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**RESEARCH REPORT ON CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN  
PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS AND CONSTITUENCY RELATIONS**

(Reference material)

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## Introduction

This paper explores the conceptual differences between constituency relations (CRs) and public consultations (PCs) and their applicability in the Vietnamese context. Both play a key role in channelling the aspirations of individual citizens into the governmental process, and so are key components of the system of representation and thereby of legitimising representative institutions. This paper also examines how the application of certain tools (often the same) can contribute to both in different ways in order to clarify the nature of CR and PC tools.

## The principle of representation

Montesquieu in his *Spirit of the Laws* contended that legislative power should be vested in the entire populace. Achieving this utopian end, though, is inherently unmanageable owing to impediments of time and space, which means that people must be represented in the legislature and in government. Rousseau explored this notion in his *Social Contract*, in which he argued that the people handed the right to wield their sovereign power over to certain institutions, like legislatures and the executive. Other doctrines, such as the Confucian doctrine of Tian Ming, or the Mandate of Heaven, place an obligation a government to act in the interests of the people, a principle which differs from the western philosophical arguments about representation but with which it is not incompatible.<sup>1</sup> It is from these and other broad philosophical foundations that the principle of representation derives.

In line with this way of thinking, many jurisdictions place supreme legal powers in their legislatures. In Viet Nam only the National Assembly can alter the Constitution. In the UK the constitutional theorist Dicey developed the legal doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty, which contends that parliament holds the highest legal powers in the UK. As such, members of legislatures play a key role in terms of representing the people. Indeed, Article 6 of the Constitution of Viet Nam states that the people ‘make use of state power through the agency of the National Assembly and the People’s Councils’, which implies such a delegation of powers. Of course, in Viet Nam the Communist Party also plays a key role as a ‘leading force’ in society, in line with Article 4 of the Constitution, meaning that this representative function is shared with institutions other than the National Assembly and other lower legislatures.

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<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven asserts that a ruler must act in an appropriate fashion in order to merit the right to rule. If he or she departs from this stance then they may lose that right to rule, which results in the removal of the mandate and the fall of that regime. To some degree, this historical rule recalls aspects of Communism.

## What is representation?

The Project has focused on the role of representative institutions in Viet Nam. In modern terms, the cardinal features of effective representation might include: communication, accountability; accessibility; and transparency. These principles are applicable to legislative assemblies operating at both national and local levels. In practice, representation thus takes place in two forms in most legislatures; first, with individual representatives helping channel the aspirations of their constituents into the administration; and second, with representatives acting in a collective fashion as part of a legislature which holds a representative mandate from the population.

## The project

In this context, in 2008, the Office of National Assembly (ONA)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project entered its third phase and started a project to enhance public consultations and constituency relations at both the National Assembly and Provincial People's Council level. The Project has to date operated these twin tracks on a separate basis, but the mid-term evaluation in August 2010 recommended that these two tracks should be combined.

In terms of its work on **public consultations** at People's Council level, an assessment carried out in 2008 identified a four year strategy to: establish a systematic process for public consultations; enhance the capacity of local People's Council deputies and staff in conducting public consultations; and draw up national and provincial regulations for the institutionalisation of public consultations. The programme aimed at supporting the application of public consultations at the level of Viet Nam's People's Councils commenced in 2008 with the launch of a pilot initiative involving three local assemblies (that of Ho Chi Minh City, and those of Nghe An and Lao Cai provinces). This project then expanded in 2009 to include seven new People's Councils, which were those of Bac Giang, Binh Thuan, Dong Thap, Hai Phong, Hoa Binh, Quang Ngai, and Thanh Hoa and will expand to all 63 provinces of Viet Nam in 2011.

In relation to **constituency relations**, the project first conducted a base line assessment of needs<sup>2</sup>. This process outlined some suggested areas of reform, including making use of constituency offices and other communications systems, enhancing provincial representatives' outreach to citizens, providing feedback to citizens, and improving ways of carrying out of constituency relations; these areas are all within the existing legal framework. In this context, an assessment resulted in the conclusions that first improving the quality of events and second developing the relationships between constituents and representatives are requirements of the greatest importance, and the Project then drew up a strategy for application in five stages. This strategy entailed: improving the quality and effectiveness of contacts between representatives and constituents, so enhancing the resolution of people's concerns; developing individual relationships between representatives and constituents; improving the collection of information through the constituency relations process; developing the capacity of representatives so that constituency relations are properly institutionalised; and drawing up clear procedures so ensuring constituency relations are institutionalised. The Project initially focused on three provinces and cities in stage one, which were Can Tho City, and Ha Tinh and Vinh Phuc provinces.

