

Country: Uganda

IPU geopolitical group: African Group

Parliament of Uganda

Focus area: Proactive parliamentary engagement in the formulation and oversight of national development plans.

Key highlights:

- All-party parliamentary forums on the SDGs can ensure that there is coherence between national development plans and the SDGs with the passed budget and legislation.
- Parliaments can play an active role in monitoring progress at subnational (e.g. district) levels in the achievement of specific national goals and priority SDG targets by discussing thematic progress reports on critical issues of interest.
- Parliaments should participate in the early formulation of national development plans, and their subsequent monitoring and implementation at different governance levels by developing key tools and methods of engagement.

Context

The Uganda Parliamentary Forum on SDGs ([UPFSDGs](#) or SDG Forum) was built on the parliamentary group established in 2007 tasked to oversee the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), the MDG group transitioned to include oversight of progress towards the SDGs. The SDG Forum focuses its work on ensuring that national development policies and legislation are aligned with the SDGs, advocating for sufficient resource allocation for the implementation of the SDGs, monitoring expenditures in terms of meeting the SDG commitments and ensuring an integrated approach to accelerating the achievement of the SDGs at national, local and community levels. The work of the SDG Forum is supported by a technical Secretariat and includes all-party membership. The SDG Forum is fully integrated in the national SDG coordination framework and regularly cooperates with the SDG Policy Coordination Committee chaired by the Prime Minister.

SDG integration into parliament's core functions

The Government of Uganda has integrated the SDGs in the Third National Development Plan (NDPIII) with the Parliament of Uganda playing a key role in mainstreaming oversight of SDG achievement through lawmaking and assessing the performance of the national budget against the SDG targets. Parliament's proactive engagement has resulted in significant progress on the SDGs. To further consolidate this progress, Parliament developed two key compliance tools: (i) the certificate of compliance, which evaluates how the proposed sectoral budget allocations comply with and support the implementation of the national development priorities (NDPIII); and (ii) the gender and equity certificate, which assesses the mainstreaming of the principles of gender equality across legislation and policies. Based on the findings of these two assessment tools, a number of areas were identified

that required targeted support, including in improving the capacities of key ministries and local governments to ensure inclusive development planning and budget execution, and in enhancing procedures for the quality assessment of legislation.

The relevant parliamentary committees also work closely with the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development to ensure that appropriate financial means are allocated to SDGs implementation and to be able to continuously monitor the realization of the approved budgets. The Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development is required to include in the annual budget allocation estimates presented to Parliament, including a clear statement indicating how the SDGs have been integrated in the annual budget allocations.

Parliament is also regularly consulted during the drafting of the periodic medium-term national development plans (NDPs) to ensure that a holistic approach is taken when incorporating all 17 goals and the provisions articulated in the long-term strategic Vision 2040. Alongside the Uganda Vision 2040, the periodic NDPs are tabled, discussed and approved by Parliament, enabling members of parliament (MPs) to play an active role at all stages of NDPs implementation.

Through the SDG Forum's outreach and the specific tools that are being used by MPs, Parliament has created a systematic framework for monitoring the effective implementation of the national development priorities and has put in place operational processes to ensure the government takes all necessary actions in a timely manner on critical areas that are lagging behind. For example, in 2018, Parliament initiated a review of the findings of the Auditor General's Report on SDG progress in Uganda and identified key gaps in regards to the national coordination on and institutional arrangements architecture for the 2030 Agenda. As a result, Parliament recommended the establishment of a national SDG Secretariat to further strengthen the SDG coordination framework.

The role of thematic committees and forums has also been pivotal in ensuring transparency in the sectoral allocation and use of government resources, in scrutinizing specific SDG-related bills, including through debates and inquiries by relevant committees, and in facilitating the monitoring and evaluation of programme-related interventions by government ministries and bodies.

SDG Forum members regularly organize public forums to engage with different constituency groups not only to raise the awareness of citizens on the SDGs but also to collect ideas and opinions on how to best address the drivers that can accelerate progress for specific vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Innovative approaches to enable progress towards:

(i) Achieving universal health coverage for all, and improving the access to quality healthcare (including to sexual and reproductive health services) for vulnerable and marginalized populations:

The Ugandan Parliament passed a number of bills to improve access to quality and essential healthcare services. In 2016, the Uganda Heart Institute Act came into force, among other things, to provide for the establishment of the Uganda Heart Institute as an autonomous body to undertake and coordinate the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases in Uganda. Furthermore, in 2018,

the Mental Health Act came into force to provide for mental treatment at primary health centres. To support the achievement of universal health coverage, the national health insurance scheme bill has been passed by Parliament and is awaiting endorsement by the President to enter into force.

In addition, Parliament drafted legal provisions for various other SDG 3 targets. For example, the Traffic and Road Safety Act (2020) was adopted in line with SDG target 3.6 “By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from traffic accident”; the Tobacco Control (Amendment) Act (2020) was enacted in line with SDG target 3.A “Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate.” In relation to SDG target 3.3 “By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases”, Parliament passed a resolution in 2018 to support HIV and AIDS prevention and control by establishing the HIV and AIDS Trust Fund. Finally, Parliament passed a resolution to combat nodding disease in northern Uganda.

(ii) Integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change measures into national laws, policies and strategies:

In 2021 the new national Climate Change Act was adopted to govern Uganda’s national response to climate change. The new law enforces the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. The Act includes measures to improve the national transparency framework, mandates the creation of a Framework Strategy on Climate Change, as well as a National Climate Action Plan and District Climate Action Plans and foresees the establishment of inter-institutional arrangements for governing climate change.

Supplementary activities

Under the National Partnership Policy framework, which regulates the activities and approaches of the government with the donor community in Uganda for the implementation of the NDPs, the government is required to submit regular (at three-year intervals) reports to Parliament on the implementation of partnership agreements and their contribution to the national development priorities. In addition, members of the SDG Forum were actively engaged in the preparation of the 2020 Voluntary National Review (VNR) and regularly organize consultations, expert meetings and debates with civil society representatives, relevant institutions and local government leaders to support the SDG localization process in Uganda.

Members of the Ugandan SDG Forum also regularly monitor SDG implementation at the district level by organizing visits to districts to check on the progress made towards the achievement of relevant SDG targets. For example, in 2019, selected districts were visited to ascertain the progress made in health and education sectors and a report was compiled and presented for discussion to Parliament. In addition, MPs hold dialogue meetings with line ministries on SDG progress. For example, executive members of the SDG Forum, in liaison with the Office of the Prime Minister, organize quarterly thematic meetings with selected line ministries to discuss specific issues and progress on particular SDG targets.

Challenges and lessons learnt

- The Ugandan Parliamentary Forum on SDGs is understaffed due to limited funding. This has resulted in a number of challenges such as, inadequate documentation of UPFSDGs' success stories and good practices; inadequate follow-up on the implementation of enacted SDG-related legislation and policies.
- Inconsistent (i.e. irregular) financial support to the UPFSDGs. The UPFSDGs mostly relies on donor funds, which affects the smooth implementation of planned activities.
- High turnover of MPs, which directly affects the UPFSDGs' membership. This impacts the smooth continuity of the forum's activities at the beginning of Parliament's new term.

Sources and links:

Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development Goals:

<https://www.parliament.go.ug/page/uganda-parliamentary-forum-sustainable-development-goals-upfsdgs>

Parliament of Uganda, parliamentary forums: <https://www.parliament.go.ug/page/parliamentary-fora>

Third National Development Plan (NDPIII) 2020/21-2024/25:

<http://library.health.go.ug/publications/work-plans/third-national-development-plan-ndp-iii-202021-202425>

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