
From a Reactive Research Section To a Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Legislative Oversight Data Centre: The Transformation of Uganda Parliament Research Service to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century

Mugabi John Bagonza

Director, Research Services

Parliament of Uganda

Kampala, Uganda

E-mail: jmugabi@parliament.go.ug

&

Kintu Francis

Assistant Director, Research Services

Parliament of Uganda

Kampala, Uganda

E-mail: fkintu@parliament.go.ug



Copyright © 2015 by **John Bagonza & Kintu Francis**. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>

Abstract

Amidst increasing demands to justify policy and resource allocation decisions, and faced with persistent public concerns about financial accountability, wastage within publicly funded services and lack of effectiveness of government programmes, one of the major challenges facing Parliaments in the 21st Century is to hold governments accountable for results. And one of the challenges facing Legislative Research Services in nations like Uganda, is furnishing Parliaments with reliable and timely performance information and data, to aide Parliament systematically hold Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to account for achieving results. This is particularly so in a context where Parliaments traditionally rely for information on reports generated by the same MDAs over which they exercise oversight; and where such MDAs and other external agencies set up to promote accountability in the public sector, suffer deficiencies in institutional capacity, or are more motivated to arm Parliament with only information that justifies their policy and budget proposals.

In order to meet this contemporary challenge, and also remain relevant to the dynamic information needs of Parliament, the Legislative Research Service in Uganda has had to evolve and reposition itself – from the traditional function of Legislative Library and Research Services focusing on generating reports largely based on secondary data and generated by the Executive Branch – to a robust oversight M&E data centre to meet MPs' increased demand for more effective scrutiny of government policies and programmes. Since embarking on these innovations, impressive results have been registered, along with challenges. The Research Department is slowly but steadily transforming into the “engine room” of Uganda's Parliament's oversight work. This paper shares our experience which we believe can offer

some invaluable lessons to Research units in Parliaments facing similar challenges, and where information for oversight is often scanty and accountability mechanisms in the public sector are weak.

Key words: Parliamentary Research, Monitoring & Evaluation, Data Centre

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges of the 21st Century facing Legislatures in developing countries like Uganda, and the Libraries and Research Services that support them, is the need for objective, transparent and timely government programmes performance information (M&E data) essential for Parliament to effectively play her oversight role. Parliaments in developing nations are operating in an environment where many government programmes are under-performing and where the gap between Parliament-approved programme resources and results is wide. There is increased demand for transparency and accountability for performance of tax payers' money sunk in programmes, and the confidence of the Ugandan people in the capability of Parliament to systematically hold Government MDAs and Local Governments (LGs) to account for results.

The need by Parliament for performance information and data to hold government programmes accountable for results has never been greater. However, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems are not only state-controlled, but are also weak. Consequently objective, transparent and timely performance information is hard to obtain by Parliament. In order to contribute to addressing this challenge while striving to remain relevant in the evolving political, social and institutional context in which we operate, the Parliamentary Research Services in Uganda have had to evolve to meet the prevalent challenges and to strategize so as to address the increasing information and data needs of Parliament.

This paper, shares our experiences the Department of Research Services of the Parliament of Uganda.

The paper is divided into five parts. Following this introduction, part 2 provides an overview of the institution of the Parliament of Uganda. Part 3 examines the background and context – outlining the nature of Uganda Parliament and the institutional challenges faced that called for adoption of innovative services. Part 4 discusses the nature of the Research services and how they are evolving to meet the challenges and the results achieved. Part 5 discusses the challenges encountered in the evolution and setting up of new systems and services, as well as the lessons that could be useful to other countries of comparable contexts.

Definitions of key concepts

For the purposes of this paper, a distinction is made between programme performance monitoring and programme evaluation. *Programme Performance Monitoring:* - This normally reflects the ongoing, routine collection, analysis, and reporting of programme performance measures to determine progress toward established goals and objectives. *Programme evaluations:-* These are seen as the in-depth individual studies conducted periodically or on an ad hoc basis to assess how well government programmes are working and the factors that affect (promote or hinder) the achieving of the intended results, and what changes need to be pursued to improve performance (see, for example, U.S. GAO, 2011).

Evaluations are designed to provide evidence-based information that is objective, reliable and useful; enabling the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the Parliamentary decision-making processes of approving policies and budgets of government MDAs. Evaluations strengthen accountability regarding government policies and programmes and, therefore, fall within parliament's oversight role.

In this paper, we use the phrase "performance information" interchangeably with M&E information/data, all to refer to information generated from performance monitoring and evaluation of government programmes by Parliament, and in the course performing her oversight function.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1 About the Parliament of Uganda

Uganda's present Parliament is the eighth Parliament since the country got independence from Britain in 1962. This is the nation's first multiparty Parliament after decades of various modes of governance including: party system of governance, military and quasi-military administrations. Parliament is unicameral and the current political arrangement can be described as a hybrid multi-party system with republican and presidential elements (Uganda, 1995).

