



Parliament and GSS: a growing relationship for evidence use in Ghana

May 2023

DAP Partners



Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Methodology	5
Global background and context	6
About the DAP project	7
A growing collaboration: Parliament and Ghana Statistical Service	10
A shared vision.....	10
Institutional champions.....	11
Learning.....	12
Personal networks	15
Mutual organisational relevance	16
Multiple levels of engagement.....	17
Steps for sustainability	19
Conclusion	21
Appendix A: List of interviewees	22
Bibliography	23

Acronyms

ACEPA	African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs
DAP	Data for Accountability Project
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
IDRIG	Inter Departmental Resource and Information Group
NDPC	National Development Commission
PDIA	Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEDI	Strengthening Evidence in Development Impact

About this report

This paper describes the new relationship between the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) and Parliament of Ghana that has grown during the Data for Accountability Project (DAP). Drawing on interviews with GSS and Parliament staff as well as project documents, it outlines the key characteristics of this relationship, both formal and informal. It concludes by considering how to sustain the relationship beyond the DAP project. The project team is hopeful that sharing some emerging insights from DAP can make a modest contribution to the discussion on evidence-informed policymaking, statistics, and parliamentary strengthening sectors in statistics use in parliaments. This report has been produced after the conclusion of DAP's first phase (2019-2021) and in the early stages of the second phase (2021-2023); it is, therefore, important to note that it illustrates an evolving and dynamic relationship.

Author

Emily Hayter, with thanks to Agnes Titriku and Issifu Lampo of ACEPA for their contributions and comments.

Executive Summary

This learning paper describes the key characteristics of an emerging collaboration between Parliament of Ghana (Parliament) and the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), aimed at strengthening the use of statistics in Parliament. Brokered by the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA) through the Data for Accountability Project (DAP), the partnership is the first of its kind in Ghana and marked the first time most staff in each agency had worked with each other.

In a [previous paper](#), ACEPA and INASP described the rationale for focusing on GSS and Parliament as a specific node within Ghana's evidence at the beginning of the project. This paper draws on internal project documents as well as interviews with staff from Parliament and the Statistical Service to describe how this relationship unfolded.

This paper offers an observation of the six key characteristics of the partnership, which have emerged after the conclusion of the first two-year phase of the project, as it moves into its second (three-year) phase:

- A shared sense of purpose and value of the collaboration
- A small group of individual champions in each partner institution and the brokering agency
- A peer learning approach which facilitated the growth of trust
- Personal/individual-level networks and connections
- Organisational/institutional relevance for both partner institutions
- Multiple levels of engagement within both partner institutions

The paper is intended to share practical learning from project implementation rather than making a theoretical contribution to the field. Still, the emerging themes are illustrative of established conceptual frameworks for understanding evidence use. We believe that practical insights from this emerging relationship are relevant to a growing global interest in the use of statistics by legislatures. The piece finishes with key considerations for sustainability beyond DAP's support.

Introduction

This report describes the relationship between Parliament and the Ghana Statistical Service as it has evolved through the Data for Accountability Project, led by the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs. This partnership is significant because it is the first formal partnership between these institutions in Ghana and one of the first such collaborations in the African region. It comes at a time when at a global level, both the parliamentary strengthening sector and the statistics system sector are beginning to show interest in the use of statistics in legislatures. Now entering its second phase, DAP is well placed to share emerging insights from this growing relationship to contribute to the fields of evidence-informed policymaking, parliamentary strengthening, and statistics systems strengthening. The paper outlines six key features of the collaboration emerging from DAP's experience so far. It concludes with forward-looking considerations from interviewees about the prospects for sustainability of the relationship beyond the project.

Methodology

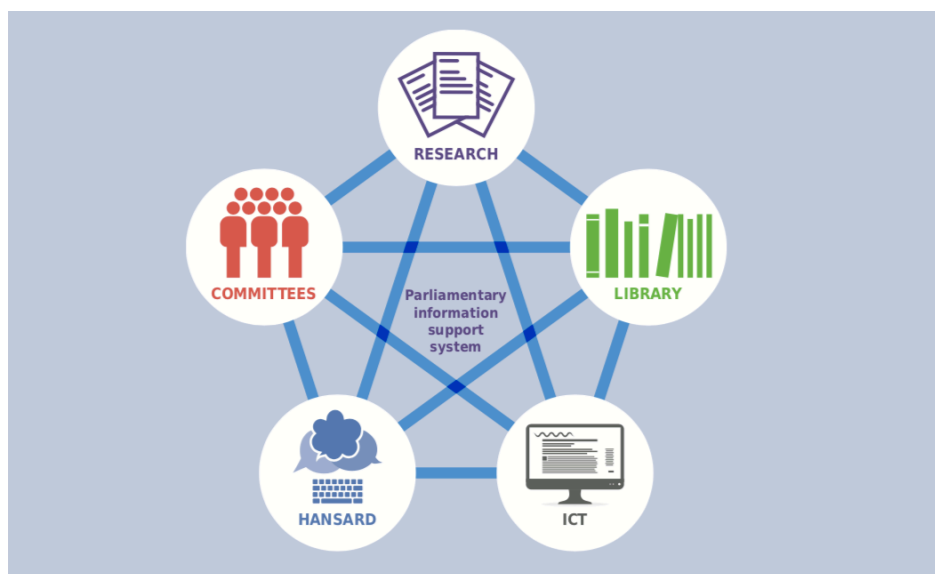
Twelve semi-structured interviews were carried out with staff from GSS, Parliament and other organisations involved in the DAP project (list of interviewees in Appendix A). These insights were combined with a desk review of DAP project documents, including routine project monitoring data, findings from the mid-term review and learning sessions. While key external documents are also referenced, the piece is intended primarily to share practical experience from the project's implementation, complementing an earlier book chapter (Lampo and Hayter 2022) which summarised relevant external literature but was produced too early in the project to share any experience from DAP itself. The paper also benefited from informal conversations with several experts in the field, which, while not quoted in the paper, were valuable in informing the approach and content¹.

