak system more prominent on the website. However, particularly in a population where internet use is new, outreach must be proactive. In addition, some people in the provincial legislatures who were internet users did not know about the system at all. One provincial staff member expressed the need for further outreach led by NCOP management:

*This idea is good and the idea can fly. But it would be helpful for the management of NCOP to advise provinces on how to sell the product. The Chair needs to sell NCOP Online! at the Speaker's Forum. The Secretary needs to sell it to colleagues at SALSA. More efforts are needed.*

Gengezi Mgidlana, Director of Parliamentary Operations, Gauteng Legislature

Limited marketing to NCOP has meant that some people key to the functioning of NCOP, such as the researchers in the Parliament Information Services, do not know how to publish or who to go to for help.

As far as outreach to the public goes, the launch seems to have reached the press, at least: journalists at SABC, the Independent and Reuters, among others, are registered to receive Epaks. Again, the primary purpose of *NCOP Online!* was to improve internal communications, rather than spark public participation and awareness. More recently, the NCOP has drafted a services brochure that highlights the system, and the quarterly publication *NCOP News*, which reaches hundreds of people around the country, routinely carries an article on *NCOP Online!* Future development efforts may wish to focus more on public outreach. Comments on this topic are found in Part III.

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<sup>10</sup> Oct 99- March 30 USAID report

<sup>11</sup> Oct 99- March 30 USAID report



## **Part II: The result: NCOP Online!**

This section briefly describes the content and features of the website and E-paks, the usage figures and a discussion of the management and monitoring of the system.

### **2.1 NCOP Online! at a glance**

The planning, consultations, training and outreach yielded an internet-based data management and communication system that integrates the world-wide web, electronic mail (email) and other technologies to link Parliament to the provincial legislatures and local government associations. This information is simultaneously available to the public on the NCOP *Online!* website. In addition, anyone can subscribe free of charge for email delivery of Parliament documents via E-paks.

The website includes detailed information about the NCOP and is linked to parliament's main website. It stores legislative documents such as programmes, bills and provincial mandates. It includes a plain language version of the NCOP rules and has links to the constitution and policy papers. The website also has acts and the Hansard, parliament's official record, although neither of these are current. Viewers can access order papers to find the status of legislation. The website has a search function as well as mandate and bill monitors. The website has contact information for NCOP members and staff, although some of the provincial contact information has tended to fall out of date. The website has many of the features recommended by the Inter-Parliamentary Council in the recently published *Guidelines for the Content and Structure of Parliamentary Web Sites*.<sup>12</sup>

Between February and May 2000, NCOP *Online!* received an average of 600 hits<sup>13</sup> per day, with numbers peaking to more than 1,000 hits per day when parliament was sitting. Current monitoring does not count home page hits since many people in the NCOP have their internet browsers set to the home page. The sections viewed on the website most were bills and committees, with the time-sensitive documents such as the programme and ATCs, a daily report on Announcements, Tablings and Committee documents, also accessed heavily.

Publishing a document on the website and sending an Epak is straightforward: the publisher logs on to the website and is taken through the process step by step. After uploading the document onto the website, the publisher indicates whether it should be sent in an Epak. The Epak is set up and sent to subscribers, via email. The faxing option is currently in development; it will likely be restricted to MPs.

Epaks are sent out automatically on timed schedules, generally overnight so that subscribers are not deluged and can count on them on certain days and times. Any urgent information is emailed in a morning or afternoon alert. This system seems to work very well, although some expressed frustration that the programme did not appear until the next morning, even when changes have been made the day before.

Between February and May 2000, an average of 69 different Epaks linked to 118 documents were sent out to the 364 subscribers. Epak documents most viewed tend to be the ones with the most time-sensitive information: the NCOP programme, ATCs, mandates and committees.

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<sup>12</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Guidelines for the Content and Structure of Parliamentary Web Sites." Inter-Parliamentary Council, May 6, 2000. [www.ipu.org/english/strcture/cnldocs/166%2Dweb.htm](http://www.ipu.org/english/strcture/cnldocs/166%2Dweb.htm)

<sup>13</sup> A "hit" is counted when any document is opened.

Epak subscribers include individuals from public, private and non-governmental organisations including the media, as well as private citizens. Subscriber address, occupation and other information is voluntary at registration, so a complete profile is difficult.

The information available shows that in June 2000, there were 364 NCOP subscribers. It is important to note that at the time of this report, only two out of four presiding officers and one NCOP permanent delegate had internet access. Fifty-four subscribers come from provincial legislatures and nine from local government. Politicians registered include members from diverse political parties: the United Democratic Movement (UDM), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the New National Party (NNP) and the ANC. Members of the press registered include Cape Argus, SABC, the Independent and Die Burger. Registered non-governmental organisations include the Child Health Policy Institute, Contact Trust, University of Cape Town and the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG).

### **Areas for improvement**

People still rely on printed versions of bills because they are available much earlier than electronic versions. In some cases, personal connections and informal networks are a faster way of tracking down committee minutes and research because electronic versions sometimes appear late or not at all.

Many MPLs and MPs are not using NCOP *Online!* as much as staff members. At the time of this report many MPs and MPLs were just receiving computers. Deputy Chairperson CM Cronje of the KwaZulu-Natal legislature, said that politicians are nonetheless benefiting from NCOP *Online!* “*Although we’re not using it ourselves, our staff gets the information to us.*”

NCOP *Online!* currently offers few links to online resources that assist in legislative and policy research. Research reports generated in the NCOP or provincial legislatures are posted months after they are completed, and research is often duplicated. NGO subscribers interviewed said that research would be particularly helpful if it were made available in a more timely fashion.

While those documents are available on the website, many are not up-to-date. Some are up to a year out of date. For example, on 13 August 2000, a check of the web site yielded: acts and provincial programmes up to November, 1999, NCOP Hansards up to March 2000 and committee schedules up to June 2000. The Hansard office is backlogged in transcribing NCOP debates and this may contribute to the outdated section. However, there is no indication of this on the website. This kind of delay in posting information and documents may be the result not of poor monitoring of the website, but perhaps an organisational problem. If that is the case, posting a brief explanation (as is found on the order papers page) and contact details for further information can give the user the confidence that the website does have the most up-to-date information available at the time.

