

A Synoptic Report on Data Fair Organised by the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA) in Collaboration with the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), The International Network for Advancing Science and Policy (INASP) and the Parliament of Ghana on the Data for Accountability Project (DAP)

“The generation of accurate and reliable data is critical for decision making in every organisation. Parliament in particular, as a House of record requires credible data sources to guide the House in its representative, financial, oversight, and deliberative functions”.

Those remarks by the Clerk to the Parliament of Ghana in opening the first ever Data Fair organised at the Parliament of Ghana, constitute a vivid description of the objectives of the DAP, and by extension the Data Fair. The three-day event which was organised and facilitated by ACEPA, in collaboration with the GSS, INASP and the Parliament of Ghana, with funding from the Hewlett Foundation aimed at creating awareness of the availability of data relevant to parliament for its work.



The maiden Data Fair which run from the 26th – 28th May 2021 had several objectives, including getting the Parliament of Ghana – which is a data user, to collaborate with the GSS – a data producer. It was also the goal of the Fair to introduce Members of Parliament (MPs) to data sources regarding the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) available to them and how to access these for the effective discharge of their duties. A third objective was to inspire MPs to rely on, and utilise quality, credible data and evidence in the conduct of their oversight role, promoting a culture of data and evidence-informed decision making.

As noted by the Executive Director of ACEPA, *“we want to use data to drive democratic discourse in this country...we want decisions to be made not by chance but based on data and evidence that will change the lives of our people”.*

The government statistician expressed gratitude to parliament for passing the necessary bills into law, putting the Service in its right frame of engagement. This he said, is in addition to the huge support the GSS received from parliament relating to their current Regional Program on Harmonizing and Improving Statistics in West Africa Project. He noted, however that, the use of data and evidence for achieving the oversight responsibility of parliament is in disequilibrium, and stressed the need to take advantage of the Fair to address that shortfall.

Delivering his address during the Fair, the Majority Leader and Minister for Parliamentary Affairs



remarked that the need for credible quantitative and qualitative data to support the work of parliament, the parliamentary service, and government is nonnegotiable. He underscored the need to build and develop the capacity, competences and skills of MPs and parliamentary research staff to be able to understand, interpret and effectively

utilise the data at their disposal. The Majority Leader cited the annual budget as a major policy document which often falls short of current data by the time it gets to the House, and recommends a parliamentary body be established to conduct due diligence on such critical policy documents to ensure their accuracy and credibility.

The Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament in his keynote address, read on his behalf, and during his visit



to the Fair-grounds reemphasized the critical role that data plays in parliament's oversight responsibility, noting that credible data and evidence does not only facilitate effective parliamentary oversight, it also empowers governments, state institutions and the private sector in planning and

forecasting. He emphasised that, there is a real need to explore and exploit data and information for the purposes of both parliamentary oversight and government business. The Speaker concluded that, *“harnessing data for the public good is the way to go”*.

The Clerk-to-Parliament in his remarks to mark the end of the Fair said the following; *“this year’s Data Fair has been successful”*, noting a move to establish *“a Parliamentary Data Center where many of the products that are being displayed today will be available...for the use of MPs, for the use of members of staff, and the use of the public”*.



Essentially, all were united in the belief that the time has come for Ghana’s democratic culture and development to take a “data” turn to ensure that parliamentary decisions, oversight and governmental policymaking are guided, informed, and taken on the basis of data and evidence. The power of data was on display at the event, and the

consensus on the value of a data-driven system going forward was self-evident.