¹ The following people kindly offered informal conversations: John Pullinger (formerly of UK Statistical Service and UK Parliamentary Library); Greg Power (Global Partners Governance); Brian Stacy (World Bank); and Norah Babic and Laurence Marzal (Inter-Parliamentary Union).

Global background and context

In parliamentary strengthening literature and practice, it is already well established that collaborations with external evidence providers are critical to support parliament's work.²

Parliaments are enmeshed in complex knowledge and governance systems (see Masvaure, 2022).



What does a parliamentary information support system look like?

Source: [Evidence in African Parliaments](#), INASP (2017)

Due to their mandate, which falls across all sectors, their powers in leveraging diverse perspectives, and their limited internal research and evidence capability, external evidence relationships play a particularly significant role in parliamentary business. Previous work has highlighted the role of these relationships across the research sector and their contribution to democratic strengthening initiatives within parliaments, as well as the role of internal parliamentary research, library and other support services in providing evidence to support MPs and committees (see Inter-Parliamentary Union 2015; Global Partners Governance 2017; Akerlof et al. 2019). There is growing interest, including from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in further exploring the role of evidence within parliaments, particularly in the context of the renewed focus on science and evidence systems that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to bear, but not yet a specific focus from this sector on statistics³.

For those working in statistics systems strengthening, the World Development Report 2021 signalled a growing interest in how statistics are used in decision-making. This showed an expansion from a focus on the production and availability of statistics to an interest in whether and

² This paper focuses on parliaments as organisations: their internal structures, systems, processes and staff which support MPs to perform their legislative, oversight and representation responsibilities. It does not focus on the structures, systems or staff of political parties.

³ The IPU's new strategy 2022-2026 (IPU, 2022) includes a focus on evidence informed decision making, highlighting its link to effective oversight capabilities of parliaments.

how statistics are used in decision-making. Demand for data is seen as a fundamental aspect of an integrated national data system, and the role of collaboration and partnerships across the system to enable this is recognised. The report notes "a critical aspect is the routine use of data in planning and decision making across government entities and the use and re-use of data [...] including in policy making and policy reform" (World Bank 2021, p.306). For the first time, the World Bank's new global statistical performance indicators include coverage of the use of statistics by key groups, including legislatures. However, the dimension on legislative use of statistics does not yet have a measurable indicator due to the lack of an established methodology (Serajuddin et al. 2021; Dang et al. 2021). The Partnership for Statistics in Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), headquartered at OECD, is also working to develop measurements for statistics use in public bodies, including national policy documents, but this has not so far reached parliaments (PARIS21 2021).

The evidence-informed policy sector has for some time been focused on improving the use of evidence in policymaking – through practical initiatives by public bodies themselves, sometimes with the support of donor-funded projects, and as a stream of research in its own right (see for example, Langer et al 2016; Parkhurst 2017; Vogel and Punton 2018). Evidence-informed policymaking initiatives take a wide range of different approaches to strengthen capability for evidence use, including focusing on building relationships between evidence providers and users; strengthening the knowledge and skills of users and/or producers of evidence to better engage with each other; and strengthening routine internal systems within policymaking organisations to improve the routine use of evidence. This sector has in recent years flourished, particularly in Africa, where there is a growing interdisciplinary community of researchers, policymakers and practitioners working together to strengthen evidence use, including a sub-strand of the sector focused specifically on parliaments (for example, Draman et al. 2017; Goldman and Pabari 2020; Morkel et al 2022). To date, however, much of this has taken a broad view of evidence without focusing specifically on statistics.

About the DAP project

As the first institutional partnership between the Ghana Statistical Service and Parliament of Ghana, DAP is well placed to share unique insights with interested stakeholders in the parliamentary, statistics systems and evidence-informed policymaking sectors⁴. DAP began in 2019 as a partnership between Ghana Statistical Service, the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs and INASP, with funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. DAP's overall goal is strengthened capacity in Parliament of Ghana to use statistics to monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is designed as a multi-level capacity development project, including focusing on strengthening individual capacities (of parliamentary and GSS staff, as well as MPs); organisational capacities (for example, through the introduction of new mechanisms such as the SDGs Desk/Data Centre and new templates and procedures) and 'systems level capacities' (the relationship between Parliament and the statistics system). This latter outcome is one of five main interconnected project

⁴ The only other current partnership between a statistics agency and a national parliament that the DAP team are aware of is an adaptation of the DAP approach in Vanuatu, supported by PARIS21 and the Inter Parliamentary Union <https://paris21.org/news-center/news/why-does-trusted-data-matter-inclusive-governance-improving-data-literacy-and-use>

outcomes in the project's Theory of Change. The project partners identified a strong window of opportunity in the political economy and governance context (described in Lampo and Hayter 2022), to which DAP was designed to respond. While the project team had a shared sense of value about the potential value of Parliament-GSS collaboration, it was not known how exactly this would unfold.

Timeline of key GSS-Parliament activities under DAP Phase 1, 2019-2021

2019

Engagement with the leadership of Majority and Minority Caucus in Parliament.