## **2.2 Management and monitoring**

One of the strengths of the system is that publishing is decentralised to dozens of staff in Cape Town and the provinces. However, strong management and coordination from Cape Town is still needed. That oversight will ensure the effective operation of the system, continued training, systems for planning and monitoring, and future development.

NDI, particularly Mr. Spence, has been spearheading the vision of NCOP *Online!* While his project management responsibilities will be divided among several NCOP staff, it is still not clear who will take over the “vision” role in the NCOP. This can turn into a serious problem. As NDI reduces its involvement, the NCOP must assume that management role in order to drive the short and long term vision of the system. This may be an appropriate function for the manager of the Liaison Unit.

The NCOP Liaison Unit is responsible for monitoring the content of the website, providing training on NCOP *Online!*, managing Epak registration and distribution, publishing the E-Bulletin electronic newsletter and serving as an information resource on the system. Some users are not aware they can get training and help solving problems from the NCOP Liaison Unit.

At the same time, the Liaison Unit’s responsibilities do not include monitoring the overall system. For example, authority over the research section is unclear, and the sections have not worked together to brainstorm solutions to current problems. As another example, Mpumalanga provincial mandates are not published on the site. Both the province and the Liaison Unit are concerned about this, but it is unclear who is responsible for solving the problem. The NCOP Liaison Unit may be the best place for developing strong systems to prevent provinces, parliament divisions or individuals from “falling through the cracks.” Part III includes recommendations on this subject.

Publishing content on the website is spread out among NCOP and provincial legislative staff. NCOP staff and provincial staff generally put information onto the website in a regular and systematic way. However, inputs from parliament, committee and research sections are generally less regular, due not to limitations of the NCOP *Online!* system, but rather to human resource, organisational management and infrastructure limitations.

Technically, maintenance of the website has been successfully transferred to the NCOP IT department. Mr. Spence provided training to the IT department, and particularly to new staff members, and is no longer doing technical maintenance.

Training is another persistent issue. While many people were trained, some of it has been lost because certain participants did not have computers at the time. People were not able to practice what they learned. In addition, a few new employees who were interviewed expressed interest in being trained, but did not know where or whom to ask. This included several Regis House staff who are the liaisons between the NCOP and the provinces. In addition, as new employees are hired, there is no system in place for introducing them to NCOP *Online!* Part III of this report includes specific recommendations on this issue.

### ***Some Areas of Improvement***

Bills, for example, often are available on paper before they appear on the website. The electronic versions are delivered to the printer for overnight printing and then entered onto the website the next day. The person with responsibility for entering bills onto the website does not work at night. This problem may be solved by training the person who completes the electronic documents to publish.

The paucity of committee documents on the website is related to a lack of infrastructure in the committee section. As of the end of July 2000, the 11 committee secretaries shared one computer with internet access and the windows-based word processing software necessary for NCOP *Online!* publishing. Committee documents are published mostly by one staff member. Many people interviewed rely instead on the Parliamentary Monitoring Group website for summaries of committee minutes.<sup>14</sup>

No one is currently authorised to publish research documents and few reports are published. This is a hindrance to the NCOP because provincial researchers and national researchers at times duplicate efforts and do not benefit from horizontal information sharing. If background research is done in Cape Town, for example, provincial researchers can focus on researching only those issues that directly affect the province. The head of the Information Services Section, Leon Gabriels, is keen to have researchers trained to publish documents directly so that at least Cape Town research can be available on NCOP *Online!* in a timely manner.

In the next section we look at the impact of NCOP *Online!* on governance.

### **Part III: Impact on governance**

NCOP *Online!* was officially launched in November 1999. Now the system is almost complete. What impact has NCOP *Online!* had on the working of the NCOP? Are provinces participating more than before? If so, has provincial participation improved the quality of NCOP legislation? Has NCOP *Online!* made legislative processes any easier or led to increased efficiency and cost savings? Although it wasn't a primary goal in the first year, has there been spill-over to public participation? This section explores these issues and concludes with a discussion of sustainability issues.

#### **3.1 Provincial participation**

Most people interviewed in the provinces agreed that NCOP *Online!* has positively affected their workplace.

*NCOP Online! has been pivotal in facilitating better participation by provincial and local governments in national policymaking.*

Judy Masekela, Northern Cape Provincial Legislature

NCOP *Online!*, has made it easier for provinces to participate in the NCOP: provincial legislatures have access to much of the information they need; debating on issues before NCOP votes is now much easier since the provincial programme matches the NCOP programme; and provinces are able to produce more in-depth research.

This evaluation did not include interviews with local government officials. However, there is some evidence that local government officials have been affected by NCOP *Online!* There is easier individual access to information. Thus when someone else from provincial or local government contacts a provincial legislative staffer, passing on the information is easy. NCOP *Online!* is providing an informal way for local governments to get NCOP information even when they do not have internet access.

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<sup>14</sup> PMG ([www.pmg.org.za](http://www.pmg.org.za)) is a non-governmental organization that monitors parliamentary committee meetings.

*I send bills from NCOP Online! to the local government ministries: any review or debates on issues that affect them.*

Dr. T.D. Raphoto, Head, NCOP Affairs, Northern Cape Legislature

*One school requested information and I sent the link via email. Provincial departments ask for information.*

Mr. A. Alexander, Senior Technical Advisor, Northern Cape Legislature

The availability of the mandates online has improved discussion about provincial positions in committee meetings.

*Without the mandates, there is no discussion... there is no provincial view and this slows down the legislative process. Previously, the chairs would adjourn the meeting for half an hour and ask members to call their provinces and find out what the mandate was. This looks unprofessional to the press and makes it look like the members, the provinces and the staff aren't working. I now print hard copies of the mandates from NCOP Online! so that the committee can discuss them.*

Edgar de Koker, Committee Secretary, NCOP

Most provinces post mandates regularly with the exception of Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape. Mpumalanga mandates are out of date because no one in the province is trained to publish and because the format in which they send the mandates to the Liaison Unit is not usable for publishing. Mpumalanga staff did not know how to get training or who to contact about posting the mandates. The Eastern Cape does not have reliable internet access. There are ways to get around both of these problems, but the interviews did not reveal that either the provinces or the Liaison Unit had addressed them.