### Public consultations

The project defined **public consultations** as the process whereby administrative authorities gather information from people about the resolutions and policies which they are preparing or implementing.<sup>3</sup> The public consultation process is a key means by which assemblies and people exchange views and opinions and come to an understanding of the impact of resolutions or policy, and entails the application of a wide ranging set of tools such as surveys, local meetings and public hearings in order to gather this information. Public consultations take place in the context of both legislative and oversight tasks.

In Viet Nam, the legal basis for **public consultations** conducted by the People's Councils currently derives from various provisions including:

- Articles 6 to 9 of the 1992 Constitution of Viet Nam, as well as Chapter 9, which relate to the powers of the People's Councils;

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<sup>2</sup> ONA/UNDP Project, Maintaining Constituency Relations in Viet Nam: Current Status and Recommendations, Hanoi, 2008

<sup>3</sup> ONA/UNDP Project, Annual Report on Public Consultations, 2009

- The 2008 Law on Laws, which states that entities drafting legal documents must collect comments from affected individuals, agencies and organisations;
- The 2003 Law on the Organisation of the People’s Councils and People’s Committee, which establishes an obligation for deputies to listen to and consider local people’s concerns, and;
- Ordinance 34/PL-UBTVQH11 on grassroots democracy which sets out details of administration at commune level.

As provided by these and other legal instruments, the People’s Councils have powers to appraise and adopt legal documents specific to their responsibilities, to question the highest local authorities, to cast votes of confidence and to monitor anti-corruption efforts at a local level. A range of representative institutions in Viet Nam have implemented public consultations, including the National Assembly and the People’s Councils, with the support of the Project. The project has developed a range of public consultations tools, which include:

- **Field inspections:** these give representatives a chance to assess policy in the field;
- **Stakeholder meetings<sup>4</sup>:** these give representatives a chance to discuss the issues with those most affected;
- **Stakeholder workshops:** close knit discussions with key interlocutors, but on a smaller basis than stakeholder meetings;
- **Public Hearings:** these more formal tools gave councils a chance to listen to debate on a controversial issue and thereby gather information for assessing laws or policy.
- **Focus group meetings:** these can bring those with most understanding closest to representatives;
- **Mass media** including radio, TV and newspapers all provide a key means to explain the purpose of any public consultation effort and to outline the results of findings, and;
- **Written submissions** provide individuals or representative organisations with a key means to provide personal views or technical advice on how best to tackle the issue under public consultation.

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<sup>4</sup> Stakeholder meetings are conducted at lower levels, while stakeholder workshops are held at provincial level and often include representatives from provincial departments, institutes, mass associations, private sector, and also representatives from districts and communes levels.

## Constituency relations in Viet Nam

This report defines **constituency relations** as the means by which elected representatives develop and maintain responsive dialogue with the individual citizens they represent. This process helps ensure that representatives reflect the needs of their constituents when carrying out their legislative and oversight function.<sup>5</sup> Constituency relations are inherently individual, in that they are between individuals and their personal representatives, by virtue of their election or appointment to represent a particular constituency. The constituency may be defined on a geographical (such as a state or provincial basis) or other basis (as in Hong Kong where select professional bodies are defined constituencies for the purpose of electing the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region). The current legal basis for constituency relations in Viet Nam derives from a range of measures including:

- Articles 97 and 121 of the Constitution of Viet Nam;
- Articles 51 and 52 of the Law on the Organisation of the National Assembly;
- Articles 12, 13 and 14 of the Regulation on the Operations of Provincial MPs and MP delegations;
- Resolution No. 228 NQ/UBTVQH of 27 October 1999, issued by the National Assembly Standing Committee, and;
- Articles 36 and 39 of the Law on the Organisation of the People's Councils and People's Committees.

In broad summary, these provisions place obligations on representatives to: maintain 'regular and organised' contacts with their constituents: understand their needs; collect their opinions and: at least once a year report back to them, as well as to hold meetings before and after each legislative session. They also state that representatives have an obligation to respond to their constituents' petitions, which they must send to the relevant department and pursue with the relevant interlocutor. People's Councils representatives must spend at least two days each month meeting collecting opinions. Other secondary legislation further adds to the obligations of representatives to carry out constituency relations work.

