

# **PRESENTATION ON THE DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH SERVICES (DRS) ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTLOOK**

**AT INASP EVENT IN LONDON, 23rd – 29th, APRIL 2017**

## **1. Introduction:**

This paper contains information on the achievements of the DRS and its outlook, highlighting the planned activities and events and potential areas of cooperation with funders in the future.

## **2. Parliament Research Week, August 2016:**

In an effort to showcase research products, build capacity and increase visibility, the DRS, in partnership with the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS) and International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), held an inaugural Parliament Research Week in Uganda in August 2016. The Week was marked by a series of events and activities held both at Parliament and selected venues within Kampala. In brief, these included the following:

- Trainings: policy briefing, science communication, data visualisation
- Manual development: research manual, policy analysis manual
- Knowledge Cafes: discussion panels, with topics including debt and
- Research symposium: selected audience composed of policy makers and research institutions discussed issues relating to use of evidence in decision making
- MP-Scientist Pairing Scheme: 10 pairs of scientists and Members of Parliament paired to learn from each other under various topics
- Learning Exchange: DRS staff attached to UNAS Committees to learn how business is conducted while Young scientists from UNAS reviewed some research products from DRS
- Research Week: held within the precincts of Parliament, in partnership with other Research Organisations, targeting MPs. Various products were showcased, requests for information received and networks established with other organisations in an effort to promote use of evidence in decision making, especially in Parliament.

## **Outcomes:**

The following have resulted from the activities and events of the Research Week:

- i. There has been an increase in the number of requests for information received from Members and Committees of Parliament. During the duration of the Research Week, over 80 requests for information were received. In the last 6 months (September 2016 – February 2017) there have been a higher number of requests made, which is higher compared to the same period over the last 3 years.

- ii. Appreciation of infographics and use of visuals among staff of DRS as reflected in research products
- iii. Extensive media coverage of the events and activities of the Research Week including live transmission of the official opening by the Deputy Speaker of Parliament and press conference
- iv. Recognition and collaboration with other departments in Parliament to organise similar activities, including Parliament Week in February 2017. Staff of DRS requested to spearhead other Parliament activities due to perceived success of the Research Week. Materials that were handed to visitors to the DRS stall during the Week are still being used, including pens, notebooks etc.
- v. Collaboration with UNAS in the review of research proposals and policy briefs developed by DRS
- vi. Collaboration with the Uganda Management Institute (UMI) and DRS requested to nominate staff to sit on UMI's Research Committee
- vii. Invitations to partner with several Universities and academic institutions across the country: College of Health Sciences, Makerere; Business School, Makerere etc
- viii. Participation in research activities organised by other research institutions, which has improved our collaboration and networking
- ix. Delivered lecture at the Uganda Christian University (UCU) on policy briefing

**What could have been done differently:**

The Research Week was the first of its kind and was essentially a learning process. Despite the successes, some things could have been done differently, including:

- *The events and activities were congested, with strict timelines.* The planning, preparations, and establishing contact with participants and partners could have started earlier and implementation spread over a longer duration. Some research products were published after the event.
- *Inadequate funding:* the resource envelope was limited and essential activities had to be foregone. The pairing scheme and exhibitions could have especially benefitted from better funding.

**Proposed Areas of Partnership/Collaboration:**

In the future, the DRS shall organise Research Week at the start and mid-term the duration of each Parliament (every two a half-years), and at the start of every Parliament. The DRS seeks funders to facilitate the successful implementation of subsequent Research Weeks and related events.

**3. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):**

**Kinds of Evaluations:**

***Evaluation of activities, projects and programs:*** Parliament oversees the implementation of activities, projects and programs implemented by the Executive. This is done through a monitoring and evaluation system, in which the DRS is key. Each year the DRS undertakes several evaluations on different sectors, both pro-actively and on request. The products are disseminated and shared with the relevant Committees, Members and Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

***Evaluation of policies and laws (post-legislative scrutiny):*** scrutiny of laws and policies that have been passed or approved by Parliament is important in assessing their implementation and performance. In the past year or so, the DRS has undertaken scrutiny of Police Penal Code and the law on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

***Meta-evaluations:*** the DRS plans to undertake evaluation on evaluations that have been conducted by other organisations, for the consumption of Committees and Members of Parliament. Also, the department shall study evaluation reports on evaluations conducted by other organisations/individuals and summarise the key findings for Committees and Members of Parliament.

#### **Case for conducting Evaluations:**

Evaluations are key in the oversight function of Parliament by assessing the implementation of laws, policies, projects and programs. This would help in measuring performance and determining resource allocation and utilisation.

#### **Proposed Areas of Partnership/Collaboration:**

In order to perform better, the DRS requires training in conducting Monitoring and Evaluation and scrutiny of Value For Money (VFM) audits. As an output from the M&E training, a manual on conducting M&E would have to be developed. In addition, the Department needs to conduct 5 single-value evaluations, with an expert to consolidate the skills attained from the trainings.