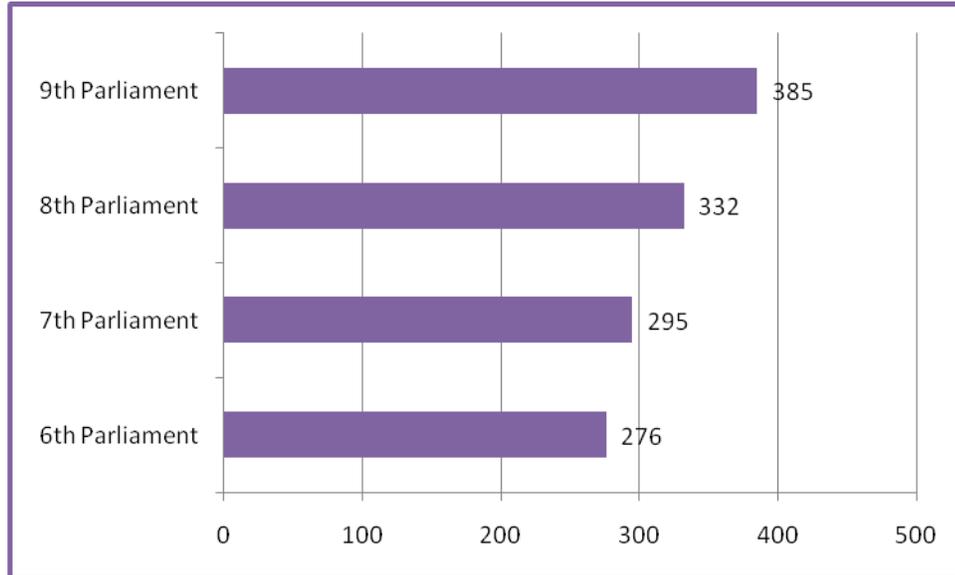
The functions of Uganda's Parliament are as follows: making laws for good governance and development of the nation; scrutinizing government policies, budgets, loans and administration; vetting appointments by the President provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda; and debating topical issues of national interest.

Uganda Parliament derives its powers from the Constitutions of the Republic of Uganda and other legislations such as the Administration of Parliament Act, the Budget Act, the National Audit Act, and the Public Finance and Accountability Act.

Size of Parliament

The size of Parliament has increased overtime from 276 MPs in the 6th Parliament to the current 385 in the 8th Parliament, partly due to the increase in population, changes in constituencies, and the creation of new municipalities and districts. This has increased the ratio of the number of MPs per researcher as well as the workload.

Figure 1: Size of Uganda Parliament



Source: Parliamentary Research Service

Committees

Like many other Parliaments in the World, the Parliament in Uganda carries out her mandate through a committee system. The committees are the primary consumers of information and data generated by the Department of Research Services. Parliament has three categories of functional committees, namely: standing, sessional and select committees. At present it has 12 standing committees, 13 sessional committees and 3 select committees. The standing committees are constituted two times during the life span of the Parliament. Sessional committees are constituted at the beginning of every Parliament session while Select committees are constituted as and when need arises.

Each committee is made up of 20 Members of Parliament, a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson designated by the Chief Whips and Whips of the Parties represented in the House. The oversight function of Standing Committees is conducted with support from the technical departments of the Parliamentary Service. In strengthening the exercise of this role, opposition MPs chair Accountability Committees. Out of the 30 committees in the Parliament of Uganda, four of the accountability committees are led by the Opposition. These are: the Public Accounts Committee (PAC); the Local Government Public Accounts Committee (LGAC), the Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (COSASE) and the Committee on Government Assurances (CGA).

Committees in Uganda Parliament are tasked with scrutinizing government budgets, ministerial policy statements, and examining the performance of government agencies. They also tasked to perform the oversight function by conducting investigations. To be able to do this, the Committees rely on information generated by government agencies (line ministries) as well as by accountability state institutions, especially the Office of the Auditor General and the Inspectorate of Government.

2.2 Institutional and contextual challenges faced by Parliament and the Research Services

One of the cardinal functions of Uganda Parliament, is oversight over the Executive Branch. Article 79 of Uganda's Constitution enjoins Parliament to exercise oversight through performing the following functions: scrutinizing Government policy and administration, and in particular "assuring transparency and accountability in the application of public funds, and monitoring the implementation of government programmes and projects"; ensuring equitable allocation of resources and effective and efficient service delivery; and providing by giving legislative sanction to taxation and acquisition of loans (Uganda, 1995).