The reliable delivery of the NCOP programme has greatly impacted workings in the provinces. Provincial programmes are now synchronised with the NCOP programme, enabling MPLs to be available for legislative work at the same time as the NCOP. Prior to this, some provinces were asked to issue a mandate when the house was not in session. In one province, early warning on an important upcoming bill enabled the province to schedule public hearings on the bill in advance of the voting in the legislature. Without NCOP *Online!* the province might not have had enough time to plan for the hearings. In that situation, NCOP *Online!* aided provincial participation and indirectly, public participation in that province.

Not only does NCOP *Online!* affect scheduling of meetings and hearings, but it has also contributed to improving research in the provinces. For example, Gauteng province outsources some of its research to meet the demand of its members. Outsourcing requires budget outlays in advance. With the notification from NCOP *Online!* the research team can project their needs, make the budget request, and hire someone to do the research. Without NCOP *Online!*, fewer issues would be researched or in little depth.

The easier, more timely flow of information has contributed to better legislative participation. Staff in the provinces responsible for advising politicians about upcoming issues say they are better informed on legislative issues and functions. One provincial liaison commented on the improvement in the quality of the work she does for her province:

*NCOP Online! has much improved my job and made it more interesting. Now, I don't just fax, but I also read and brainstorm with my colleagues in the provinces. Now, I can spend time with the provincial whips and MPLs to review the mandates. Before I was like a post office.*

Patience Mbalo, Mpumalanga Liaison Officer

Further investigation could be made by comparing provincial negotiating mandates before and after NCOP *Online!*

### **3.2 Legislation quality**

It was difficult to determine *NCOP Online!*'s impact on recent legislation or amendments in the time period allowed for this evaluation.

Future evaluations might select one or two high profile bills from past and present and interview the people involved to determine if there was a qualitative difference in the debate and amendments. Determining the measures of impact can be elusive as the Gauteng Legislature discovered when it attempted a similar study to determine the effect of recent organisational changes on provincial legislation.

What is evident from this evaluation however, is that *NCOP Online!* has enabled people to increase the amount of substantive work they can do, made in-depth research easier to accomplish and increased access to information. While the above does not necessarily mean that legislative quality has improved, it does demonstrate a more enabling environment for improving the quality of legislation. The next section contains a more detailed discussion of these elements.

### **3.3 Improved legislative processes**

The smooth and productive running of legislative processes such as bill drafting, committee review, plenary debates and voting is important to any governing body and crucial to the NCOP because of the need to build consensus among provincial delegations. Each province must be fully informed about newly introduced legislation so that it can debate a bill, consult public stakeholders, negotiate with other provincial delegates and develop a mandate on the bill before it is voted on in parliament. *NCOP Online!* has increased the ability of the NCOP to complete this process in periods of four weeks.

To begin with, political tensions have lessened. According to NCOP Chairperson Naledi Pandor, "*the arrival of NCOP Online! has reduced the number of complaints about NCOP.*" The improved communication through *NCOP Online!* has eased some political tensions as well. Chairperson Pandor explained that there are now "*more orderly administrative relations. I have a better relation with Speakers.*" The systematic nature of *NCOP Online!* has eased other politically sensitive issues:

*Prior to the system, there were many changes to lists of speakers at meetings and I had to print and copy new hard copies every time there was a change. This is a sensitive political issue which is solved much more easily by doing [the programme] electronically.*

Elmarie van der Horst, Usher of the Black Rod, NCOP

Overwhelmingly, respondents said they had better and more reliable information delivery. Now people know where to find the information and get it quickly.

*It used to be that in the morning, about 7:30 am, downloading bills was my first priority. Sometimes I couldn't start my other work until 10am. No one else could start their days either. Now, they're not really dependent on me anymore. NCOP Online! changed everything.*

Mr. A. Alexander, Senior Technical Advisor, Northern Cape Legislature

The availability of information has affected the conduct in committee meetings and debates as well:

*Debates and meetings are happening in a more professional way. Members now cannot say they haven't received programmes, bills, etc.*

Elmarie van der Horst, Usher of the Black Rod, NCOP

People did say that although they were now regularly receiving bills and amendments, they still relied on paper copies that arrive sooner.

As mentioned previously, NCOP *Online!* has contributed to more and better research in the provinces. NCOP *Online!* could go even farther by fixing the research section so that parliamentary and provincial researchers could share their research on the web.

While there are areas that still need improvement, the changes in legislative processes have led to administrative efficiency and cost savings in the NCOP and the provincial legislatures.

### **3.4 Administrative efficiency and cost savings**

Administrative efficiency and cost savings is an important outcome of NCOP *Online!* because better use of human and financial resources eliminates waste and creates space for better governance. Improved scheduling and use of staff time, and reducing paper and travel costs, are ways in which NCOP *Online!* has improved administrative efficiency and cost savings. In addition, morale has improved, a catalyst to better performance and efficiency.

Perhaps the biggest change in governmental processes has occurred because of the improvement of parliamentary information delivery. Provincial legislative schedules now match the NCOP schedule and staff in all areas are able to plan and prioritise their work more effectively, increasing the quality of what they can do.

*[Scheduling problems have been solved as a result of NCOP Online!] For instance, the whole of the provincial calendar dovetails with our constituency week and leave for members. The fact that we have this on hand, helps us to rework the programme.*

Dr. T.D. Raphoto, Head, NCOP Affairs, Northern Cape Legislature

The scheduling problems also used to result in provincial delegations missing entire days of work in transit when they could have been in the provinces working and of course, the expenses were wasted. Thousands of rands of unnecessary travel costs have been avoided because of NCOP *Online!*

In addition to the misdirected resources, scheduling mishaps also created problems for the provincial staff. A loss of trust occurred between members and their staff, because members could not rely on staff for correct information.

Previously, schedules lost in the mail or faxed to a wrong number left the provincial members acting unknowingly on out-of-date information. It created a perception that the NCOP was disorganised. NCOP *Online!* has contributed to eliminating this perception. It is now easier to see which scheduling problems result due to a legislative delay or organisational management issue, rather than a simple communication problem.