Leadership of ACEPA and GSS met the Majority Leader and Minority Leader of the 7th Parliament of Ghana at the start of DAP. This was an initial step toward building a relationship between Parliament and GSS.

JULY 2020

Peer training workshops (also held in October 2020)

Workshops hosted by ACEPA in which GSS staff trained parliamentary researchers and committee staff attached to the two focus committees (finance and poverty reduction) in identifying data sources (especially for SDGs monitoring), data analysis and communication.

MARCH 2021

Meeting with the Speaker of the 8th Parliament of Ghana

The government statistician, the Head of Demographic Statistics & SDGs Coordinator at GSS and the Executive Director of ACEPA met the Rt. Hon. Speaker of the 8th Parliament. The meeting was to brief the Speaker on DAP initiatives that started in the previous Parliament and what the plans are for the current Parliament. It also afforded GSS the chance to speak to its own programmes, particularly the impending census. This meeting was instrumental in strengthening the Parliament-GSS relationship.

FEBRUARY 2020

Peer training workshops (also held in January 2021 and August 2021)

Workshops hosted by ACEPA in which senior parliamentary researchers trained GSS staff in how to engage with Parliament with a specific focus on the information needs of committees and other departments of Parliament.

AUGUST 2020

Clerk gives approval for the establishment of an SDGs /Statistics Desk in the Research Department of Parliament

A dedicated desk established within the Parliamentary Research Department to serve as a coordinating point for SDGs data (and data in general) required to support Committees' tracking and reporting on SDGs. Also, to serve as a liaison between the Research Department and the Ghana Statistical Service.

NOVEMBER 2021

Official launch of Constituency Profiles

GSS produced profiles for five selected constituencies in Ghana. The profiles are the first of their kind in Ghana, and they provide data summaries of the status of key development indicators in constituencies over a 10-year period. The five constituency profiles were produced as a pilot: Asante Akim Central, Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam, Hohoe, New Juaben South, and Wa East. They were launched at a DAP Project showcase as part of the African Statistics Day celebration 2021, an event hosted by GSS.

JULY 2021

Pre-field visit training for Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee

Workshops led by GSS and ACEPA focused on strengthening committee members' understanding of the SDGs, with a focus on data sources for the SDGs. This included training in the data collection template that GSS and ACEPA had developed to guide the field visit.

MAY 2021

Data Fair at Parliament

Event dedicated to strengthening links between Parliament and a wide range of data producers, including GSS, Digital Earth Africa and the University of Energy and Natural Resources. The Data Fair showcased the availability of data both within Parliament and externally and aimed to raise the visibility of and trust in GSS data.

DECEMBER 2021

Production of State of SDGs Implementation Report for Parliament

As part of the data/information support to MPs, GSS, working with actors from the National Development Commission, produced a brief for Members of Parliament on the State of SDG Implementation in Ghana.

SEPTEMBER 2021

Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee field visit

GSS accompanies Parliament's Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee and Committees Department staff assigned to the Committee on a field visit to six district assemblies in the Upper East Region. The purpose of the visit was for committee members to establish the extent to which district assemblies were aligning their annual work plans to three specific SDGs (1, 3 and 4 on poverty, health and education) as directed by the Ministry of Finance and to find out district level budgetary allocation and spending on these SDGs. To guide the Committee's enquiries, templates to gather data from the districts were designed by GSS and ACEPA in advance of the visit. This resulted in recommendations for government to improve progress towards these SDGs as well as revealing gaps and inconsistencies in the statistics system at district level.

Source: ACEPA (2023)

A growing collaboration: Parliament and Ghana Statistical Service

This section outlines six characteristics of this relationship as it has developed through DAP. While the paper is intended to share practical learning from project implementation rather than making a theoretical contribution to the field, the emerging themes are illustrative of established conceptual frameworks for understanding evidence use. For example, Langer et al.'s systematic review (2016) identified, among others, interaction between decision-makers and researchers, mutual understanding and agreement, and access to evidence as key change mechanisms which combine with capability, opportunity and motivation to result in evidence use. In the Context Matters Framework, Weyrauch et al. (2016) combined elements of political economy analysis, research systems approaches, and organisational assessments to outline a multifaceted range of factors which affect evidence use, including relationships within and between public agencies as well as leadership and organisational culture⁵. In 2021, the Strengthening Evidence in Development Impact (SEDI) project's 'Political Economy +' methodology (Shaxson et al., 2021) used a similar approach, combining traditional political economy analysis with a research systems lens and an internal organisational lens which drew on the Building State Capability programme's 'Authority, Acceptance, Ability' lenses on public sector institutional reform in the Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) approach (Andrews et al. 2017)⁶. Readers familiar with these frameworks will recognise the intersections between DAP's relationship-building experience and other evidence-use themes – for instance, (cap)abilities, leadership, and formal and informal motivations and incentives.

A shared vision

Since the DAP project's inception, there has been a shared sense of purpose for the collaboration between GSS and Parliament and of the value of ACEPA's role in brokering this relationship. DAP's first-year learning report (ACEPA 2021a) details the extensive groundwork done in the project's early stages to achieve this, leveraging ACEPA's decades of previous work in Parliament. Meetings between high-level technical staff as well as between the Speaker and the Government Statistician, the DAP project partners and the Majority and Minority leaders of Parliament, show a clear and consistent message from both sides about the value of GSS to Parliament as a data producer, and the value of Parliament to GSS as a key user.