#### **4. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**

##### **Parliament and Development Goals:**

In its 5-year Strategic Plan, 2014 -2020, Parliament aims at participating in achieving equitable and sustainable national development goals. This shall be achieved through overseeing implementation of national development plans and programmes, including the Uganda National Development Plan, 2015-2020, and the Sustainable Development Goals. The DRS is the department responsible for ensuring that Parliament proposes initiatives and proposals, through its Committees, that shall lead to the attainment of set goals. The department is also responsible for ensuring that Parliament enforces accountability and transparency, by facilitating the scrutiny of audit reports and reports on corruption.

## **Case for participation in the attainment of Development Goals:**

Uganda's development plans and programmes are geared towards attainment of SDGs. The effective and efficient implementation of these plans and programmes contributes to national development and Parliament plays an important role in this regard.

## **Proposed Areas of Partnership/Collaboration:**

The DRS requires training in operationalisation and implementation of strategic plans to be able to guide Parliament in participation in the attainment of SDGs and national development goals.

## **5. Research Agenda:**

### **Setting the Agenda:**

Every year the DRS undertakes research on various topical issues, both pro-actively and on request. There are about 10 field based studies undertaken each year on different topics for the consumption of Committees and Members of Parliament.

The DRS should set an Agenda for its research, stating the planned research to be undertaken in the course of the proceeding year. The Agenda would guide the DRS to: develop proposals in time; interest and engage Members of Parliament; seek funding, where necessary; plan and set realistic timelines for implementation. Setting the research agenda is key in planning given that the majority of research studies are pro-active in nature and it would accord the department adequate time to contextualise and improve the proposals before funding is committed to their implementation.

## **Proposed Areas of Partnership/Collaboration:**

The DRS requires training in developing and implementation of research agendas. The department shall develop its Research Agenda as an output from the training. The skills obtained shall be used to develop future Research Agendas for the DRS and improve work programmes for Parliamentary Committees.

## **6. Constituency Profiling:**

### **Update on Constituency Profiling:**

Todate, the DRS has profiled about 100 of the 290 Parliamentary Constituencies in the country. The profiling exercise involves documentation of basic information about Constituencies so as to provide a reference about the level of service availability. The Constituency Information documented includes: number of administrative units; demographic characteristics; natural resources; road network and condition; communication services;

education and health services; economic and business activity; and budgetary allocations for the services. Funds permitting, the Constituency Profiles shall be updated mid-term the duration of each Parliament (every two a half-years), and at the start of every Parliament.

**Case for Constituency Profiling:**

Constituency Profiles are key in enabling Members of Parliament effectively lobby for additional services and in assessment of service delivery by the Executive at the lowest level possible. In a way, the outputs of the exercise facilitate tracking of resources and enable Parliament gather evidence which would be used in budgetary allocations and monitoring purposes.

**Proposed Area of Partnership/Collaboration:**

The DRS has used funds from its annual budget to facilitate the Constituency Profiling exercise so far accomplished. However, due to limitation of funding, the completion of the exercise might take several years and yet this is a key activity to enable each individual Member of Parliament monitor service delivery at the lowest levels in their Constituencies. The DRS seeks a funder to facilitate completion of the exercise in other Constituency. The department could share experiences with other Parliaments about how the exercise is being implemented in their countries.

**7. Community ScoreCard:**

The Community ScoreCard used by Ghana could be applied by the Parliament of Uganda. The ScoreCard would be used to obtain feedback from the Community about the perceived performance of Parliament and its Committees in executing its mandate. This would assist Parliament in improving upon its performance based on the perceptions by the public. In its 5-year Strategic Plan, 2014 -2020, Parliament aims at increasing public participation in its work as a means of bridging the gap with the people.

**Proposed Area of Partnership/Collaboration:**

The DRS requires training in the development and application of the Community ScoreCar as this is a new area. The experiences of Ghana can be shared with the DRS to appreciate the likely challenges during implementation. In this way, the DRS would suport Parliament's objective of bridging the gap with the public.

**8. Citizens' Evidence:**

In order to improve the representative function of Parliament and increase the use of evidence from the grassroots in decision making, the DRS could engage ordinary citizens in

discussions pertaining to particular matters. The DRS would organise discussions on a topic or a particular government program or project and obtain feedback on the implementation. This would assist Parliament in the assessment of service delivery in the rural communities and guide in the budgetary allocations towards particular programmes.

**Proposed Area of Partnership/Collaboration:**

The DRS requires training in the gathering and use of citizens' evidence for decision making as this is a new area and the department has no experience in the same. An expert would train the department in gathering citizens' evidence and thereafter undertake at least 2 sessions on selected topical issues.