The project drew up a range of tools aimed at enhancing constituency relations. The project has identified a range of tools suited to constituency relations<sup>6</sup>, which include:

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<sup>5</sup> ONA/UNDP Annual Report on Constituency Relations 2009

<sup>6</sup> ONA/UNDP Project, Maintaining Constituency Relations in Viet Nam: Current states and Recommendations, Ha Noi, June 2008

- **Constituency offices**; these can provide a useful permanent base for representatives to engage with their constituents;
- **Outreach efforts**: these can have both a collective and individual character;
  - Collective outreach might include public meetings and field visits,
  - Individual efforts can include: door to door canvassing; attending group meetings; private consultations; private briefings; small group meetings with residential bodies; meetings with citizens in their workplace.
- **Communications**: relevant tools include electronic communications (e mails, websites and blogs), telephone calls, hotlines on particular topics, letters;
- The publication of **promotional material**, such as newsletters outlining representatives' efforts;
- Communication through the **mass media**, particularly local newspapers or TV stations;
- The **collection of citizen feedback** from supervision efforts;
- **Reporting sessions** which representatives must conduct before and after each legislative session;
- The reading of **petitions and denunciations**, and the facilitation of response by the relevant administrative body;
- Developing **informal relations** with citizens – for instance by visiting markets or other public places, and;
- Conducting **public opinion polls** on behalf of representatives.

### The overlap

However, some concerns about differentiating the tools in the separate contexts have emerged. The 2009 Annual Report on Constituency Relations suggested that there is a degree of conceptual confusion regarding the constituency relations tools. This confusion is most apparent in the use of public consultation (collective) tools such as public hearings in order to carry out constituency relations activities. In some of the Provincial People's Council reports, reference is made to representatives' confusion about the difference between both processes. However, a major conceptual difference between the tools does exist.

In relation to **public consultations**, their main feature is that in this role the representative is playing a part within the legislative process – and so the representative’s individual identity has to some extent been subsumed into the legislature as a whole; their role may be described as inherently collective. The purpose of public consultations is also subtly different from that of constituency relations in that it seeks to gather information about executive initiatives, which might include draft laws or new policies, with the aim of assessing their worth, improving on their delivery and ensuring that they take account of people’s needs. As such, the public consultations process may be said to have primary concern with the efficiency of the administrative regime, rather than the requirements of individuals, although these personal concerns form a major backdrop to the public consultations process.

In terms of **constituency relations**, the individual representative will seek to serve the needs of their constituents by acting on behalf of individuals in the legislature. This role might be likened to that of a lawyer and a client, in that the representative has specialist knowledge and access which are not available to the client; accordingly, constituency relations might be defined as an agent/principal relationship. Indeed, the system of petitions and denunciations in Viet Nam comes close to replicating this form of relationship. Deputies have an obligation under Article 97 of the Constitution of Viet Nam to ensure petitions and denunciations are dealt with efficiently. In this context, while the efficacy of the administrative machinery is of great importance, the focus of constituency relations is rather on what problems arise from the constituency level and how they relate to the system of government. Accordingly, the process of selecting candidates and the system of voting are all important in obliging elected representatives to act in certain ways (with arguably those elected on a party list based system less alive to constituency concerns than those who directly represent a defined geographic constituency).<sup>7</sup>

This paper, then, contends that the distinction between public consultations and constituency relations derives primarily from the motive of the process (a desire to satisfy individuals’ needs in the case of CRs, and a need to improve the administrative machinery of government in relation to public consultations), and from the individual and collective nature of one and the other, with public consultations being inherently collective and constituency relations being inherently individual in nature.

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<sup>7</sup> Norris, Pippa, *Electoral Engineering: Voting rules and Political Behaviour*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp235 -260

Given these differences the tools for their application are not mutually interchangeable, although the conceptual boundaries blur in implementation, since in many cases the tools are the same. In this context, representatives may gather broadly similar information from their individual relations with constituents as well as from their participation in a public consultation process. This is particularly the case when representatives react to a chorus of concerns brought up at constituency level, say in relation to a policy initiative which has been ineffectively implemented, and a subsequent public consultation is then carried out into this particular problem. However, the differences are more obvious in relation to those constituency concerns which may be too local or individual to merit assessment as part of the public consultations process (examples might include misapplications of justice or other individual concerns).

In order to reduce the confusion, the subsequent section of this report sets out the relevant tools in a table and outlines out how they relate to the CR and PCs process in a different manner.