While Parliaments in developing nations like Uganda approve government budgets and policies, they tend to be weakest at monitoring and evaluating implementation and effectiveness of the same. This accounts for the widespread poor service delivery and lower quality of human life in many of our developing nations. In Uganda, the oversight function is the least effectively executed of all Parliamentary functions, and the results have been obvious. For instance, Uganda's progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been modest despite colossal sums of money approved by Parliament and invested in government programmes to meet such goals. The MDGs were adopted in 2000 and were to be implemented by 2015 with the view of poverty eradication. , However, Uganda has only achieved three out of the 17 targets of the MDGs, underscoring under-performance in as far as implementation is concerned (Rutaru, T, (2015).

This is largely attributable to the lack of a comprehensive M&E framework and institutional capacity of external government agencies that Parliament would rely on to scrutinize and hold government MDAs accountable.

- ***M&E framework in Uganda***

For many years, Uganda has not had a single unified and comprehensive M&E framework, resulting in a wide range of entities monitoring and evaluating government programmes. Recently, attempts have been made to draft a national policy on public sector monitoring and evaluation. The purpose of this policy is to improve the performance of the public sector by strengthening production and use of objective information on implementation and results of national programmes and projects. Despite having a policy, , financing it remains a challenge (Uganda, 2013).

Like in many countries, the more formal, routine work of M&E in the Ugandan Government is conducted by the Executive Branch, in its MDAs, through which most of the administrative work of the government is carried out. However, the coverage, objectivity, quality and utility of such assessments and evaluations of public policies and investments have remained questionable. All government ministries or departments are required to produce annual performance reports containing performance targets and results achieved against their targets during the fiscal year just ending. (The Uganda government's fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30). The reports are submitted to Parliament around April close to the end of the respective fiscal year. These are known

as "Ministerial Policy and Budgets Statements." These act as "Performance and Accountability Reports" and have been and continue to be an important part of Government reporting. The key elements of the reports include:

- annual outcome-based programme performance targets for the next fiscal year;
- comparison of actual performance with the targets for prior years;
- analysis and explanation of the causes of any missed targets; and
- budget or funding proposals for consideration by Parliament.

The Committees of Uganda Parliament use the following procedure in scrutinizing the respective Ministerial Policy and Budget Statements (Parliament of Uganda, 2007):

- Formally inviting the respective Ministers to present their policy statements
- Reading the statements together with relevant materials regarding the sectors (Policies, laws, regulations and write ups)
- Raising questions on the policy statements for clarification by the relevant Ministers
- Meeting autonomous bodies that take policy guidelines from the Ministry.

Parliament uses the above approach to assess whether a given programme is performing and when more funding should be approved by Parliament for it. The problem, however, with this kind of assessment is that Parliament is at the mercy of the programme reporting officer; and the key performance outputs as reported by ministries do not often necessarily mean that they are actually there on ground. However, Parliament has little or no time to assess the accuracy of the reports, before approving the budgets.

Parliament has traditionally relied for information on performance and accountability reports compiled by the same MDAs that Parliament is scrutinizing. This phenomenon has been likened to tasking a monkey to take stock of bananas in a forest, while expecting an accurate report. Indeed, many government departments appear less motivated to arm Parliament with information that does not enhance prospects for speedy approval of their budgets. Uganda Parliament has previously encountered a practice of recycling old, exaggerated and falsified performance reports sent to her Committees by some MDAs.

- ***Role of external agencies in monitoring and evaluation***

As part of the control mechanisms aimed at promoting accountability in the public sector, the Ugandan Government established external agencies. The two major control agencies include the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and the Inspectorate of Government (IG). Both of these form part of the monitoring and supervision tools of government and are mandated to enhance public service through efficient and effective resource management, ensuring adherence to standards and regulations, and promoting responsiveness to community needs (Kakumba, 2012).

The law establishes the OAG as the *supreme audit institution* of Uganda with the responsibility to scrutinize, verify and report to Parliament on the propriety and regularity of the manner in which public funds are used. Likewise, the IG has powers to investigate or cause investigation of any offence or breach of public authority and may prosecute or cause prosecution of any such offenders to eliminate and foster the elimination of corruption, abuse of authority and of public office (Uganda, 1995).

Structure and responsibility of the Office of Auditor-General (OAG)

The OAG is charged with the key duty of promoting accountability and good governance in public offices. The OAG is required to conduct *financial* and *value-for-money* audits in respect of any income, or expenditure involving public funds, across all the spheres of government, including the local governments.

Following implementation of a government's budget, the OAG audits government accounts, financial statements, and operations. In Uganda, this audit is followed by the consideration of the audit findings – which may include value for money and performance auditing as well as financial or compliance auditing by Parliament. Parliament's recommendations to the executive based on the deliberation on audit

findings put forward by the auditor should be reflected in future budgets, thus allowing for continuous improvements in public financial accountability.

Structure and responsibility of the Inspectorate of Government (IG)

The IG is headed by the Inspector General of Government (IGG), deputized by the Deputy IGG and supported by the Secretary to the Inspectorate (at level of Permanent Secretary) as the Accounting Officer and the head of Finance and Administration Department. For coordination and systematic implementation of functions, the IG is structured into five directorates, headed by directors, and three units headed by senior inspectorate officers (Uganda 2002).