All those interviewed agreed there has been cost savings as a result of NCOP *Online!* As mentioned earlier, documents are now available on the internet and by email delivery that were previously faxed or couriered to provinces. The process of tracking down missing documents was difficult. NCOP *Online!* took a complex process and made it simpler.

*I have just begun to realise how valuable this system is. It has saved us both time and money. We no longer have to spend time trying to track down committee secretaries as they pick-up and deliver documents all over parliament. We don't have to track them down, because they are always in the office now. It is dramatically cutting down on the amount of paper work that we have to deal with. I am already adjusting my budget for next year's paper purchase.*

Calvin Neluvhola, Parliamentary Unit Manager of Committees, Legislation and Oversight

NCOP *Online!* also saves NCOP money in hiring employees:

*[If NCOP Online! disappeared tomorrow] this would have a great impact because we would have to have additional staff.*

Dr. T.D. Raphoto, Head, NCOP Affairs, Northern Cape Legislature

There has been a fundamental change in the jobs of a number of people. People do less repetitive administrative stuff and think more. Some people speak of improved morale. There is also a feeling of being part of a greater governing process.

*It was quite a fun thing to publish. I enjoyed contributing to a document that you see on the web and that is seen by parliament and others beyond parliament.*

Ester May, Researcher, Parliament Information Research Service

How many others beyond parliament use and derive benefit from NCOP *Online!* still remains a question, as we see below.

### **3.5 Public participation**

From the start, NCOP and NDI intended that the NCOP *Online!* in its first year would be primarily an internal communication tool that could have public participation benefits. NCOP *Online!* was not envisioned primarily as a public participation tool and the focus was on its applications within the NCOP.

That being said, the public is using NCOP *Online!* to some extent. The system has facilitated public participation in the provinces, but there is significant room for building a greater public participation component into NCOP *Online!*



### **Public usage of NCOP Online!**

As mentioned in Part II, Epak registration shows that several NGOs use the system, along with a number of members of the media. These include individuals from the Child Health Policy Institute, Contact Trust, University of Cape Town, PMG, *The Cape Argus*, Reuters, SABC TV, *The Independent* and *Die Burger*. Non-governmental organisations that are active in policy issues but are not registered include Black Sash, the Institute for Security Studies, Fair Share, EPRI and the SA Council of Churches. (The reporting function only reports organisations registered to receive Epaks.)

The scope of the evaluation did not call for an in-depth look at public participation, but the few interviews with civil society organisations highlighted some reasons why more NGOs are not registered for Epaks. For example, an IDASA staff member attempted to sign up for Epaks twice over the past year, but never received them. Fair Share did not know about NCOP *Online!* and was delighted to learn of a place to access primary government documents as it would enable them to quote correct NCOP figures in their budget pamphlets instead of relying on secondary sources. Fair Share sends their publications to hundreds of people. This is an example of how NCOP *Online!* may be facilitating public education, albeit indirectly.

### **Facilitating public participation in the provinces**

As mentioned in the earlier section, some provinces have found that they are now able to schedule more public hearings because they know about upcoming bills ahead of time. In addition, staff members find that being freed up from administrative tasks allows them to help public participation:

*[As a result of NCOP Online!, we now have the time to] help translate parliamentese to outsiders, improving the information that we can give to public.*

Lindikhaya Sipoyo, Manager, NCOP Liaison Unit

### **Outreach to the public**

By law, committees are supposed to take public opinion into account in discussions of bills. A public submissions feature on NCOP *Online!* has yielded few online submissions. It was hoped that the electronic submission option would aid in increasing the number of public submissions made by civil society organisations. The low use of this feature may be due to a lack of awareness about NCOP *Online!*

The E-Bulletin, a periodic newsletter published on the site, is a new feature that has potential use for public outreach. The E-Bulletin allows NCOP media officers to publish reports on happenings inside the NCOP. It also displays all bill status changes and new provincial mandates from the prior week. The idea is to liven up the type of information available so that provinces and other stakeholders are interested in what is happening in Parliament outside of the information contained in normal parliamentary papers.

As noted earlier, outreach to the public has been limited. Now that the programme is up and running, there is an opportunity to expand the universe of NCOP *Online!* users in a way that could improve public understanding of the NCOP and improve the access of information by other parts of government. This is discussed further in the recommendations in Part IV of this evaluation.

### **3.6 Sustainability**

What efforts have NCOP and NDI made to ensure that NCOP *Online!* will continue?

Efforts to sustain the project include:

- The system was designed to be operated with a minimum of infrastructure and so that even computers running older software could be used
- NCOP created a new unit to specifically work on NCOP *Online!* as well as dedicated IT staff to the project
- NCOP and NDI created a solid training programme, including “training of trainers.” The NCOP Liaison Unit is trained to carry on training new people in the use of the system as needed. Mr. Spence trained the IT unit to manage and develop new functions for the system; they are currently fulfilling that function.
- Basic monitoring systems are in place to help the system remain accurate and legitimate.
- NDI has decreased its role at a pace that matches the increasing capability of the NCOP.

As it stands currently, NCOP *Online!* will likely continue to function because enough people rely on the system as part of their daily routine. However, NCOP *Online!* will need to improve its accuracy and reliability as *the* place to get information on the NCOP if it is to truly succeed and be sustainable over years. This is further discussed below.

## **Part IV: Looking toward the future**

While NDI’s strong support is coming to an end, NCOP *Online!* is not “done.” It is a continuing work in progress: the NCOP can increase system use, expand its functionality and promote NCOP *Online!* as the definitive source of NCOP information. As the NCOP takes over the day-to-day management and monitoring and development of NCOP *Online!*, there are many opportunities for continued development of the system. Option A focuses on finishing what the NCOP and NDI set out to do. Option B looks beyond that to outline activities to maximise NCOP *Online!*’s potential. The recommendations can be viewed as separately or together.

### **4.1 Option A—Complete NCOP Online!**

To complete the original vision of NCOP *Online!* the NCOP should assume full responsibility for driving the vision; improving accuracy; increasing legitimacy of the system within parliament, the provinces and beyond; and fine-tuning existing features.

