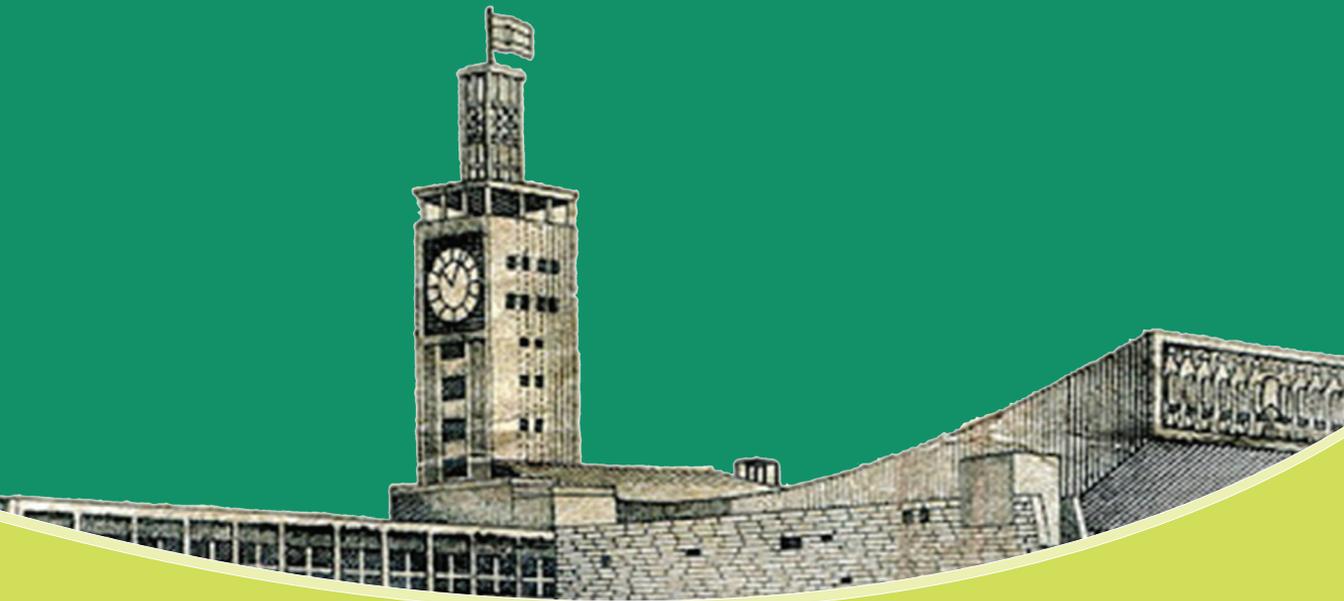




Parliament of Kenya

The National Assembly

# The Parliamentary Research Services



**Fact Sheet**  
No. 15



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*FactSheet No.15*

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# FactSheet

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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 and greater inclusion of the public in public affairs have broadened the scope of parliamentary information needs. This has greatly altered the way legislatures conduct their traditional mandates and decision making processes.

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 require members and legislature to come up with informed and evidence based decision making. This is inevitable if the traditional doctrine of separation of power is to be upheld.

Following the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, the wake of a bicameral parliament brought about many changes within the legislative framework. The rebirth of bicameralism meant that apart from the National Assembly, the Senate was created. Bicameralism also came with expanded constitutional mandate for Parliament in Kenya besides number of Members of Parliament. In addition, the paradigm shift to a presidential system coupled with enhanced separation of powers had a direct influence for a well mainstreamed parliamentary research outfit.

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 information consumers 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 under the Parliamentary Joint Services to provide policy research and analysis support to both the National Assembly and the Senate.

The establishment of the Parliamentary Research Services (PRS) was motivated by the need for Members to access immediate, concise, synthesized and objective information to facilitate legislative decision-making, as well as the traditional Parliament constitutional mandate. Its conception and present existence has created a formidable confluence for access to research information derived from diverse knowledge sources. This is also aimed at making research evidence use an indispensable tool for informed decision-making in Parliament.

Over the years, the department has gradually grown from the initial four pioneer researchers to the current thirty (30) research and policy analysts from various fields of specialization. The research services and outputs are available to individual Members, Leadership Offices of Parliament, House Committees, parliamentary delegations, presiding officers, and staff of Parliament.

### 2.1 Roles and Functions

The PRS draws its core mandate from the PSC Strategic Plan 2008-2018 (revised 2012) Strategic Issue 1: Objective 3 – To strengthen the Parliamentary Research Services. The strategic direction pursued is anchored on the following key strategies: -

- a) Institutionalize and strengthen research capacity in Parliament;
- b) Formalize and strengthen the role of researchers in value addition of parliamentarians' engagement in parliamentary discourse;
- c) Forge and maintain strong networks with research and policy analysis institutions at national, regional and international levels; and
- d) Entrench and build institutional capacity to utilize research evidence use and policy analysis in decision-making.

The range and scope of research services offered by the PRS is designed to assist in linking the research and policy analysis more closely to the legislative agenda of Parliament in line with the strategies outlined above. These roles and functions have a constitutional context that provide impetus and establishes the baseline for a strong and well entrenched

research services in Parliament. The key provisions include: the bicameral nature of the Parliament of Kenya; the presidential system; enhanced separation of powers; increased number of Members; and increased Leadership Offices of Parliament. This is further complemented by the centrality of committee system in transaction of business before the House(s).