The wider implications of this collaboration are also appreciated by both sides – for instance, in a meeting held between the Speaker of Parliament and the Government Chief Statistician, the

⁵ See Langer & Weyrauch 2020 for a combined version of these frameworks

⁶ Authority is defined as 'the support needed to effect reform'; 'acceptance' as 'the extent to which those who will be affected by the change accept the need for change and its implications' and 'ability' as 'the practical side of reform or policy change: time, money, and skills'. Definitions summarised from Andrews et al. 2017 pp158-59. For more information, see the PDIA Toolkit <https://bsc.cid.harvard.edu/PDIAtoolkit>

government statistician highlighted *"the need to enhance statistical literacy within parliament and thus reduce the misunderstanding and misuse of data within the country, especially along partisan lines"* (ACEPA 2021d).

Interviewees from the staff of GSS and Parliament were also clear and succinct about the purpose of their collaboration:

"Parliament should have at their fingertips all the kinds of data that exist to facilitate their work, and GSS should be able to produce that or coordinate the production of that by other entities..."

[GSS staff]

"As a research department, we try to provide credible information to Members. This [GSS] is a government agency that generates credible information. So there shouldn't be a time where we disengage, it should be a continuous engagement."

[Parliament research department]

Institutional champions

The groundwork done in the early stages of DAP to establish a common vision and purpose for the GSS-Parliament relationship was enabled by a small but influential group of institutional champions who would continue to support the relationship as it evolved⁷. Together, these champions provided core leadership (or formal 'Authority' as it is known in PDIA) within the parliamentary research department, the Statistics Service, and the project leads and brokers ACEPA. In Parliament, senior leaders in the research department had been advocating for improved statistical capacity for some time. In GSS, champions had been pushing for greater engagement with users. And ACEPA had been brokering relationships between Parliament and a wide range of external actors. As one interviewee noted, *"some underground work had been done already"*, which meant that although Parliament and GSS had minimal knowledge and working experience of each other prior to the DAP project, the critical aspect of trust had already been established between this small group of champions, who together created an open, frank and collaborative atmosphere for the collaboration. This was further enabled by the open, curious and adaptive mindset of the funder, drawing on established relationships with some of the project partners, which allowed the champions to work together to lay the groundwork for the collaboration without rigid, predefined expectations.

⁷ A roundtable discussion between champions from GSS, Parliament of Ghana and ACEPA was held as part of Africa Evidence Week in 2021. The recording is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqFzeMBTleo>

GSS and Parliament interviewees describe how, as it evolved, the project grew to recruit more and more champions from different levels of both partner organisations. In Parliament, champions in the administrative layer were able to increasingly engage champions in the political layer, such as the Majority and Minority leaders, the MPs whose constituencies were profiled, the members of the Committee on Poverty Reduction Strategy who conducted the field monitoring exercise, and the Speaker himself. In GSS, the project had always benefited from high-level support in Accra, but the activities in districts, such as the field visit and the compilation of constituency profiles, exposed a range of local-level data gaps and issues, which as the DAP Mid Term Review report noted had not received attention from high-level policymakers such as MPs before (ACEPA 2021a). This harnessed the existing motivation of those working at other levels of the system who had been pushing for improvements in administrative data systems.

Learning

DAP is primarily focused on strengthening the capacity of Parliament to monitor the SDGs, and the project team itself has also committed to a learning and adaptation culture within project delivery. Interviews with GSS and Parliament staff illustrate how important learning has also been as a facilitating factor in the growing relationship between Parliament and GSS. The opportunity to learn about each other and *from* each other was repeatedly cited as a key characteristic of the relationship by staff from both sides. Here, learning can be divided into two main elements: building knowledge (about each other, on both sides & including MPs) and strengthening skills (mainly for parliamentary staff, in the analysis of data). Both of these areas were approached through a peer learning modality which saw GSS and parliamentary staff training each other.

Many parliamentary researchers had not been aware of the scale of GSS work, particularly the details of the data gathering process and the range of administrative data GSS produces. In particular, gaining a better understanding of how GSS statistics are computed was felt by both parliamentary researchers and GSS staff to be a key factor in building trust in statistics.

"On our part, we didn't know that they have such a huge amount of data. We didn't know the number of surveys they conduct, we can get so much information from these. We all know of census data, when census is done we are quoting the data; even when it's eight years old, we still quote it. But we didn't know there is other data they collect in between, which may be even more useful for us, especially when census data is getting old."

"We didn't know the methodologies that they [GSS] deploy [...] We noticed that they are more on the ground than any others because of their district representation. They also exposed us to the way they collect the data. The quality control was one

important thing that reassured us. They have been very generous in explaining to us how this data is gathered [...] We are all technical people when it comes to research, so if we all agree on quality control, it means we are far more confident presenting your data [to MPs]."

"There was curiosity, they were excited, there was so much they didn't know about what GSS does. Even a simple thing like what goes into computing the consumer price index, or how they go about computing inflation figures – you could see this is new information [for them], it tells you how much they didn't know about GSS."

One parliamentary researcher provided an example of how some of the tools shared by GSS could affect their work in support of MPs:

"To see the data presented geographically, I was amazed [...] If an MP wants to track something in their community or constituency, I can just go in there to the data GSS has, open it up and let the MP see what I'm talking about. So the graphic presentation was very handy, I felt very comfortable with it."

On the GSS side, most of the statisticians involved in DAP had no prior professional experience working with Parliament. Some learned of the parliamentary research department for the first time, and the workshops delivered by the department were described as eye-opening:

"The first time we met, and we were taken through the work of Parliament, I was really, really shocked about the extent to which some MPs have power to influence activities or projects that happen in the country[...] Hitherto we knew they were just lawmakers, but my interactions with the DAP project has really informed me about how much power parliament has."