Public consultation tools	Constituency relations tools
<p><b>Field Visits and Inspections:</b> Where the decision-maker(s) travels to a location to gain a better understanding of an issue by seeing the situation in person. This may include a visit to a commune or village that is directly impacted by a decision or to a physical location. When conducted as part of public consultations this is generally a formal process, in that the legislature as embodied in the representatives is examining the issue on field visits. It will also operate within a constrained research environment – not straying beyond the boundaries defined in the constituency</p>	<p><b>Field visits and inspections:</b> to meet people engaged in a particular issue or locality. The visit entails an individual representative travelling to a region to assess a particular topic and meet constituents with concerns in that region. When carried out as part of constituency relations this action is purely individual (or on behalf of the political party of which the representative is a member) on the part of the representative, and so is an action outside the collective remit of the legislature in question. Such action fits within obligations to tend certain areas as if he were a gardener (i.e. by highlighting</p>

<p>relations process.</p>	<p>what improvement work needs doing). Such a process is a key means for representatives to build understanding of their region, but should only take place on an individual basis.</p>
<p><b>Commune Meetings:</b> This tool is arguably not suited to public consultations work, since it entails wide ranging meetings with individuals who are constituents, about a range of issues.</p>	<p><b>Commune Meetings:</b> After village leaders have conducted grassroots democracy, the commune People’s Council and Fatherland Front organizes a meeting for provincial deputies to visit the commune to discuss specific issues. This can raise a whole of constituency relations issues, which can then be tackled in other fora. This process is somewhat formal.</p>
<p><b>Internet based communications:</b> Public consultation processes may draw on the internet to provide an opportunity to seek feedback via the internet. Documents related to the decision can be presented on a website and citizens can be asked to submit comments via the website or to a specific e-mail address. The recipient website in relation to public consultations might be that of the People’s Council itself. One key feature of this is that it will relate closely to the issue under consultation (and hence differ from broader CR issues) and the website most applicable might that of the legislature itself rather than the</p>	<p><b>Internet based communications:</b> Representatives may post info on Webpages, and should have address for voters to send opinions, comments or post mail. This is a key tool for every Deputy who can set up individual email with telephone number, blog. The internet in this context will provide a basis by which individual representatives can collect information and come to understand which issues (however wide ranging) trouble their constituents.</p>

<p>representative or his political party.</p>	
<p><b>Communication through the mass media:</b> Key people can provide different perspectives on the issue in public consultation during a forum on television. Information can also be transmitted over the radio and the local loudspeaker system or newspapers. These formal mechanisms are best suited to a single, defined subject when used in the public consultation process.</p>	<p><b>Communication through the mass media:</b> Coverage of CR issues by a newspaper, web-based media, television or radio is crucial to the success of a representative, who must have a strong, continuing relationship with the key media. This is because mass media is a means by which the People’s Council or individual MPs and Deputies can pass a message onto all citizens, and through which they can communicate government initiatives and seek to address local problems. The key difference in application is that CR issues may be wider ranging and that the representative is operating as an individual agent of the people and a member of the key political party.</p>
<p><b>Open House’:</b> This tool is generally not applicable to public consultations.</p>	<p><b>Open House’:</b> Citizens are notified that the decision-makers will be available at a given time and place to discuss the issue at hand. The citizens are encouraged to attend and discuss the issue in an informal setting. Usually there are brochures, posters or designs related to the issue that can be viewed by participants. This process is closely associated with the ‘surgery’ concept in which MPs permit constituents to make appointments and come to discuss any issues of concern. In surgeries, representatives make the public aware that</p>

	<p>they are available for a certain regular time (perhaps Saturday mornings) for discussions on any topic troubling constituents.</p>
<p><b>Written Submissions:</b> Citizens are notified of the decision that is being considered (i.e. when it is placed in the commune office, or by advertisement in a newspaper, announcement via the commune loudspeaker) and asked to provide comments in writing. There is usually a limited time where written comments will be accepted. The comment received must be defined according to the terms of reference of the public consultation, since issues outside that are of no direct relevance.</p>	<p><b>Written submissions:</b> In many jurisdictions, the core work of representatives revolves around responding to letters received from constituents and then pursuing some particular concern by letter with the relevant administrative interlocutor. As such, written submissions of information are a key component of work in constituency relations, but they differ from public consultations in that they are less formal and far more wide ranging.</p>