### **Transition to full NCOP ownership**

- 1. Identify a person within NCOP to further the vision of NCOP Online!** Until now, NDI has taken the lead on the driving the strategic vision and development of the system. As NDI changes roles, various people within NCOP are dividing NDI's former responsibilities. It appears that the basic operation of NCOP *Online!* will continue, however a gap remains: ultimate authority and responsibility for the system's maintenance, longevity and continued development are unclear. Internet projects are highly dependent on reviewing, updating and innovating to retain their utility. A senior manager within the NCOP should be charged with driving and overseeing all aspects of the system. The Liaison Unit is the one department most universally concerned with NCOP *Online!* and its manager may be a logical choice for that position. Close contact with the NCOP IT department will further enhance thinking about technical innovations.
- 2. Expand the monitoring role of the NCOP Liaison Unit** to include proactive problem-solving. This way, the Liaison Unit will not only be able to identify outdated pages or missing mandates, but will have the authority and responsibility to actively seek to work with researchers, provinces and other stakeholders to ensure NCOP *Online!* maximises its utility. Public support from the NCOP leadership would strengthen the Liaison Unit's legitimacy and authority while reinforcing the idea that primary responsibility for correct and up-to-date information lies within the originating department.
- 3. Document lessons learned developing NCOP Online!** including technical specifications written by Mr. Spence. This would help NDI compare and assess similar pilot projects around the world help NCOP maintain records of NCOP *Online!* as changes occur. It would also be of great value to others in government, particularly at local government level, seeking to apply information technology in similar ways.

### **Market NCOP Online! internally**

- 1. Encourage committee and research sections to contribute to NCOP Online!** Staff in these sections are already keen to participate but may not have the infrastructure or mandate to do so. Encouragement from the NCOP leadership and pro-active engagement from the Liaison Unit could enable these sections to make an enormous contribution to NCOP *Online!*
- 2. Promote NCOP Online! within the NCOP as well as in the provinces, in government departments and in the National Assembly.** The NCOP leadership can help to encourage use of the system and encourage the perception that NCOP *Online!* is the authoritative place to find official information on the NCOP. This can be done through the Speakers' Forum, the South African Legislative Secretaries Association (SALSA), new employee manuals and orientation, regular articles or "advertisements" in NCOP News and other parliamentary newsletters and emails to employees.
- 3. Include NCOP Online! orientation in new employee materials and training,** emphasising the role NCOP *Online!* plays in NCOP's constitutional mandate. Ideally, some training should be offered, but at minimum the training manual should be provided, along with information on who to contact with problems.

- 4. Make it clear for the general audience how to get training and who to contact with questions.** Within the NCOP people might know to call the Liaison Unit with a problem, but those in the provinces and other government departments may not have that same knowledge. This information should be explicit on the website, in the Epaks and in any published material.

### ***Expand website and Epak functionality and content***<sup>15</sup>

This evaluation was not intended to review the website. The recommendations below address some of the larger issues discussed in this report, rather than comprehensively evaluating the website and Epak systems.

- 5. Merge the NCOP website into the “parliament” website.** Plans underway to merge the two sites should be supported. Currently, instead of having one parliament website, or one site for the National Assembly and one site for the NCOP, there is a parliament website and an NCOP website. This makes it seem as if the NCOP is outside of parliament. To add to the confusion, the NCOP website has search and tracking features not just for NCOP but also for NA bills.
- 6. Conduct outreach, perhaps in the form of a workshop, with researchers to improve the research page,** making sure to include provincial as well as parliament researchers. At the same time, designate a researcher with responsibility for publishing research papers on NCOP *Online!*
- 7. Email-to-fax the Epaks to provinces without reliable internet access.** The system is currently being set up to allow this function for MPs in constituencies without internet access. This should be expanded on a temporary basis to include provinces that at this time do not have good internet access. This might include Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, which do not have reliable internet access.
- 8. Improve monitoring of Epak registration.** Slow or no response to registration/de-registration efforts are a continuing problem that cuts down on the number of registered users and negatively affects perceptions of the site and the NCOP. This is an integral part of NCOP *Online!* and should be monitored more closely.
- 9. Review the Epak delivery timing and publication of information on the website,** specifically with respect to the programme and bills. Currently, the NCOP programme Epak is sent out at the end of each day, often too late in the workday for people to read it. In addition, NGOs, such as PMG, put the programme up on their website before it is published on the NCOP *Online!* website. Interviewees suggested that there is a demand for an earlier mailing of the programme Epak. Another important point is that some bills still arrive as a paper version before they arrive electronically. This situation should be addressed.
- 10. Add an Epak on upcoming bills.** NCOP *Online!* has been able to favourably impact provincial participation through its early warning systems. One NCOP staffer often emails a list of bills to be introduced. Just as the NCOP *Online!* website announces bills, a corresponding Epak would be valuable.

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<sup>15</sup> In the course of doing the interviews, users made suggestions for improvement which I have forwarded on to the NDI and NCOP IT staff and the NCOP Liaison Office.

11. **Make a template for official documents**, or add text to official documents stating they are official. This will increase the credibility of information posted on NCOP *Online!* For example, many banks have stopped sending paper statements to their customers, and instead use an electronic template that looks like the paper statement. This helps build their customers' confidence in the information. In this case Parliament's "paper users" will become more comfortable receiving official documents electronically.
12. **Add explanations and contact details on web pages that are outdated.** For example, if the Hansard section is not up to date, include an explanation of that and a contact number for the Hansard section so that users can track down the information they need.
13. **Add ability to email the webmaster/comments section.**
14. **Add links to provincial legislatures** and have them add links to NCOP *Online!* The following provincial legislatures have websites not listed on or linked to NCOP *Online!*: Eastern Cape<sup>16</sup>, Gauteng<sup>17</sup>, KwaZulu-Natal<sup>18</sup>, Mpumalanga<sup>19</sup>, Northern Cape<sup>20</sup>, Western Cape<sup>21</sup>.
15. **Add press statements, speeches and Hansards.**

### ***Continue training***

The NCOP *Online!* system was well designed, such that many people interviewed were able to teach themselves how to use it. Even so, there was a clear difference in understanding between those who had been trained and those who had not. In addition, those who had not been trained tended to use the system less. The capacity has been built within the NCOP to conduct training, and a regular programme should be developed.

