

Africal Leadership Institute and Uganda Management Institute Short Course



MODULE: EFFECTIVE PLENARY & COMMITTEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Module Leader: Dr. Adrian Beinebyabo

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1. Introduction

Plenary of parliament is the sitting at which all Members of Parliament (MPs) are invited or expected to attend. The plenary sits in the Chamber of Parliament and is chaired by the Speaker/Deputy Speaker. At the start of a new legislature, Parliament decides which Members will sit in which standing committees on the basis of the preferences expressed by them. It is a key decision as it will determine in which field they will focus most of their efforts. These committees play a crucial role in policy-making as they are responsible for preparing Parliament's positions, notably on new legislative proposals.

In accordance with article 90 of the Constitution, the House shall appoint Committees of Parliament necessary for the efficient discharge of its functions. According to Rule 144 and 145 of the Rules of Procedure of Uganda's Parliament (Committees of Parliament), The House shall have Standing Committees and Sectoral Committees. Rule 147 provides for general functions of Committees of Parliament in addition to their specific functions to include: (a) to discuss and make recommendations on Bills laid before Parliament; (b) to initiate any Bill within their respective areas of competence; (c) to assess and evaluate activities of Government and other bodies; (d) to carry out relevant research in their respective fields; and (e) to report to Parliament on their functions. Rule 177 gives functions of Sectoral Committees as follows: (a) to examine and comment on policy matters affecting the Ministries covered by them; (b) to initiate or evaluate action programmes of those Ministries and Sectors and to make appropriate recommendations on them; (c) to examine critically Bills brought by Government before the House before they are de-bated; (d) to examine critically Government recurrent and capital budget estimates and make recommendations on them for general debate in the House; (e) to monitor the performance of Ministries and Departments; and (f) to ensure Government compliance with approved plans and programmes.

In Uganda's parliament, Standing committees last two and half years. They are set up at the start of a new term of Parliament and again after two and half years. They comprise about 30 members selected by party whips. The Composition of Standing Committees is as follows: The Business Committee, The Appointments Committee, The Budget Committee, The Committee on Government Assurance and Implementation, The Committee on Equal Opportunities, The Committee on Public Accounts (Central Government), The Committee of Public Accounts (Local Government), The Committee of Public Accounts (Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises), The Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline, The Committee on National Economy, The Committee on HIV/AIDS and Related Matters, The Committee on Human Rights and The Committee on Climate Change.

Parliament also has sectoral committees. These are departmentally related committees, whose composition is determined at the start of each new session. Sectoral Committees last one session, and comprise about 30 members designated by Whips and approved by the House. Independent MPs can apply through the Clerk to Parliament to serve on committees of their choice. The Composition of Sectoral Committees in Uganda is as follows: The Committee on Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, The Committee on Defence and Internal Affairs, The Committee on East African Community Affairs, The Committee on Education and Sports, The Committee on Finance, Planning and Economic Development, The Committee on Foreign Affairs, The Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development, The Committee on Health, The Committee on Information, Communication Technology and National Guidance, The Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, The Committee on Natural Resources, The Committee on Physical Infrastructure, The Committee on Presidential Affairs, The Committee on Public Service and Local Government, The Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation, The Committee on Tourism, Trade and Industry. Parliament may under Rule 180 set up ad hoc committees of inquiry and special committees to investigate any matter of public importance that does not come under the jurisdiction of any Standing or Sectoral Committee or that has not been dealt with by a Select Committee.

It is therefore important for Members of Parliament to understand the business of the plenary and committees and how to be engaged effectively.

2. Module Aim

To enhance the participants' knowledge and skills on the business of plenary and committees of Parliament and how to design effective strategies for members' engagement.

3. Module Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, participants should be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the parliamentary Rules of Procedures
- Develop and apply debating and argumentation skills
- Appreciate how to accommodate differing and dissenting views during legislation process.
- Appreciate benefits and challenges of attending plenary and committee meetings

4. Module Content

Unit One: Parliamentary Rules of Procedures

- Overview and understanding of the key concepts in Parliamentary Rules of Procedures
- Understanding Oaths, role of oaths, general Authority of office of the speaker and other officials of parliament, sitting arrangements
- Order and Procedure of Business
- Motions and amendments to motions
- Rules and behaviour of members during debate
- Voting and removal from office
- Form, publication and introduction of bills
- Committees of the house (formation, roles, operations and removal)

Unit Two: Development and Application Debating and Argumentation skills

- Public speaking (strategies, logic and guidelines)
- Debating skills: Style and Approach (speed, tone, volume, language and fluency)
- Argumentation skills (elements, methods and tools)
- Dealing with policy briefs and policy argumentations

Unit Three: Accommodation of differing and dissenting views during legislation process.

- Meaning and interpretation of differing and dissenting views during legislation process
- Importance of having differing and dissenting opinions in legislation processes
- Promoting accommodation of differing and dissenting opinions in legislation processes
(Case studies and benchmarks)
- Management of differing and dissenting opinions in legislation processes

Unit Four: Attending plenary and committee meetings

- Types and nature of meetings
- Sittings, Quorum and adjournment of the house
- Management of plenary and committee meetings
- Admission of public and press to the meetings/sessions
- Benefits and challenges of attending plenary and committee meetings

Teaching and Learning Methods

- Interactive lectures
- Case studies
- Group work
- Open class discussion

5. Assessment Strategies

The participants will be assessed through:

- Formative assessment (group exercises)
- Summative Assessment (End of Module exercise)

6. Facilitators

- i. Dr. Adrian Beinebyabo
- ii. Dr. Lazarus Nabaho
- iii. Dr. Sylvester Kugonza
- iv. Dr. Alfred Kenneth Kiiza
- v. Dr. Andama Felix Adibur'u
- vi. Dr. Aida Lubwama
- vii. Dr. Kiganda Michael Peters Galukande
- viii. Assoc. Prof. Gerald Karyeija

7. Reading List

Biribonwoha, P. P. (2005). Efficiency of the Legislative Process in Uganda. *Eur. JL Reform*, 7, 135.

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