The IG functions and responsibilities are vast and stretch across the central and local government spheres. The IG is obliged to undertake measures to ensure the rule of law in public offices, accountability and integrity among public officials, and transparency in the exercise of administrative functions. The IG carries out investigations in instances where there is alleged corruption and abuse of office or authority, breach of the Leadership Code of Conduct by leaders specified under the Leadership Code Act (LGA), 2002, and where administrative injustice and maladministration are reported in public offices (Uganda, 2002).

Weaknesses

In spite of these efforts to improve accountability in government, there are still challenges in funds that do not reach their intended destination or are not properly utilized. Corruption and misuse of public resources is widespread. Studies evaluating the institutional capacity of the OAG and the IG in the enhancement of accountability in local governments (LGs) in Uganda point to deficiencies in institutional capacity across the spectrum of financial, human and material resources. The IG reports are largely reactive to suspected or actual abuse of authority or misuse of public resources, and rarely relevant to the annual audit of MDAs performance by Parliament (Kakumba, 2012).

Regarding the OAG, there has been a failure to comply with the law as auditing of LG accounts and presentation of reports has often not been done within the statutory time of end October. Accounts of LGs of 2003/2004, for example, were not audited by end of the financial year 2006/2007, three years after the statutory period, mainly because the OAG lacked adequate human resources or due to late disbursement of funds from central government (OAG-Policy Statement, 2007).

In Uganda, the auditing of accounts is followed by the consideration of audit findings by Parliament. However, because audit reports often reach Parliament too late, most recommendations based on audit findings can't be reflected in ministry budgets, to allow for continuous improvements in public spending and generally public financial management. Audit reports have not been produced and tabled in the legislature as speedily as needed to ensure their relevance legislative monitoring and evaluation of government programmes.

Long delays have ended up undermining accountability, as officials who are responsible for a loss of public money have too often moved, retired or died by the time an abuse of public resources comes to the attention of Parliament. So often Parliament learns too late that the Government didn't implement policies and programmes in accordance with the wishes and intent of the Legislature. While Parliament is expected to adopt requisite legislation, approve budget allocations, and exercise oversight over expenditures, Parliament has thus often had limited knowledge of how government programmes perform.

3. CREATION AND RE-ALIGNMENT OF THE RESEARCH FUNCTION TO MEET THE CHALLENGES

3.1 Strategic initiatives undertaken

In light of the weak institutional mechanisms for Parliamentary oversight and promoting accountability in Uganda's public sector as outlined above, and Parliament's need for performance information to achieve greater effectiveness of government expenditures and programmes and accountability, the Research function, with the support of the Parliamentary Commission, embarked on a robust monitoring and evaluation of government programmes for Parliament, to supplement government information.

The innovation has involved a radical expansion of the traditional function of Library and Research services largely based on generating reports from secondary data – to proactive conducting of monitoring and evaluation of key government programmes, and conducting other service delivery surveys involving primary data collection from national to sub-national/ local governmental levels.

Furthermore, the Research Services have had to undergo four strategic innovations and re-alignment that are summarized below:

(1) Elevation of Research function to Departmental status

Following recognition of the increased need and demand for oversight information and legislative data, and research as a key contributor to performance and improved work of Parliament, the Research division was in 2012, upgraded into an independent department, namely the Department of Research Services.

The Research function in Uganda Parliament was first introduced in 1999 with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under the Uganda Parliamentary Technical Assistance Project (UPTAP). Research then existed as a section under the Department of Library, with the aim to provide nonpartisan, objective analysis and well-researched information to Committees and Members of Parliament to enable them to make informed legislative decisions.

A restructuring of the Parliamentary Service in 2004 saw the Research section elevated to Division status still under the Department of Library and Research. The Department of Research Services (DRS) in Uganda's Parliament came into effect in October 2012 to support effective and efficient execution of business of the Parliament of Uganda with a funded M&E function.

The Uganda Parliament now engages in M&E of government programmes directly through its internal committee hearing process, through its support Department of Research Services, supplemented by the Budget Office. The Department of Research Services thus serves as the principal research arm of Uganda Parliament. The range of work conducted by Department of Research services in Uganda Parliament includes:

- Evaluations of government programmes, policies, operations, and performance;
- Analyses of the policies and budgets of government departments and financing for government activities;
- Policy analyses to assess needed actions and the implications of proposed policies; and,
- Additional assistance to the Parliamentary Committees in support of their oversight, appropriations, legislative, and other responsibilities.

Parliament promotes, funds, or demands monitoring or evaluation of specific government programme. The goal is to replace but to supplement analysis and evaluation by other government agencies with more timely and reliable performance information.