<p><b>Citizen feedback during supervision</b></p> <p><b>missions:</b> The information gathered as part of the supervision process can feed directly into the public consultation process, since it already amounts to part of the ‘collective knowledge’ of the legislature. This is most relevant when a select sub-committee of representative conducts assessments of particular issues and is thus in a strong position to proffer its expertise to the legislature as part of the consultations process.</p>	<p><b>Citizen feedback during supervision</b></p> <p><b>missions:</b> There are always concerns being raised by citizens during the work of the People’s Councils that can be transformed into issues which the People’ Councils and individual MPs and Deputies can address. However, it must be clear that this information is being used by the representative in his role as an individual agent of the people and as a member of a political party.</p>
<p><b>Consultative Seminars or topical meetings:</b> An informal public meeting where those with a direct interest in a decision (e.g. – draft provincial regulation) come together and provide feedback and comments. Normally, the objective is to have diverse perspectives to ensure the decision-makers have a chance to hear a variety of opinions and a chance for discussion and debate. However, these seminars take place both with a defined remit (as part of a public consultations process) and as part of legislature’s efforts to understand the nature of the issue it is addressing.</p>	<p><b>Consultative seminars or topical meetings:</b> Such a process is a more formal means for a representative to conduct constituency relations and carries the risk of confusion with similar meetings as part of the public consultations process. However, the key difference with PCs is that in these meetings the representative is acting as an individual member of the legislature or as a member of a political party, and so is not at least in legal terms a direct line into the public consultations process on a particular subject.</p>
<p><b>Public Hearings:</b> Discussions held by</p>	<p><b>Public hearings:</b> These tools are not</p>

<p>People's Councils where formal submissions are sought and deputies can ask questions of those making submissions. Government officials can also be asked to attend and answer questions. All questions and answers are recorded.</p>	<p>suitable for constituency relations work since they are formal and are a tool by which a legislature can gather information.</p>
<p><b>Focus group:</b> A select group that reflect a diverse range of opinions can be brought together to seek their views on the issue to be decided upon. This is similar to the consultative seminar, but a private meeting and a much smaller group.</p>	<p><b>Focus group:</b> A select group that reflect a diverse range of opinions might occasionally brought together to seek their views on the issue to be decided upon. This is similar to the consultative seminar, but a private meeting and a much smaller group. However, this tool is an unusual one for local representatives expect at times as organised by representatives of the relevant political party (for instance to assess how it might prepare policy on this issue).</p>
<p><b>Social Survey:</b> A random sample of citizens is anonymously surveyed to seek their views on a given issue. This tool, while expensive, can be a good means to gain raw information on a particular subject. It is most effective if the sample population is appropriate to the matter under discussion and if questions are short and direct. The offices of legislatures are then in a solid position to assess the gathered information and explore how it relates to the issue under discussion.</p>	<p><b>Social survey:</b> A random sample of citizens is anonymously surveyed to seek their views on a given issue. MPs may choose to gather information of relevance to their constituents so as to ensure their continued electability. However, this is unlikely to be a valuable tool for individual MPs (although it is of value for political parties) owing to expense. That said, its information – for instance when used for the purposes of public consultations – can inform constituency relations work.</p>
<p><b>Independent Research Organisations:</b></p>	<p><b>Independent Research Organisations:</b></p>

<p>These organizations can be used to check sources of information and data and could even function as an oversight agency.</p> <p>They are a key means by which legislatures can gather expert information when conducting public consultations. The key nature of their research is its narrow focus concentrating on a particular issue (especially when it is a technical subject under consideration).</p>	<p>This is generally not a tool for constituency relations, although political parties may choose to make use of them on occasion.</p>
<p><b>Private Briefings:</b> The decision-maker(s) seeks background information and comments (usually from the responsible agency or ministry, or other experts) so as to better understand the major underlying issues involved. These discussions are not recorded so as to encourage a more open exchange of ideas and recommendations. They are essentially for the benefit of the decision-maker.</p>	<p><b>Private briefings:</b> Individual representatives might seek to gather information from individuals about the nature of a particular situation or problem. This process, though, is an inherently individualistic one, with an emphasis on the representative's efforts to understand more deeply his constituency and thereby respond to local concerns.</p>
<p><b>Private Meetings:</b> The decision-maker(s) arranges meetings with individuals or groups that are directly impacted by the decision to be made. It is important that there be some balance in how these meetings are arranged, ensuring private meetings are arranged for different individuals and groups with various perspectives on a given issue. However, such processes must focus on the question in concern and not drift into wider</p>	<p><b>Private or informal meetings:</b> Citizens who feel they can approach an MP or Deputy to discuss a matter are citizens that are comfortable with the MP or Deputy and believe the MP or Deputy can help them. As such, representatives might make a habit of meeting with people in relevant social circumstances, such as at festivals or other public occasions, thereby building a strong understanding of their local communities and the key individuals within</p>