1. **Follow-up on previous committee section training and monitor timely publishing of committee reports.** Like the research papers, this is an area in which there is widespread provincial interest. The situation should improve significantly once the committee section gets computers; this is scheduled for August 2000.
2. **Train NCOP and provincial staff to publish research documents.** The Liaison Unit should train one administrative assistant or each researcher in the Information Services Section to publish documents. Links with the provincial researchers should be expanded, and training provided for them as well.
3. **Support and encourage MP training.** More and more MPs are becoming computer literate, and they are both good consumers and advocates of the system. Efforts should be made to reach out to MPs in both the NCOP and NA.

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<sup>16</sup> Eastern Cape website: [www.ecprov.gov.za](http://www.ecprov.gov.za)

<sup>17</sup> Gauteng website: [www.gpg.gov.za](http://www.gpg.gov.za)

<sup>18</sup> kwaZulu-Natal website: [www.kwazulu.net](http://www.kwazulu.net)

<sup>19</sup> Mpumalanga website: <http://mpumalanga.mpu.gov.za/legislature/legislature.html>

<sup>20</sup> Northern Cape website: <http://ncwebpage.ncape.gov.za>

<sup>21</sup> Western Cape website: <http://westcape.wcape.gov.za/>

4. **Institute an on-going training programme** that includes the provinces. As people change jobs within parliament, or are newly hired, the knowledge of the system spreads with them. The training should take into account employee turnover, whether it is by training trainers in government departments and in the provinces, or by a regular training schedule from the Liaison Unit. Information on the training should be incorporated into the marketing materials and the website in a clear and accessible manner.

### ***Evaluate the system again***

One year after the official launch of NCOP *Online!*, a targeted group has begun to use the system regularly and incorporate it into their everyday work. Yet many other groups, inside and outside government, still have not taken part. The system has great potential for technical and user expansion, and this should be monitored. In addition, continued learning about the success of NCOP *Online!* will be of great benefit to others in South Africa and internationally.

1. **Workshop this report and conduct another evaluation in a year** to assess the system. This evaluation should be reviewed with key stakeholders to determine a specific work plan in the year ahead. That work plan can serve as the basis of continued evaluation. A key area to highlight might include use by MPs and MPLs, as well as the general public.

### **4.2 Option B—Maximise the potential of NCOP Online!**

This option sets forth a more expansive course of action, moving beyond completing NCOP *Online!* to maximising the potential of the system. The recommendations outlined make use of the financial commitments already made by the NCOP without the need for significant additional resources.

### ***Expand NCOP Online! visioning***

2. **Create an inter-unit working group** in order to combine the ideas and vision of NCOP users such as the IT section, Liaison Unit, provincial liaisons, researchers, committee clerks, etc. This group would contribute ideas to redesign and vision changes, as well as help flag problems.

### ***Promote NCOP Online! externally***

3. **Develop marketing campaigns for government and non-government users.** The non-government campaign might target NGOs, the media, the government affairs sections of private sector companies and embassies. The NCOP can help promote awareness and improve dissemination of parliamentary information through a marketing campaign to the media, government affairs sections and NGOs. Along with more traditional marketing methods, an email campaign – which has very low cost implications -- can increase awareness of and understanding of NCOP *Online!* as well as increase accuracy in reporting. This is a potential role for NDI in consultation with the NCOP.
4. **Reach out to young citizens through a civic education page.** Again, there is not enough internet saturation in South Africa to warrant this as a primary means of reaching young people, but the NCOP could add a civic education page to be used in wired schools, such as the 1,000 schools across the country that were connected by Telkom. This would complement the national government's push to increase internet access and use country-wide.

### **Redesign the web page for a public audience**

5. **Make the website more user friendly.** While NCOP *Online!* does not target public users, it could nonetheless be made more accessible to the non-NCOP user. Provinces should be included in the brainstorming on this issue.
6. **Add web casting of NCOP debates.** Since television stations do not air all NCOP debates, NCOP *Online!* could add a video feature for live or archived debates.
7. **Reorganise the Epak subscription page.** According to the Liaison Office, a number of subscribers from the private sector unsubscribed in early 2000. This may be because it was unclear from the start what type of information they would receive. Currently, the list of Epak selections is long, and many choices may be unclear to a parliament outsider. A more detailed description of the Epak content, and even suggestions on Epaks for new subscribers, might be very useful. For example, the media recommendation might include press releases, upcoming bills and research reports; the citizen recommendation might include press releases and the E-Bulletin; the staff recommendation might include the programme, upcoming bills and bills. In addition, Epaks based on sectors could be created, such as an Epak for all agriculture-related documents and meetings.
8. **Add philosophy behind/mandate of the NCOP.** NCOP *Online!* is an inexpensive marketing resource available to the NCOP. As a government body, the NCOP is still new even to the people who work within it, and more basic information would be helpful. This might include the history of the NCOP, profiles of MPs and a list of frequently asked questions.
9. **Add NCOP press releases**
10. **Increase links** to other government websites, parliamentary information websites and related NGOs.

### **Evaluate NCOP Online! with expanded audience in mind**

1. **Evaluate impact of NCOP Online! on public participation** once the site is further marketed and an effort has been made to reach out to other parts of government, civic organisations, the private sector and the public.
2. **Review content and organisation** of the website with NCOP outsider in mind. The Inter-parliamentary Union has a guideline document for content and structures of parliamentary web sites that might be useful to review, particularly when assessing the public participation component.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The document "Guidelines for the Content and Structure of Parliamentary Web Sites" can be downloaded from [www.ipu.org/english/structure/cnldocs/166%2Dweb.htm](http://www.ipu.org/english/structure/cnldocs/166%2Dweb.htm)

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## **Terms of Reference**

### **NCOP Online! Evaluation Terms of Reference June 2000**

#### **Background**

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and National Council of Provinces (NCOP) in October 1999 launched an internationally-unique information technology initiative known as *NCOP Online!* This Internet-based information management system consists of a website and Email and fax broadcast systems that proactively distribute parliamentary information around the country. Before, politicians in the provinces would receive bills, amendments and schedules via fax or courier, often traveling thousands of kilometers from the provinces for hearings in Cape Town, only to find they had been canceled, or that they had received an outdated version of a bill. Through *NCOP Online!*, national and provincial legislators and staff – along with members of the public and interest groups -- have instant access to the latest bills, committee and public hearing schedules, parliamentary programmes and other legislative information. *NCOP Online!* even allows the public to make submissions directly to NCOP committees.