Table 1: Key Roles of the DRS

Roles of the DRS

- Conduct quality research and offer technical advice to Committees, individual MPs and Staff of Parliament in respect of parliamentary work.
- Conduct studies on new Bills and Policies to inform Committees and individual MPs.
- Provide technical briefings and advice to Committees on, among other things, allocation of resources, accountability and Government assurances.
- Support Committees in conducting investigations.
- Conduct Monitoring and Evaluation studies on Government Policies and programmes.
- Conduct other proactive studies - to support Parliamentary business.

Table 2: DRS products and services

DRS products and services

- ***Routine research reports;*** covering briefs and reports provided to mostly Members of Parliament for motions & debates in the House, presentation in workshops and information concerning their constituencies.
- ***Bills analysis reports;*** mainly for Committees considering the Bills referred to them by the House and interested Members of Parliament.
- ***Policy analysis reports;*** include desk reviews and field surveys on selected areas of public policy. It includes analysis of sectoral policies to support the budget process.
- ***Monitoring and evaluation reports;*** covering monitoring and evaluation studies of government policies, plans, programmes, projects and interventions.
- ***Fact sheets;*** covering provision of key sectoral and national statistics useful for Parliamentary business.
- ***Committee briefs and reports;*** mainly focusing on producing briefing papers to facilitate public hearings and field visits. Researchers help Committee Chairpersons to draft reports.
- ***On spot technical advice;*** involves provision of verbal advice or otherwise instantly whenever asked, either in a Committee meeting or in offices.

Source: Parliamentary Research Service

(2) Functional realignment towards M&E efforts

The Department has been functionally re-aligned to respond to the need to deliver monitoring and evaluation information and data, beyond the traditional roles and responsibilities of library and research units in Parliaments. This was done through creation of two proactive supervisory divisions and five data collection units or sections.

The divisions are:

- ✚ **Finance & Economy** - which is responsible for overseeing the generation of information and data on Finance and Economy, Science and Technology issues, of the economy and society for Parliament;
- ✚ **Social Services** - which is responsible for overseeing the generation of information and data on social, legal and political sectors of the economy and society for Parliament.

The sections are:

- **Finance and Economy:** which is responsible for gathering and analysing information for Committees and Members of Parliament dealing with, public financial management and economy matters. These are mainly Committees on Public Accounts; Local Government Accounts; Budget; Commissions, Statutory Authorities & States Enterprise; Tourism, Trade & Industry; East African Community Affairs, and National Economy. The Section has nine staff including its Head. All Committees have been assigned at least one staff. The staff has qualifications mainly in economics and accounting.
- **Science and Technology:** The section is responsible for gathering and analysing information for Committees and Members of Parliament dealing with oversight of science and technology matters. These include Committees on Science & Technology;, Agriculture, Animal Industry & Fisheries, Information & Communication Technology, Physical Infrastructure and, Natural Resources. The Section has five staff. The position of Head of Section is vacant. An Officer has been assigned to every committee in the section. The staff has qualifications in environment, engineering, agriculture, energy and natural sciences.
- **Statistics:** which is responsible for handling and guiding on matters of statistics and field surveys. It mainly deals with committees that generate and require regular updates of databases as they conduct their businesses. These include Committees on Appointments, Business and Government Assurances. The Section has three staff including its Head. One additional Officer is yet to be recruited. All Committees are being serviced by an officer. The staff has qualifications in statistics and econometrics.
- **Social Development** which is responsible for gathering and analysing information for Committees and Members of Parliament dealing with health, education and social development matters. These are mainly Committees on HIV/AIDS & related matters, Gender, Labour & Social Development, Education & Sports, Health, and Equal Opportunities. The Section has six staff including its Head. All Committees have been assigned one staff. The staff has qualifications in social sciences and social work & administration disciplines.
- **Legal and Political** which is responsible for gathering and analysing information for Committees and Members of Parliament dealing with legal, administrative and political matters. These are mainly Committees on Rules, Discipline & Privileges, Human Rights, Public Service & Local Government, Legal & Parliamentary Affairs, Defense & Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Presidential Affairs. The Section has seven staff including its Head. All the Committees are being serviced by an officer

The above units are tasked to address the M&E and other data and information needs of the following Committees:

Table 3: Parliamentary Research Services Divisions and Committees Supported

Parliamentary Research Service Division	Committees supported
1. Finance and the Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public Accounts Committee ➤ Local Government Accounts ➤ Government Assurances ➤ Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises ➤ National Economy ➤ Finance, Planning and Economic Development ➤ Tourism, Trade and Industry ➤ Information and Communication Technology, ➤ Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, ➤ Natural Resources ➤ Physical Infrastructure ➤ Science and Technology
3. Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Equal Opportunities ➤ HIV/AIDs ➤ Gender, Labour and Social Development ➤ Social Services ➤ Legal and Parliamentary Affairs ➤ Rules, Discipline and Privileges ➤ Foreign Affairs ➤ Presidential Affairs ➤ Defense ➤ Public Service and Local Government

Source: Parliamentary Research Service

(3) Creation of a multi-disciplinary research team

In order to respond to the data and information needs of the present times, the Research Services department created a staff base of 39 researchers with a multidisciplinary technical orientation and with qualifications and skills that mirror the critical sectors of the Government of the Republic of Uganda and over which Parliament exercises oversight. These include social scientists, political scientists, lawyers, economists, accountants, statisticians, environmental scientists, agro-business officers, engineers, and oil and gas scientists as well as education and gender specialists.