[GSS interviewee]

"A lot of them [at GSS] didn't take Parliament seriously when it comes to the use of data. Some did not even know that Parliament has a research department that has people with knowledge of how to use data. Secondly, they also didn't know

that Parliament needs data in a certain form; they just deliver their data for everybody. They didn't know the type of data of information and when/at what time it's needed by Parliament.
"

[Parliament interviewee]

Many of the MPs involved in the project were also interacting with GSS for the first time, which was a valuable experience both for the MPs and for GSS. While in some cases, GSS had had prior engagements with MPs, this had usually been on an individual basis, so engaging with committee structures was particularly appreciated in helping GSS understand Parliament as an institution:

"The MPs were excited to learn how GSS collects this community-level data; secondly, they were able to know the variety of data that is available at GSS. MPs, sometimes they don't know how government institutions work, so when they were exposed to various categories of data they were amazed."

[Parliamentary researcher]

"The first time I was involved in a training, it brought lots of parliamentarians together, not just one parliamentarian [...] that has made a request for some data, which happens a lot. Meeting a lot of MPs representing a committee of Parliament, this is the first time... And that has been very instructive because following that engagement, we better understood our roles...the parliamentarians who were part of that engagement better understanding what is available and what GSS is doing, and we being able to understand how we can better meet the expectations of the committee."

[GSS interviewee]

Another interviewee involved in the same workshop observed that, from the Parliament side,

"I think everybody was bought into the idea of relying on GSS for technical support, it wasn't just because the Chairman says so...meeting them as a collective, they all saw the importance and value they could get from GSS."

Personal networks

While GSS data was available prior to DAP through a system involving requesting data through the website, the intricacies of this process meant that, in practice, it did not feel easily accessible to many in Parliament.

"Before DAP, I knew of the existence of GSS, but I've never worked with or had a personal relationship with them...I went to their site from time to time to see if there was data I could use, but we were never in that kind of contact. There was this perception that when you go to GSS looking for information, it takes you a long time, so we never bothered going to them to look for information."

"They were working on their own. Sometimes we even had to write letters if we wanted specialised data. So the engagement wasn't there at all until this project."

Perhaps the most commonly cited characteristic of the growing relationship between Parliament and GSS was the level of informal personal connections that have emerged to supplement the institutional partnership. The time that GSS and parliamentary staff have spent together in DAP's many joint activities has fostered new personal relationships. Interviewees from both Parliament and GSS described a situation where parliamentary staff can access GSS anytime using personal phone numbers, WhatsApp and email addresses.: *"at the touch of a key, we can get to them"*, said one parliamentary researcher. *"They were always ready to support us, but now we know them personally"*, added another. This is particularly important when, as is very often the case for Parliament, speed is a critical factor. DAP's approach to brokering collaboration between GSS and Parliament has taken an institutional starting point, but the personal connections emerging from this are strengthening and enriching this partnership.

Box 1. Specific examples of evidence use in parliament

In a brief prepared to support the Committee on Roads and Transport, a parliamentary researcher reported they were able to point to the specific relevant SDG targets and indicators as well as show Ghana's status on these indicators, as a result of training provided by GSS.

In a parliamentary paper on crime rates during the COVID-19 lockdown, research department staff used data from GSS' Local Economies Tracker tool, which they had not been aware of or able to use prior to GSS training.

The MP for Wa East was able to use the constituency profile prepared by GSS to demonstrate the needs of the district and ultimately secure funding for communities in his constituency.

The Chair of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee is planning to lay the report and recommendations from the DAP field visit (highlighting pertinent issues from the field, gathered through use of the data collection template developed by GSS and ACEPA) before Parliament.

Mutual organisational relevance

On a broader level, beyond the individual level champions, knowledge and networks driving the development of the GSS-Parliament relationship, there is a clear and mutual relevance of the collaboration on an organisational level – both operational and strategic. This ensured that in fostering collaboration between the two institutions, DAP was 'going with the grain' on both sides.

"[DAP has] come at a time when Parliament itself is beginning to appreciate the use of data," said one parliamentary researcher. After several years of working on improving evidence use, Parliament has been through a number of recent organisational reforms linked to improving the use of evidence, including increasing the size of the research department, forming an internal inter-departmental research and information group, launching the budget office, and holding a parliamentary evidence week (see Atengble and Zackaria 2022). DAP's proposal to establish an SDGs and Statistics Desk within the research department (which was readily approved) served as a foundation and trigger for the establishment of a data centre by Parliament. This ensures that the mechanism of the desk and, by extension, the relationship is embedded in a broader institutional framework for sustainability rather than being tied only to the project and specific individual champions. DAP's focus on statistics use is therefore well matched to both Parliament's revised structures and capacities⁸. Despite this interest, however, there remains an unavoidable complexity to parliamentary administrative systems: *"GSS are faster in implementing policies than us in Parliament, we are slow, have a very long bureaucracy, so we tend to slow the process down"*, acknowledged one parliamentary interviewee.

On the GSS side, strengthening the use of data is a major feature of the current organisational strategic plan, and the organisation's national and international role in the SDGs gave it a strong interest and mandate in strengthening oversight. As DAP's earlier work showed (Lampo and Hayter 2022), the 2019 Statistics Act had already provided GSS with refreshed energy and renewed mandate. While GSS' leadership of the national Population and Housing Census in 2021 proved operationally challenging in some respects for the DAP project, it also meant that the collaboration with Parliament offered attractive opportunities for greater publicity and support of the census. A strong shared culture of evidence use and insistence on user engagement was evident in interviews with GSS staff:

"GSS stands to benefit a lot because, at the end of the day, we produce statistics, data and publications, and we don't have enough users to debate, critique it, or use those publications, so then why are we producing it?"