The launch of *NCOP Online!* followed two years of design, development and planning, undertaken jointly by NDI and the NCOP, with project management by NDI staff. NCOP strategic planning processes in 1995-97 highlighted the need for such a system; extensive consultations with members of the national and provincial legislatures, parliamentary staff, civil society representatives and others provided a detailed scope of work. While some of the system design was contracted privately by NDI; the NCOP provided the network and cabling infrastructure. NDI provided extensive training to parliamentary staff (in both legislative and information systems departments) in Cape Town as well as across the provinces.

This document is intended to serve as a terms of reference for evaluation of the *NCOP Online!* system.

#### **Objectives**

The *NCOP Online!* system has been set up in such a way that it automatically tracks the number of users and documents downloaded. NDI and the NCOP have also received anecdotal evidence of the utility of *NCOP Online!* to parliamentarians, staff and civil society actors. However, NDI and NCOP, through this document, seek to more closely examine the qualitative impact of the system. The objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Determine whether *NCOP Online!* achieved any or all of its stated objectives, including examining if those objectives addressed the stated problem and fit into NDI's mission
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of *NCOP Online!*, including whether the programme was implemented as designed
- Analyse the overall impact of *NCOP Online!* (sustained changes to individual and institutional understanding and behavior, including public participation)

Specifically, this evaluation seeks to determine the impact of *NCOP Online!* on the:

- Delivery of relevant parliamentary information to targeted audiences;

- Quality of legislation and related legislative participation, particularly with respect to provinces;
- Administrative efficiency and cost savings to the NCOP; and
- Public participation.

In addition, the evaluation will touch on the effectiveness of current efforts to sustain the system, as well as recommendations for increasing its use and expanding its functionality.

### **Methodology**

An independent evaluator will draft a questionnaire, conduct the review and draft a 10 to 15 page report summarising the findings. The evaluation will be based on a documents review and key informant interviews with at least 30 individuals in the NCOP, National Assembly, provincial legislatures and non-governmental organisations, as well as NDI. The evaluation is to begin in June; a draft report is to be available in late July.

### **Key Questions**

#### IMPLEMENTATION

- 1) What were NDI objectives?
- 2) Were those objectives met?
- 3) Were they the right objectives?
- 4) How was the programme designed?
- 5) Is *NCOP Online!* implemented as designed?

#### USE

- 6) How many users are registered on the site? How are they distributed across provinces? How many are governmental? Non-governmental? Which stakeholders are not registered? Why not?
- 7) How many hits is the site getting on a daily basis? How does this change when Parliament is not sitting? What is the distribution across provinces? What percentage of users are from government? Outside of government?
- 8) How many e-paks are sent out? How many documents are accessed through e-paks?
- 9) Which staff in provinces are using *NCOP Online!*? How do they use the information? Is there anyone who is not using *NCOP Online!* that should be? Why not? If not, how are they getting their information?
- 10) Which staff in the NCOP and provincial legislatures are inputting information? Are they doing so effectively (regularly, systematically, consistently)? Is there anyone who is not inputting information that should be? Why not?
- 11) How many people were trained on using the system? What were the training methods? Were training efforts sufficient? Are there people who still need training?
- 12) What efforts have been made to sustain the system? What is NDI's current role? Who is trained to take over NDI's role? Has the NCOP committed financial

resources sufficient to continuing *NCOP Online!*? Have the efforts to sustain the system been effective?

- 13) Are all functions used? What other functions might be added to the system?
- 14) Did *NCOP Online!* automate administrative tasks within Parliament? What tasks did ON automate?
- 15) Is it possible to track legislation online? Is this helpful? How? To whom is this helpful?
- 16) Is there access to online resources that assist in legislative and policy research? What are those resources? Are they used? Are they helpful?

#### IMPACT

- 17) With *NCOP Online!*, is it easier for provinces to participate in the NCOP?
- 18) Do members of the national and provincial parliaments and their staff have more information about legislation and the NCOP process?
- 19) Have the contributions of provincial delegations or individual members improved?
- 20) Have the provincial mandates changed from two years ago? Are they posted more frequently? Are they more detailed?
- 21) Is the impact of *NCOP Online!* evident in any recent legislation or amendments?
- 22) What would happen if *NCOP Online!* were terminated tomorrow?

#### ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS

- 23) Has there been a demonstrated cost-savings to the NCOP as a result of *NCOP Online!*, perhaps in travel, telephone, fax or courier accounts? How have information system costs changed?
- 24) With the availability of schedules on *NCOP Online!*, are members able to get information about events in a timely manner? How have scheduling problems changed since *NCOP Online!* was introduced?

#### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 25) Which local governments use *NCOP Online!*? How do they use the information? Are they online? Is *NCOP Online!* useful to them?
- 26) Which organisations outside of government use *NCOP Online!*? How do they use the information?
- 27) Which key groups do not have access to *NCOP Online!*, or have access but are not using the system? What can be done to improve this?
- 28) How many online submissions have been received? How are those used by committees?
- 29) What outreach efforts have been undertaken? Have they been effective?

**Interview Questions**

**NDI Evaluation of *NCOP Online!***

Purpose: To informally assess the impact of *NCOP Online!* and gain insight on utility of information technology initiatives.

Note: This information is confidential and will be referred to without mentioning the interviewee. Any direct quotes with attribution must be approved by interviewee.

Name	
Title	
Organisation	
Date	

**General**

What is your job? How does it relate to NCOP? How long have you been in your current position?

Do you have access to a computer? How does a computer help you accomplish NCOP-related responsibilities?

Do you have access to the internet? Dial-up or modem? Do you have email?

**Outreach & Training**

Are you aware of the *NCOP Online!* system? Do you subscribe to E-paks?

How did you learn about *NCOP Online!*?

How did you learn how to use *NCOP Online!*?

Is there anything you didn't learn that would be helpful to know? Do you feel additional training would be useful?

***NCOP Online!* E-Paks**

Do you use email for work-related business on a regular basis? Would you describe your email usage as heavy (>10 messages per day), moderate (5-10) or light (<5)?