Besides working together as a section, each of these officers is assigned to a committee of his specialty and tasked to provide committees and MPs with comprehensive, reliable, objective, non-partisan and timely information and data to enable them effectively monitor and evaluate the performance of government of behalf of Parliament. These work closely with the department of Library services, amongst others, to provide legislative information to committees and Members of Parliament.

3.2 Achievements

(1) From a reactive to a proactive monitoring and evaluation data centre

The above innovations and strategies have led the Research services in the Parliament of Uganda to transform from a largely reactive research section - to a robust monitoring and evaluation legislative oversight data centre, able to meet the challenges at hand. We are now a pro-active research service centre that anticipates parliamentary data and information needs of oversight committees and, also to counter the monopolistic tendencies of the Executive and its agencies when it comes to releasing information to Parliament.

The Department has so far carried out monitoring and evaluation studies and generated reports for Parliament on the following, amongst other, field studies:

- Impact of creation of Districts on service delivery;
- Evaluation of Universal Primary Education programme;
- Study on accountability systems;
- Evaluation of impact of decentralization on service delivery
- Evaluation of agricultural data bank
- Evaluation of programme for youth and children empowerment
- Evaluation of fisheries development programme in Uganda.
- Impact of polythene bags in Uganda;
- Appropriation in AID in Uganda
- Impact of climate change;

(2) Provision of objective, relevant and up to date analyses, information and technical advice to all organs of Parliament of Uganda

Whereas in the past Parliament has helplessly had to put up with recurrent recycling of old, exaggerated and falsified performance reports by government departments, the embarking on of proactive monitoring and evaluation of government programmes by the Research Services department, has put the practice in check. Parliament is now independently monitoring.

The DRS is now able to provide objective, relevant and up to date analyses, information and technical advice to all organs of Parliament of Uganda in a highly demanding multiparty dispensation. It has

worked closely with other departments and stakeholders to support committees and Members of Parliament with needed information to monitor and evaluate government projects and programmes.

(3) Support to Parliamentary Committee System

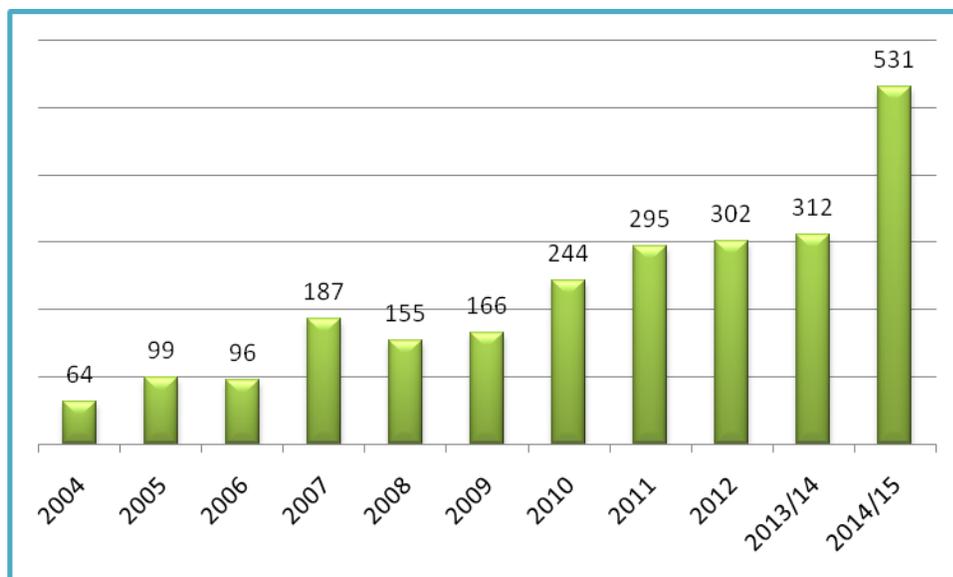
DRS can now more effectively support standing sectoral, select and *ad hoc* committees of the Parliament of Uganda. It has attached a Researcher to each of the 28 committees in the 9th Parliament. About four Researchers still provide support to two committees each. We aim to have every Committee of Parliament supported by at least a Researcher.