<p>discussions for the public consultations process to be truly effective. Generally the fewer private meetings the better, since they risk undermining the public consultations process.</p>	<p>it.</p>
<p><b>Petitions and denunciations:</b> It is possible that a petition or denunciation may prompt a public consultation if it raises an issue of merit in this context, but broadly speaking these tools are not relevant to public consultations process which should operate on a separate basis.</p>	<p><b>Petitions and denunciations:</b> These are a written submission for the government to do or not do something to the benefit of the citizens who sign the petition. All representatives have an obligation to facilitate the resolution of such petitions or denunciations in Viet Nam. Such work naturally places a significant burden of casework on representatives, and in some cases it may be difficult for the representative to assist. However, this process is a key means by which the representative delivers on his responsibility as an agent of the people (which ultimately is the sovereign principal delegating powers to the legislature).</p>
<p><b>Outreach:</b> While of some value in public consultations process, social surveys and other such tools might fulfil this need. Accordingly, this tool is most applicable to CR issues.</p>	<p><b>Outreach:</b> Instead of waiting for citizens to raise concerns, outreach allows the People’s Council or an individual MP or Deputy to actively seek to gather the views of individuals. Representatives for instance might attend local events such as markets or festivals to talk to people and learn their views. He might visit homes by knocking on doors or organising telephone calls or a letter sending campaign. These means will acquaint a representative with</p>

	full understanding of the issues at stake.
<p><b>Constituency office:</b> The constituency office is not a core location for public consultation work, since it relates to the much broader work of constituency relations.</p>	<p><b>Constituency office:</b> In many assemblies these offices provide the core basis of constituency relations offices. They serve as a base for representatives to meet local people and through which representatives can raise issues. Their funding is variable, with political parties providing office funding in some cases, while in others the state either provides funding or provides facilities shared between political parties. In the Vietnamese context, it might be most appropriate for political bodies, such as the Communist Party or the Fatherland Front, to provide the constituency office space.</p>
<p><b>Promotional material:</b> The legislature may on occasion choose to produce limited promotional material when conducting public consultations, for instance in the form a press release about a public hearing. It may also produce a report at the end of the process. It is important that the people know what the assembly is doing.</p>	<p><b>Promotional material:</b> People’s Councils or individual MPs and Deputies produce newsletters and materials that promote their efforts in representing the interests and citizens of the people who voted for them. This can be done via web-based methods or hard copies printed and distributed to commune offices and households. In many jurisdictions this responsibility falls to a political party, since its interests may not match with those of the legislature itself (for instance if an alternative party is in control of the assembly).</p>
<p><b>Reporting sessions:</b> The public consultations process has a reporting process of its own which means that it should not overlap with the constituency</p>	<p><b>Reporting sessions</b> before and after each session before and after each session of the People’s Council. Meetings are chaired by the People’s Council and all MPs and</p>

<p>relations reporting process. As such, this tool is not a key component of public consultations work.</p>	<p>Deputies play an active role. This is a key means by which an individual representative can feed their findings into the legislative process, and alert other representatives to particular issues.</p>
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## Conclusion

Public consultations and constituency relations are conceptually different in significant ways, notwithstanding the similarity of some of the tools they use. These conceptual differences must be highlighted to ensure that confusion about the application of the tools above in each context does not arise, and so that representatives making use of the tools do so with firm understanding of their roles in the process. If the Project does not do so prior to combining the two programmes, it risks strengthening a degree of confusion which also appears to exist.

Accordingly, this paper recommends that the Project make some alterations to the system of training prior to combining the constituency relations and public consultations training purposes.

- First, the training packages should receive some small amendments to explain clearly the conceptual differences between public consultations and constituency relations.
- Second, the list of tools presented by the Project should be amended so as to make a closer distinction between CRs and PCs.
- Third, the training packages should be amended so as to include some exercises which seek to demonstrate the conceptual differences between CRs and the PCs, and which oblige participants to examine whether one particular tool applies in certain situations.

These amendments need not be significant but are of importance, since without such changes confusion about the conceptual and practical differences between constituency relations and public consultations may remain and even in time be reinforced.