⁸ Linking to the PDIA references above, this would suggest the presence of both ability and acceptance, in addition to authority, in both GSS and parliament.

"We want to make sure we become the trusted leader of evidence in this country. Parliament is such an important institution in the makeup of a country that if you can get Parliament to continuously use evidence, then you know we can get where we want to be."

This culture of user engagement is visible in the flexibility and open-mindedness on the part of GSS in terms of their standard organisational procedures and templates. [As has been noted elsewhere](#), GSS has been mindful of the communications skills and systems required for engaging with a new type of user and is willing to adapt these accordingly. One interviewee observed this was a critical factor in facilitating the relationship:

"The producer must be willing to meet the user; otherwise, there's no point...GSS could be fixed in their ways, and they could say we only produce A, B and C, and we only put it out in this format...but they are amenable to meeting Parliament in whichever way they can."

"In this project, we've been able to institutionalise things", concluded one parliamentary researcher. As both organisations have got to know each other better, the initial shared sense of vision has evolved into a mutual understanding of each others' work and the roles of GSS as a producer and Parliament as a user:

"We have built... synergy and trust between the institutions...for us to access their data, and them knowing that we are using that data for a purpose"

[Parliamentary researcher]

Multiple levels of engagement

A final key feature of the growing GSS-parliament relationship is that not only is it both individual and organisational, both formal and informal, but it also operates through entry points at multiple different levels within both Parliament and the statistics service. As previous work has shown, evidence systems in parliaments are made up of multiple different units on the administrative side which support the political layer (MPs and committees) in their tasks of oversight, representation and legislation (Draman et al. 2017; see also case studies in Morkel et al., eds 2022). In Ghana, these support units come together in the Inter-Departmental Resource and Information Group (IDRIG), as described by Atengble and Zackaria (2022). While the primary operational level links between GSS and Parliament run through the research department, the relationship emerging through DAP is not

limited to this unit. DAP has also created links between GSS and other IDRIG units, such as the library and the committees staff, as well as supporting high-level engagement with the head of Parliament's administrative arm, the Clerk.

On the political side, DAP has also forged relationships at the highest levels, including with the Majority and Minority leaders and the Speaker: "[DAP] created the opportunity for the Government Statistician to have a direct relationship with the Speaker of Parliament, where he could reach out to the Speaker through his secretariat. I don't think that existed in the past," reflected one GSS interviewee. It has also facilitated engagement with individual MPs as recipients of the constituency profiles and targeted committees and attendees of the Data Fair. The project's direct engagement with MPs has so far been more limited in scope, partially due to the results of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 election, and interviewees were mindful that there is more work to do at this level. However, so far, there are early signs that engagement with GSS is growing, for example, through a request from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee for GSS to present in their committee meeting – the first such invitation that GSS had received. DAP has therefore been able to draw on the long experience of ACEPA as project leads and brokers of the GSS-Parliament relationship to ensure that the links with GSS are built via multiple entry points in both the political and administrative layers of Parliament.

At GSS, the DAP team initially comprised a core group of statisticians in Accra, with support from the Government Chief Statistician. Over time, this grew to include regional statisticians as well as those at the district level.⁹ The field visit DAP carried out with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee and the production of the constituency profiles involved statisticians from HQ in Accra collaborating with those at regional and district level¹⁰ – with the field visit also including close engagement with the District Assemblies. Through these activities, parliamentary researchers and statisticians based in Accra also became aware of the potential of directly brokering the relationship between staff working in the MPs' constituency offices and district-level statistical officers. This would mean that the nodes of connection growing between the parliamentary and statistics system reach all the way to district level and back 'up' again to Accra – a significant development when both parliamentary strengthening and statistics system strengthening initiatives can sometimes focus unduly on HQ/national level to the exclusion of the community level. The implications for democratic representation were succinctly encapsulated by one interviewee:

"This project brings the representatives and the represented together because the data on the ground represents the people".

⁹ While links between Parliament, GSS and its regional and district level units is the primary focus of DAP and of this paper, the project also began to cultivate wider links for Parliament across the statistics system with other producers of data, for instance through the Data Fair.

¹⁰ None of the districts visited during the field visit had a district statistician. Data for the constituency profiles were collected by regional statisticians. To date, there are still districts and some municipalities in the country who are yet to have local level statisticians

Steps for sustainability

The multifaceted collaboration that has emerged between Parliament and GSS left most interviewees feeling optimistic about the prospects of the partnership continuing beyond the project and the mutual benefit this would entail to both organisations. Representatives of Parliament and GSS both clearly confirmed their intention to continue working together beyond the project and felt that the organisational buy-in and attention they have received from both sides of the partnership so far is indicative of this intention. For several, the current hung parliament presented a promising window of opportunity:

"Now more than ever, the interest in evidence and data should go up because everybody now wants to make a case for their side, and they have to be loud and emphatic and have as much support as possible. So, we believe this situation should lead to an appetite for evidence uptake and use,"

Interviewees also identified several risks that could affect this growing relationship. It was acknowledged that while the partnership currently enjoys high-level support from leadership in both GSS and Parliament, changes in leadership could result in decreased prioritisation of the relationship on either side – making DAP's efforts to strengthen organisational capacity even more important as this has the potential to outlast individuals. Interviewees also observed that continued engagement would require resources from both GSS and Parliament, and champions in both institutions are currently working to secure budgetary commitments. The culture of evidence use is still growing, particularly in Parliament. One interviewee was cautious about over-optimism in this regard:

"At the core of it is also Parliament's own incentives for information use and reliance on evidence and data, how much are they reaching out to anybody at all, not just GSS but other producers, civil society et cetera, I think there is a bigger problem around that and it's not just related to GSS".