(4) The Department is handling an increasing amount of workload

There has been increased demand for research products resulting from innovations outlined above. This increase can also be attributed to the increase in number of MPs serviced, number of committees requiring permanent presence of researchers, different political parties demanding research services on issues peculiar to their parties, new broad research areas – such as the oil and gas industry. As a result, the average number of research requests (i.e., core research reports, excluding oral briefs, technical back-ups to committees and briefs for committee field oversights) has increased from 64 in 2004 to 244 requests by 2010, representing an annual growth rate of 27%.

The analysis indicates that the number of the research requests handled has been increasing, from 64 requests in 2004, to 531 requests in the FY 2014/15 as presented in table below. This shows that there is an increasing need by Members of Parliament for researched information.

Table 4: Research Requests handled by the Research Division



Source: Parliamentary Research Service

Uganda’s legislators now have access to much more performance data required to assess government agencies, than years before. M&E data generated by the Research Service is providing a more objective and transparent basis for understanding government programmes and their impacts; and for informing Members of Parliament on issues of needed improvement and resource allocation decisions. Such data is helping Parliament to review government programmes and projects and also to hold accounting officers

and programme managers accountable for programme improvements and to justify subsequent budget proposal requests to Parliament.

Below is a summary of the strengths of our M&E strategies and some of the challenges to their effectiveness that are being encountered.

Strengths

- The department is collecting substantial amounts of programme performance data relevant to Parliamentary oversight function.
- The importance of analyzing and using programme performance data to justify policy and budgetary approval decisions by Parliament is yet to be widely acknowledged.
- Parliamentary oversight committees now have better information about the performance of some of government's programmes.

4. CHALLENGES

▪ *Limited appreciation of performance information*

Despite monitoring and evaluation efforts being undertaken by Uganda's Parliament, and despite rising demand for it, appreciation of performance information is still relatively modest. Our M&E information is yet to become a significant driver of legislators' decisions to approve agency budgets or scrutinize government policies and programmes. Commitment to a focus on results is still weak across the government, and transformation is still needed in organizational culture to make not only agencies but also Parliament more results-oriented.

▪ *Limited use of M&E information by Parliament and her oversight Committees*

Uganda Parliament and her oversight Committees could make much greater use of M&E information generated by the Research Department for oversight, resource allocation/budgetary scrutiny, and for other decision making about government programmes. We've embarked on efforts to make M&E information more useful to Parliament and her oversight Committees. These include doing more to involve Members of Parliament in the development and production of M&E information products to increase legislative interest in them.

Greater investment in legislators' capacity for appreciating and using programme /agency performance information for legislative purposes and better packaging of such information can enable more legislators make greater use of performance information (see, for example, Ellig 2010).

▪ *Limited collaborative stakeholder participation*

Wider appreciation of M&E initiatives by the Research Department and greater cooperation, beyond the institution of Parliament, is often limited. This is because such initiatives are often perceived as potentially punitive by government agencies, and as a fearsome Parliamentary tool to potentially penalize government programmes managers and staff. Despite of this, collaborative stakeholder participation is needed, especially with government departments, in the design,

collection and analysis, and use of M&E data that can best aid Committees scrutinize government performance.

- ***Limited resources***

DRS is contending with lack of access to adequate resources for specialized studies, as well as inadequate financial and human resources to effectively realize the department's mandate. The Department is lobbying the Board of Management and the Parliamentary Commission and Partners to provide additional funding and approve the Parliamentary Research Policy that has been drafted.

- ***Limited capacity/skills***

Even with a staff base of 39, we are still contending with limited capacity/skills to support all the critical operations of government and parliamentary business. Carrying out proactive research studies of this nature requires multi-disciplinary teams of no less than 10 researchers on average per study. Additionally, it takes at least three months to produce a report of a proactive research study that cuts across various districts. In a context where nearly all government programmes are implemented in districts with little reliable and accurate data feedback from line ministries, proactive research is a highly demanding research function that requires a sufficient skills base.

Consistent analysis and timely presentation of agency performance data to Parliament and her Committees remains a big challenge. Data collection is too often time-consuming and compliance with data collection requirements is often overwhelming to staff. Performance evaluation, everywhere, is often characterized by rigour and yet high standards of data collection processes and analysis are required, to enable Research units earn credibility with Governments and other stakeholders (see, for example, Katharine M. *et al.*, 2011).

Investment in the skills necessary to implement M&E on behalf of Parliament, including skills in rigorous programme evaluation methodology, is vitally important. There is need to augment the Research Department's capacity to plan and manage such studies. Building analytical capacity to assemble programme performance information and to ensure its quality — both in terms of staff trained to do the analysis and availability of research and evaluation resources — seems to be a challenge even in develop nations, yet it is critical to meaningful use of performance information (see, for example, U.S. GAO 2005, 2008a, p. 15).