**The PRS roles and functions are summarized as follows:**

- a) To generate and disseminate research information to enhance parliaments core functions - Law making, oversight and representation.
- b) To provide researched analytical information and facts to the Legislature with a view to contribute towards enhanced constitutional principle of separation of power;
- c) To provide research services and support to Parliamentarians, House Committees, and Parliamentary Office holders, that assists them to effectively perform out their constitutional responsibilities;
- d) To support the provision of the information needs of Parliament through a range of research services and products;
- e) To carry out research and assemble sectoral data, and information on comparative aspects of parliamentary practice and procedure; evolution, growth and contemporary aspects of Parliament;
- f) To undertake legislative research and public policy analysis to generate policy briefs and options to sustain evidence-informed decision making in the legislature;
- g) To build a credible data bank for reference and timely response to Parliament's information needs.
- h) To forge and maintain mutually beneficial networks and linkages with research and policy analysis institutions at national, regional and international levels; and
- i) To initiate anticipatory research and contribute to publications on contemporary and topical issues relevant to the work of the legislature.

**2.2 Services and Products**

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

- a) *Policy analysis and policy briefs* - To respond and inform on topical issues, information on legislative proposals, Committees business, individual Members of Parliament.
- b) *Background and position papers* – prepared for use by Parliamentary delegations attending local and international conferences, workshops, seminars and other official engagements. Also prepared as a way of providing background information on intended legislative proposals.
- c) *Bill digests and analyses* - To isolate salient issues of a Bill and to enable Members interrogate its contents and effectively engage with

stakeholders in line with the constitutional requirements for public participation.

- d) *Briefing notes and issue analysis* – As part of advance information for committee site visits, stakeholder engagement, and/or information and analytical brief on topical issues.
- e) *Motion notes (supporting and contra-arguments)* - To provide supporting evidence and information on the motion that facilitate debate of its adoption or defeat in the Chamber.
- f) *Review of documents/evidence* – Such as petitions and memoranda from the public and other stakeholders during oversight visits, public hearings, vetting of nominees to various public offices, and as part of Committee secretariat.
- g) *Reports of parliamentary inquiries* - to guarantee expert input and factual analysis are incorporated in the report.
- h) *Subject matter specialist advice/consultations* – this is available to Members, Leadership offices and Committees as needs may arise taking cognizance of the multidisciplinary staff capacity in the PRS.

In order to execute the above roles effectively, it is necessary that the research outputs and services are evidence-informed, authoritative, independent, and objective. This therefore calls for parliamentary research and policy analysts who are focused on the legislative agenda and context, non-partisan and impartial.

*Parliamentary Research Services is a non-partisan, professional department of the Parliament of Kenya whose core function is to provide information, advice, and conduct research and policy analysis that advances and informs parliamentary discourse*

### 3.0 The Specialized Divisions in the PRS

In order to navigate through the increased demand for research, policy analysis an information needs of Parliament, the department organized into four (4) specialized divisions. This is also intended to ease administration and supervision, quality control, and efficiency. The divisions are designed to handle research and policy analysis in the broad policy, legislation, and program areas of, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources; Economics and Trade; Governance and Political Affairs; and Social Policy.

The specialized divisions are also avenues for building specialization and competencies in areas of interest among the PRS research and policy analysts.

#### (a) Social Policy Division

The division is responsible for research and analysis on issues relating to the broad area of social policies and programs in education and training, healthcare policies, social security and welfare, poverty issues and the SDGs, housing, labor issues and unemployment. Issues related to gender, children, and people living with disability and the aged also comprise the

focus of the division. In addition, the Division provides research support to House Committees whose mandates fall within the stated areas of expertise.

**(b) Governance and Political Affairs Division**

The division responds to governance and political issues, mainly: public affairs and administration; devolution, intergovernmental relations, political party issues and the electoral process; constitutionalism and rule of law, foreign relations, national security and defense policy. The division provides technical backstopping to the Committees with similar mandates in the two Houses.

**(c) Economics and Trade Division**

The division focuses on continuous analysis of Kenya's economy and its key drivers; macroeconomics policy; public finance and trade; banking and financial market issues including insurance and securities; fiscal and monetary policy; industry and infrastructure; country and global economic trends; trade related legislation, regulations, agreements and policies; and investment. Research and policy analysts in the division provide research support in secretariats of House Committees with respective mandates.

**(d) Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Division**

The division focus is on policy analysis and research related to: food security; natural resources and environmental management; lands; agriculture, food and fisheries; energy and minerals – extractive industry; science, technology and technological innovations. This division is also responsible for collating data and provision of technical advice and research support to House Committees with relevant mandates.

Overall, the divisions respond to research requests that fall within the purview of the broad themes.

#### **4.0 How to Access Research Services**

The PRS services are available to Members through the Office of the Chief Research Officer or can be individually and/or collectively accessed at committee level where a specific researcher/policy analyst is assigned. For record purposes, a research request form is available for documentation.

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