**9. Conducting Investigations:**

Parliamentary Select Committees are routinely constituted to conduct investigations into different matters as determined by the House. Such investigations require background information and involve review of documents, which is often done by staff of the DRS attached to such Committees. In the past, the DRS has successfully supported several Select Committees to investigate and report on matters. However, the support has been ad hoc since there has been no training or particular skills previously imparted to DRS staff.

**Proposed Areas of Partnership/Collaboration:**

The DRS requires training and sharing of experience on conducting Parliamentary Investigations. Moreover, these investigations are often undertaken during or after program implementation, which requires special investigative skills to review documents and guide the Committees. An expert would train the department and work with a member of staff who might be supporting an on-going investigation.

**10. Use of Large Data Sets:**

Several large data sets are produced by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) on a regular basis including: Demographic survey data; Panel data; Household surveys; Census report etc. This data is difficult to consume in the state in which it is presented and requires simplification for the consumption of individual Members and Committees of Parliament. Such data is important for planning and decision making purposes since it is an important source of evidence.

**Proposed Areas of Partnership/Collaboration:**

The DRS requires training in the use of Large Data Sets. An expert would be identified to work with the department in summarising and presenting at least 3 Data Sets to Committees and Members of Parliament.

#### **11. Improvement of Information Systems:**

Each year, DRS produces several research products for Staff, Members and Committees of Parliament. In order to improve the efficiency and workflow processes for managing its electronic documents including: receiving and assigning of work; supervision and monitoring progress on assignments; storage; and access and retrieval. The DRS should improve upon its data base as well its web page on which the research products will be available.

#### **Proposed Areas of Partnership/Collaboration:**

The DRS requires funding for the development of its web page. The funding include a component on training all DRS on the management of work flows both for supervisors and supervisees.

#### **12. Supporting MPs to Develop Private Members' Bills:**

In the past 2 years, the Parliament of Uganda has granted leave to 8 Members of Parliament to introduce Private Members' Bills. The DRS offers technical support and guidance and provides required background information to the MPs during the process of developing such Bills. However, the support offered has been ad hoc since there has been no training or skills previously imparted to DRS staff in this area.

#### **Proposed Areas of Partnership/Collaboration:**

The DRS requires training in developing Private Members' Bills. The Department would work with an expert in supporting a Member of Parliament who might be working on a Private Members' Bill.

#### **13. Collaboration with Scientists:**

**Young Scientists:** The Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS) Young Scientists have collaborated with the DRS to review research products. UNAS has expressed willingness to engage its Young Scientists in building the research capacity of DRS. This collaboration provide a platform for the scientists to engage with policy makers at Parliament.

**Other Scientists:** Also, other Scientists from Universities have expressed a desire to collaborate with the DRS in availing evidence to MPs for decision making.

***New Unit of Science and Technology in DRS:*** a Section of Science and Technology (S&T) has been created in the DRS to spearhead research and technical support on matters of S&T in the department.

***Global Young Academy:*** the DRS to engage with Global Young Academy to enhance its policy and decision-making processes. The Academy Members would be engaged by the DRS in the process of developing concepts and instruments for research and review of final reports. This would improve the quality of reports and impact of evidence for policy making in the country.

***International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA):*** the DRS to collaborate with other users, practitioners and scholars of science to share experiences on the application of science in policy and decision making. The DRS to participate in the INGSA events and activities to build the network and collaborate.

***PASGR:*** this is a policy analysis organisation based in Kenya, which promotes network of scientists in the region. The DRS has been participating in the events and is expected to be involved in the next training in November.

#### **Case for Collaboration with Scientists:**

It is important for DRS to promote the access and use of science and technology information in the Parliament of Uganda through its collaboration with Scientists. Effective and continuous communication of science to policy makers is important given the technological changes and advancements.

#### **Proposed Areas of Partnership/Collaboration:**

The S&T Section needs to build its network and collaboration with UNAS; Research Institutions and Partner Organisations; Evidence-producers and users; other Parliaments; and MDAS in order to facilitate learning and build capacity to perform better. The section requires attachment and access and use of information in order to effectively brief Committees and Members of Parliament.

Funding should be available to facilitate the Young Scientists and other Scientists to work with the DRS to effectively support Parliament.

#### **14. Documenting Knowledge in Uganda:**

In a bid to promote access and use of knowledge in Uganda, there is need proper documentation of the same. Researchers and research users need to be collaborate and work together. The Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) the Government Agency mandated to strengthen national system for research, product development, technology transfer and intellectual property management. DRS in collaboration

with UNCST would work towards ensuring that knowledge is available and knowledge producers and users are classified by category to facilitate easy access to required information for decision making.

**Proposed Areas of Partnership/Collaboration:**

UNCST should be funded to document knowledge producers and users and improve collaboration for decision making.