Several specific areas for renewed focus in the remainder of the second phase of DAP were suggested to ensure that the opportunities for sustainability are maximised.

- Both Parliament and GSS interviewees emphasised their own organisations' roles in sustaining the partnership at institutional level, beyond individual champions on both sides:
 - On the GSS side, interviewees highlighted the challenge and responsibility that has come with engaging Parliament: "*Parliament has become a major user stakeholder, so we need to try to meet their expectations*". Some interviewees suggested ways to continue to strengthen GSS's credibility and trust with parliamentary audiences,

such as establishing a formal schedule of regular meetings (per quarter, for example) or conducting small bespoke projects for Parliament. Interviewees pointed out that adequate resources would be required both within GSS and within the statistical system as a whole to sustain this kind of engagement.

- At Parliament, the SDGs Desk/Data Centre was emphasised by several interviewees as a priority for the second phase of the project to ensure that there is an organisational mechanism to sustain the collaboration. Several interviewees suggested that investment from parliamentary budget in this Centre would be an important signifier of commitment on an institutional level.
- The parliamentary research department and GSS have started to get to know each other and build individual networks as well as lay groundwork for an organisational liaison point through the Data Centre. However, at the operational level, interviewees suggested there is greater co-creation needed between parliamentary researchers and GSS staff to solidify this – for example, more involvement of parliamentary researchers in producing future rounds of constituency profiles.
- Capacity development is still needed to sustain the relationship, particularly for the parliamentary researchers to develop skills in analysing the data that is now much more easily accessible from GSS. While GSS has trained some parliamentary researchers in the first phase of the DAP project, the department has doubled its staff size during the period of the project, and the new recruits are yet to be trained. A second, longer-term capacity development issue is related to the high turnover rates of MPs and the continual need for training new MPs in using data in order to support Parliament's engagement with GSS.
- Continuing to strengthen the district-level relationships between statistical systems and the MPs' roles in their constituencies and via the district assemblies, to ensure that the community-level elements of the collaboration are as engaged with each other as the national/HQ levels that the first phase had established.

Interviewees were generally optimistic about the prospects of the relationship beyond DAP but also frank about challenges and mindful of the evolving nature of the collaboration.

Conclusion

The relationship that the DAP project has facilitated between Parliament and the Ghana Statistical Service is still evolving. This paper has shared a picture of the key characteristics of this dynamic relationship emerging as the project enters its second phase. It has illustrated how the relationship encompasses both formal and informal elements, with multiple points of entry on both sides. The relationship appears to be strengthening trust in statistics within Parliament, as well as strengthening both Parliament and the Statistics Service's links with the district level, in line with the 'localisation' ambitions of the SDGs. In order to sustain the relationship beyond the DAP project, these early (but strong) signs of institutional support will need to translate into concrete actions on both sides.

Appendix A: List of interviewees

Name	Role	Institution
Chris Amewu	Regional Statistician, Volta Region	Ghana Statistical Service
Edward Boamah	Technical Manager	Digital Earth Africa
John Boateng	Research Officer	Parliament of Ghana
Jeremiah Dery	Regional Statistician, Upper West Region	Ghana Statistical Service
Ernest Nutakor	Statistician, Central Regional Statistical Officer	Ghana Statistical Service
Mohammed Nyagsi	Director of Research	Parliament of Ghana
Emmanuel George Ossei	Head, Governance Statistics & Head, 2021 Population and Housing Census Secretariat	Ghana Statistical Service
Victor Owusu Boateng	Senior Statistician/Demographer	Ghana Statistical Service
Bernadette Quartey	Senior Research Officer	Parliament of Ghana
Omar Seidu	<i>Head, Demographic Statistics & SDGs Coordinator</i>	Ghana Statistical Service
Agnes Titriku	Programs Manager	ACEPA
Abraham ibn Zackaria	Senior Research Officer	Parliament of Ghana

With thanks to Cyrus Kwesi Darpoh for arranging interviews with colleagues from GSS.

Bibliography

ACEPA team, 2021a. Institutionalizing Evidence Use in the Parliament of Ghana: Reflections from the first year of the Data for Accountability project. Available at <http://www.acepa-africa.org/publications/others>

ACEPA team, 2021b. A synoptic Report on the Data Fair. Available at <http://www.acepa-africa.org/publications/others>

ACEPA team, 2021c. Report on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee (PRSC) Field Monitoring of Six Municipal and District Assemblies in the Upper East Region [internal project document]

ACEPA team, 2021d 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC) gets another boost: Government Statistician meets with the Rt. Hon Speaker of Parliament. Internal project brief.

ACEPA, GSS and INASP, 2021. DAP Theory of Change (visual & narrative). Internal DAP project document.

Addo-Yobo and Seidu, 2021. State of the Sustainable Development Goals Implementation in Ghana: a brief for Members of the Parliament of Ghana. Available at <http://www.acepa-africa.org/publications/others>

Akerlof et al, 2019: A collaboratively derived international research agenda on legislative science advice: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-019-0318-6>. Nature.

Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock, 2017. Building State Capability: Evidence, Analysis, Action. Oxford University Press.

