

FACTSHEET

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PARLIAMENT OF KENYA
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Parliamentary Research Services

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THE PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH
SERVICES

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Purpose and Acknowledgement

This Factsheet is part of the Kenya National Assembly Factsheets Series that has been developed to enhance public understanding and awareness, and to build knowledge on the work of the Assembly, and its operations. It is intended to serve as a guide for ready reference by Members of Parliament, staff and the public. The information contained here is not exhaustive and readers are advised to refer to the original sources for further information.

This work is a product of the concerted effort of all the Directorates and Departments of the National Assembly and the Parliamentary Joint Services. Special thanks go to the members of the *National Assembly Taskforce on Factsheets, Speaker's Rulings and Guidelines*, namely, Mr. Kipkemoi arap Kirui (Team Leader), Mr. Rana Tiampati, Mr. Kennedy Malinda, Ms. Anna Musandu, Mr. Samuel Kalama, Mr. Salem Lorot, Ms. Fiona Musili, Mr. Benson Inzofu, Ms. Laureen Wesonga, Ms. Anne Shibuko, Mr. James Maina Macharia, Mr. Morrice Shilungu, Mr. Finlay Muriuki, Ms. Rabeca Munyao and Mr. Stephen Omunzi.

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The Parliamentary Research Services



1.0 Background

Information has become central to decision making in legislatures. The emergence of constitutional democracy coupled with intensified social awareness, narrowed informational gaps, expanding democratic space and greater inclusion of the public in governance affairs have broadened the scope of parliamentary information needs.

From a contemporary perspective, the ultimate reason for establishing a Parliamentary Research Service is to provide non-partisan and balanced analysis that is adapted to the research needs of parliamentarians. In the process of dispensing their constitutional mandate, conventional practice requires Members of Parliament to come up with informed and evidence based decisions.

Conventional research in Parliament has emerged as a response to the increased complexity of the work of Parliament and parliamentarians. Within a constitutional democracy, Parliament is made up of representatives of the people with varying backgrounds and expertise. The immense range of policy issues that Parliament deals with makes it impossible for parliamentarians to be experts in all areas and therefore, it becomes absolutely critical that research information is repackaged and presented in a meaningful form for use.

2.0 The Parliamentary Research Services

The Parliamentary Research Services (PRS) in the Parliament of Kenya was established in November, 2003 as a specialized, non-partisan, and professional department of the Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC). It currently operates as a directorate under the Parliamentary Joint Services to provide policy research and analysis support to both the National Assembly and the Senate.

The establishment of the PRS was motivated by the need for Members of Parliament to access immediate, concise, synthesized and objective information to facilitate legislative decision-making. Its conception and present existence has created a formidable confluence for access to research information derived from diverse knowledge sources making evidence -use an indispensable tool for informed decision-making in Parliament.

The research services and outputs are available to individual Members of Parliament, Leadership Offices of Parliament, House Committees, parliamentary delegations, presiding officers, and staff of Parliament.

2.1 Roles and Functions

The range and scope of research services offered by the PRS is designed to assist in linking research and policy analysis more closely to the legislative agenda of Parliament. The PRS roles and functions are summarized as follows:

- a) Generating and disseminating research information to enhance Parliament's core functions of legislation, oversight and representation;
- b) Providing researched analytical information facts and evidence with a view to contribute towards enhancing the constitutional principle of separation of powers;
- c) Providing research support and analytical services to Parliamentarians, House Committees, and Parliamentary Office holders;
- d) Undertaking legislative research and public policy analysis to generate policy briefs, evidence and options to sustain evidence-informed decision making in the Legislature;
- e) Assembling of sectoral data, and information on emerging issues and contemporary aspects of Parliament;
- f) Building a credible data bank for reference and timely response to Parliament's information needs;
- g) Forging and maintaining mutually beneficial networks and linkages with research and policy institutions and the academia at national, regional and international levels; and
- h) Initiating anticipatory research and contributing to publications on contemporary and topical issues relevant to the work of the legislature;

- i) Carrying out comparative research on parliamentary research practice and trends, growth and contemporary aspects of Parliament;
- j) Monitoring and evaluation of policy development, trends and impact of legislation.

2.2 Services and Products

PRS services and outputs are both demand driven and anticipatory. The broad range of services and outputs cover consultations, expert advice and analyses. Specific outputs include:

- a) Policy analysis and briefs;
- b) Background and position papers on national, regional and global issues;
- c) Bill drafting notes and analyses;
- d) Research and briefing notes, factsheets, and issue analysis;
- e) Motion notes;
- f) Review of documents and evidence adduced before House committees;
- g) Reports of parliamentary inquiries;
- h) Comparative analysis on parliamentary research practice and trends;
- i) Subject matter specialist advice and consultations;
- j) Research information materials and publications.

In order to navigate through the increased demand for information by Parliament, the Directorate is organized into specialized departments designed to handle research and policy analysis in the broad policy, legislation, and program areas of: Agriculture, Science, and Environment; Finance, Economics and Trade; Governance and Political Affairs; and Social Policy. This is also intended to ease administration and supervision for quality control, and create avenues for building specialization and competencies in areas of interest among the PRS research officers.

3.0 Office and contact details

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