Which e-paks do you find useful?

	Useful	Not useful	Not Subscribed	Send to others?
Programme				
Daily Papers				
Committee Minutes and Notices				
Legislation (bills, amendments, acts)				
Morning and Afternoon Alerts				
Provincial Mandates				
Other				

Have you had technical problems receiving E-paks? What were they and are they resolved? Who do you contact when you have e-pak problems?

**NCOP Online! Website**

Do you use *NCOP Online!* website? How often (times per day, week or month)?

Do you use other Internet web sites for collecting Parliamentary information such as GOV.ZA, PMG, the Parliament web site, or the ANC web site? Why? (more information, more accurate information)

Have you had technical problems accessing the web site or the Internet? What were they and are they resolved?

What parts of the *NCOP Online!* website do you find most useful/accurate/timely?

	Useful/accurate and why	Not Useful/accur	Refer this to other	How distribute
NCOP Programme				
Legislation (bills and bill tracking)				
Parliament Papers (ATCs, Order Papers, Minutes of Proceedings, Meetings of Committees (contact information, bills, minutes)				
Scheduling information (notices for committees and other house committees)				
Contact Information				
Rules, procedural information, Interventions, research reports, or other?				
Ebulletin, NCOP News				

**NCOP Online! Processes and Information Flows**

**Sending Information**

What NCOP information do you send, to whom? (NCOP, provinces, other?) How do you send it?

Who did you send information to before? How did you send it?

Do you input information onto the site (publish mandates, etc.)? If so, what is your procedure for inputting information (regular, systematically, consistently)?

Do your submissions to the NCOP get there in a more timely fashion than they did previously? Why or why not?

Are certain tasks automated now that weren't before? Which tasks? If so, what do you do now that you spend less time on those tasks? Have you saved time/money as a result of this automation?

Are there times when you do not/cannot submit information to the NCOP electronically? If so, why not? How do you get around this problem? Who do you contact when you have this problem?

Has the process of sending information improved? Why is this important? Are the procedures to submit information to the NCOP electronically more/less effective compared to the old procedures?

### **Receiving information**

Do you get information quicker than before through *NCOP Online!*? Before *NCOP Online!* how long did it take you to get that information? How much quicker? Example? Why does that matter?

Has the system made things more/less efficient than before (time, money, streamlining?) Why is that important?

Is the information you receive any more accurate? How much more accurate? Example? Why does that matter?

### **Administrative Impact**

What scheduling problems have been solved as a result of the new system? Are there any unresolved or new scheduling problems as a result of the new system?(Solution e-pak or the web page?)

Has the *NCOP Online!* service made your job easier or improved the quality of what you are able to do? How?

### **Impact**

Is you/your provincial delegation able to make meaningful input into bills and mandates to the extent that it would like? Why/why not?

How often do you or your stakeholders compare or consider the mandates of other provinces? How do you get the mandates? Do the mandates of other provinces influence decision-making in your province?

Has your province's access to legislative information improved over the last year (since the 1999 election)? If so, what do you attribute the improved access to? If not, what causes the lack of improved information?

Do you/your province participate in more debates, committees and propose more amendments than you did before?

In your opinion, has the *NCOP Online!* service facilitated better participation by provincial and local governments in national policymaking? Example.

If *NCOP Online!* disappeared tomorrow, what impact would that have on you in your current responsibilities? What impact would it have on your province or organisation?

Do you have any recommendations for improving *NCOP Online!* or the e-pak document delivery system?

Any other comments?

## People Interviewed

### **CAPE PROVINCE LEGISLATURE**

Mr. Gengezi Mgidlana	Director of Parliamentary Operations
Ms. Jocelyn Moeti	Regis House
Ms. Margare Diedericks	Research Services Manager
Mr. Mike Coetzee	Secretary
Mr. Lizette Symeone	IT Consultant

### **KWAZULU-NATAL LEGISLATURE**

Mr. Anthony Grinker	Regis House
Mr. R. Mzimela	Secretary
Mr. Sibisi	Procurement
Mr. Sam Muthige	Administration
Mr. ET Vezi	Chief Whip (IFP)
Mr CM Cronje	Deputy Chairperson/Chief Whip (ANC)

### **MPUMALANGA LEGISLATURE**

Mr. Justice Modipane	Acting Head of Procedural & NCOP Section
Ms. Patience Mbalo	Regis House
Mr. MJ Bester	Senior Researcher
Mr. Mkhonza	IT Manager
Mr. Advocate Zama	legal advisor

### **NORTHERN CAPE LEGISLATURE**

Ms. Judy Masekela	Administrative officer, NCOP Affairs
Ms. Tebogo Ranaka	Regis House
Mr Nomhlo Ngcakani	Researcher
Mr. A. Alexander	Senior Technical Advisor, Finance Department
Dr. TD Raphoto	Head, NCOP Affairs
Mr Natalia Borchard	Library Assistant

### **NCOP**

Mr. Mohseen Moosa	Permanent Delegate
Mr. Mohamed Bhabha	Provincial Whip/Permanent Delegate
Ms. Naledi Pandor	Chairperson
Mr. M.L. Mushwana	Deputy Chairperson
Mr. Thembalani Stamper	Information Officer, Liaison Office



Mr. Mandisi Tyumere	Information Officer, Liaison Office
Mr. Lindikya Sipoyoha	Manager, Liaison Unit
Mr. Jonathann	February Office of Chairpersons of Committees
Ms. Lana Willemse	Systems Operator, Liaison Office
Ms. Elmarie van der Horst	Usher of the Black Rod
Mr. Darwin Franks	

**CIVIL SOCIETY**

Ms. Erin Martin	Country Director	NDI
Mr. Chris Spence	Senior Programme Officer	NDI
Ms. Julie Hughes	Senior Programme Officer	NDI
Mr. Elroy Paulus	Programme Manager	Fair Share
Mr. Albert Van Zyl		Idasa

**OTHER**

Ms. Hermione Cronje	Special Assistant	National Director of Public Prosecutions
Mr. Edgar de Koker	Committee Secretary	Parliament
Ms. Ester May	Researcher	Parliament Research Information Services
Mr. Leon Gabriels	Manager	Parliamentary Research Unit