Atengble and Zackaria, 2022. Ghana: parliamentary institutions and implications for evidence use. Chapter 3 in Morkel et al, eds. African parliaments: Evidence Systems for Governance and Development, Vol II.

Dang et al, 2021. Statistical Performance Indicators and Index: A new Tool to Measure Country Statistical Capacity <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35301>

Draman, Titriku, Lampo, Hayter and Holden 2017, Evidence in African Parliaments. Available at: <http://www.acepa-africa.org/publications/others>. African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA) and International Network for the Advancement of Science to Policy (INASP). Accra/Oxford.

Goldman and Pabari, eds. 2020 Using Evidence in Policy and Practice: Lessons from Africa: <https://www.routledge.com/Using-Evidence-in-Policy-and-Practice-Lessons-from-Africa/Goldman-Pabari/p/book/9780367440077> Routledge.

Global Partners Governance, 2017. Information and Expertise for Parliaments <https://gpgovernance.net/publications/guide-to-parliaments-paper-7-information-and-expertise-for-parliaments/>

Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) 2018. National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2018-2022 https://statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/storage/img/NSDS%20II%20Ghana_Revised_16.03.18.pdf

GSS 2020 Corporate Plan 2020-2024.

https://statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/storage/img/GSS%20Corporate%20Plan%202020_2024.pdf

GSS and ACEPA, 2021a Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam Constituency Profile. Available at

<https://statsghana.gov.gh/gsspublications.php?category=MTAyOTI2NTM5NC42ODM1/webstats/8no4s4pq67>

GSS and ACEPA, 2021b Asante Akim Central Constituency Profile. Available at

<https://statsghana.gov.gh/gsspublications.php?category=MTAyOTI2NTM5NC42ODM1/webstats/8no4s4pq67>

GSS and ACEPA, 2021c Hohoe Constituency Profile Available at

<https://statsghana.gov.gh/gsspublications.php?category=MTAyOTI2NTM5NC42ODM1/webstats/8no4s4pq67>

GSS and ACEPA, 2021d New Juaben South Constituency Profile Available at

<https://statsghana.gov.gh/gsspublications.php?category=MTAyOTI2NTM5NC42ODM1/webstats/8no4s4pq67>

GSS and ACEPA, 2021e Wa East Constituency Profile Available at

<https://statsghana.gov.gh/gsspublications.php?category=MTAyOTI2NTM5NC42ODM1/webstats/8no4s4pq67>

Ijon, 2021. An analysis of the coronavirus lockdown on crime rate in Ghana. Parliament of Ghana research brief. Available at <https://www.parliament.gh/publications?research&gp=1>

Inter Parliamentary Union 2015, Guidelines for Parliamentary Research Services

<http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/research-en.pdf>.

Inter Parliamentary Union 2022. Strategy 2022-2026

<https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/about-ipu/2022-01/strategy-2022-2026>

Lampo and Hayter, 2022. Parliament and the National Statistics System in Ghana: a Critical Relationship for Evidence Use. Chapter 4 in Morkel et al, eds African parliaments: Evidence Systems for Governance and Development, Vol II.

Langer, Tripney and Gough, 2016. The Science of Using Science.

<https://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=3504>. UCL EPPI-Centre.

Langer and Weyrauch, 2020. Using evidence in Africa: a framework to assess what works, how and why. Chapter 3 in Goldman and Pabari, eds Using Evidence in Policy and Practice: Lessons from Africa. Routledge.

Masvaure, Kiwekete, Engel, Khumalo and Woloto, 2022. A systems thinking perspective on evidence use in parliaments. Chapter 3 in Morkel et al, eds. African parliaments: Evidence Systems for Governance and Development, Vol I.

Morkel, Khumalo, Blaser Mapitsa, Ali and Engel, eds. African Parliaments: Evidence Systems for Governance and Development, Vol I and II,

2022. https://play.google.com/store/books/details/African_Parliaments_Volume_1_Evidence_Systems_for?id=TkRQEAAAQBAJ&hl=en_US&gl=US . African Sun Media.

PARIS21, 2021 Measuring References to Statistics in National Policy Documents. https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/PARIS21-paper_Measuring%20References%20to%20Statistics.pdf

Parkhurst, J. 2017. The Politics of Evidence: from Evidence Based Policy to the Good Governance of Evidence. https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/68604/1/Parkhurst_The%20Politics%20of%20Evidence.pdf LSE.

Shaxson, L., Rocha Menocal A., Leach B., Hayter E., and Harris D. (2021) 'Understanding the demand and use of evidence through a political economy+ approach: the SEDI experience in Ghana, Pakistan and Uganda', SEDI learning brief 1, Strengthening Evidence Use for Development Impact, Oxford.

Serajuddin et al, 2021. Measuring the Statistical Performance of Countries: an Overview of Updates to the World Bank Statistical Capacity Index.. <https://worldbank.github.io/SPI/>

Vogel and Punton 2018. Final Evaluation of the Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence Programme. <https://www.itad.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/BCURE-Final-Evaluation-Report-25-Jan-2018-1.pdf> ITAD: Brighton.

Weyrauch, Echt & Suliman, 2016. The Context Matters Framework: <https://www.inasp.info/contextmatters> Politics and Ideas and INASP.

World Bank 2021. Data for Better Lives: World Development Report <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2021>

Zackaria, 2021. Sensitisation workshop for Management Staff of the Ghana Statistical Service Information needs of Committees and other Departments of Parliament. Internal DAP project Powerpoint presentation.



ACEPA, 2023

No. AGR/2B, Farmland, Beach Road, Accra

info@acepa-africa.org