5. LESSONS LEARNED

There is still a long way to go in establishing a very effective system for M&E with greater impact on legislative oversight in Uganda Parliament. Nonetheless, based on the experience we've so far gleaned, we can draw some lessons that may in some way contribute to informing the efforts of Research units in other Legislatures looking to set up sound systems for M&E for legislative oversight.

- ***Leadership support is essential to success.*** The leadership of Parliament must play a major role in establishing requirements for the monitoring performance by the Research Departments. Leadership commitment is necessary not only to provide resources, but also to underscore the importance of M&E information in providing a framework to enhance accountability and transparency.

- ***A departmental-level coordinating structure helps to drive the M&E efforts.*** To plan and execute M&E efforts in Parliament, Research services had to be upgraded to full departmental status with a leadership management team from the level of director, assistant directors, principal research officers, senior research officers to research officers. A radical expansion of the traditional function of Library and Research Services centering on generating information reports based on secondary data – to proactive conducting of service delivery surveys and monitoring and evaluating government programmes involving primary data required elevating the research function to a departmental status.

This, amongst other things, brought in place a dedicated M&E budget conveniently managed in order for the Parliamentary Research Service to effectively and efficiently provide needed data and information for legislative oversight, as and when needed by Members of Parliament and Committees. The elevated structure has been essential to keeping M&E efforts well planned, coordinated and implemented consistently throughout the financial year, as senior leadership is needed to develop solid strategies for implementing research efforts.

- ***Functional streamlining with core divisional and sectional structures is vital.*** Functionally structuring the Research Department into divisions and sections enhances delivery services of research services, as it among other things brings in the critical element of staff speciality and specialisation, besides the critical need for better coordination, management and development of a core skills base. The transformation of our original two divisions into one specialist, multi-disciplinary and multi-section department has enable us to more efficiently and effectively deliver specialist committee tailored research outputs that meet the needs of our clients.
- ***An ongoing investment in capacity building to ensure greater technical expertise and to build the M&E infrastructure required to collect timely and high quality data and reports on government departments performance is essential to the success of the M&E system.*** Officers need to undergo continuous training in the design and analysis of M&E evaluations. Parliaments must strengthen the capacity of the Research Departments to collect, analyze and disseminate programme performance information.
- ***A multidisciplinary skills and competences base is key to effectively generating data and information for legislative oversight.*** The Research Service needs to be strengthened in both numbers and skills to adequately respond to the research needs of Committees, Members, Staff and other fora in Parliament. For the Parliamentary Research Service to generate data and information for legislative oversight, it is necessary that the department is structured to attract diverse qualifications, skills and competences that closely mirror the Government's core Ministries, Departments and Agencies and Sectors Parliament oversees.

The service needs to be designed to attract a mix of experienced and qualified professional, such as, economists, lawyers, accountants, natural scientists, social scientists, and statisticians. We have found that better alignment of staff according to their professional and subject specialty is one of the best ways to enhance technical supervision and assignment of tasks, and thereby improve effectiveness and efficiency in delivering organizations mandates and objectives.

References

Ellig, Jerry. 2010. —Has GPRA Increased the Availability and Use of Performance Information? Working Paper No. 09-03. Mercatus Center, George Mason University, Washington, DC.

Kakumba, U. (2012). Assessing the Institutional Capacity of External Agencies in holding Local Governments Accountable in Uganda. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance. Issue 10: December 2011- June 2012* <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/ojs/index.php/cjlg>.

Katharine M.& Pfeiffer J.R (2011). Monitoring and Evaluation in the United States Government: An Overview. Independent Evaluation Group, the World Bank Group. NW, Washington.

Rutaro, T. (2015). *Monitoring MDG indicators - a case of Uganda*. Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) 2015. Kampala: Government Printers.

Uganda. 2013. *National Policy on Public Sector Monitoring and Evaluation, Final Draft (April 2013)*. Kampala: Government Printers.

Uganda. 1995. *The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995*. Kampala: UPPC

Uganda. 2002. *The Inspectorate of Government Act, 2002*. Entebbe: UPPC.

Uganda. 2002. *The Leadership Code Act, 2002*. Kampala: Government Printers.

Uganda. 2003. *Public Finance and Accountability Act, 2003*. Entebbe: UPPC.

U.S. GAO (U.S. Government Accountability Office). 2005. *Managing for Results: Enhancing Agency Use of Performance Information for Management Decision Making* (GAO-05-927). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

U.S. GAO (U.S. Government Accountability Office). 2011. *Program Evaluation: Experienced Agencies Follow a Similar Model for Prioritizing Research* (GAO-11-176). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

U.S. GAO (U.S. Government Accountability Office). 2008a. *Government Performance. Lessons Learned for the Next Administration on Using Performance Information to Improve Results* (GAO-08-1026T). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Acknowledgements

This paper was informed and enriched by, among others, interviews with some senior staff in the department. The authors thank the department staff of the Uganda Parliamentary Research Services for their support of this work.
