

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT DECISIONMAKING

Case Studies From Ethiopia and Uganda

Population Reference Bureau Assessment Team

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Development is about improving the lives of people, and policy and fiscal decisions should rely on data that answer who these people are, where and how they live, and how their lives are changing. The demographic and related data that answer these questions are essential to policymakers and development planners across nearly every sector of society. Unfortunately, barriers to access and use of such data exist throughout the developing world and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The lack of high-quality data and access to existing data are fundamental challenges to effective development planning and evaluation of development interventions.

The Hewlett Foundation embarked on an exploratory planning process in response to these challenges and specifically examined the following issues in sub-Saharan Africa:

- A lack of basic demographic and socioeconomic data.
- Serious problems with access to and use of these data even when they do exist.
- Insufficient demand for the application of these data by policymakers and other key stakeholders who determine development directions and allocate resources.

Objectives

In September 2008, the Hewlett Foundation requested that the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) contribute to this planning initiative through an assessment of what data policymakers and journalists do use, should use, and how to increase demand for such data in policymaking and reporting. In response, PRB embarked on case studies in Ethiopia and Uganda with the following objectives:

- Improve understanding of the ways that policymakers at the national and subnational levels as well as journalists access and use specific types of demographic and socioeconomic data including the national census, household surveys, service statistics, and budget data.
- Identify ways that the Hewlett Foundation and other development partners could contribute to existing efforts to increase access, demand, and use for these types of data.

Methods

To achieve the objectives, PRB worked with local partners and conducted the following activities:

1. A targeting exercise to identify key informants for interviews. A list of high-level policymakers was developed and then the list was sent to a high-level adviser for review.
2. Developed a semi-structured interview instrument.
3. Completed 45 semi-structured interviews of diverse policymakers in Ethiopia and Uganda (25 in Ethiopia and 20 in Uganda).
4. Completed 23 interviews of journalists from different media in Ethiopia and Uganda (13 in Uganda and 10 in Ethiopia).

5. Analyzed interviews to identify common themes and highly pertinent input.
6. Coordinated a meeting of Ethiopia and Uganda teams for comparison of findings.
7. Developed recommendations related to demand, access, and use of data.

The Ethiopia and Uganda assessment teams focused on interviewing high-level government decisionmakers, key population data advisers and influentials, and the media. The work was carried out to complement a recently completed assessment by the Population Council in Ethiopia and Uganda for the same Hewlett Foundation initiative. The list of participants was compared with Population Council's and any duplication was eliminated.

Interviews were conducted with a semi-structured interview guide. **The interview guide sought responses about the following:** main roles and functions of the interviewee; data use by the interviewee; priority data needs; views on quality of demographic data; training and capacity-building needs; need for media to report on demographic data; and overall impressions of data demand, access, and use. **Verbal consent** was obtained prior to the interview and notes regarding responses were recorded on paper. In Uganda, where possible, the interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewee.

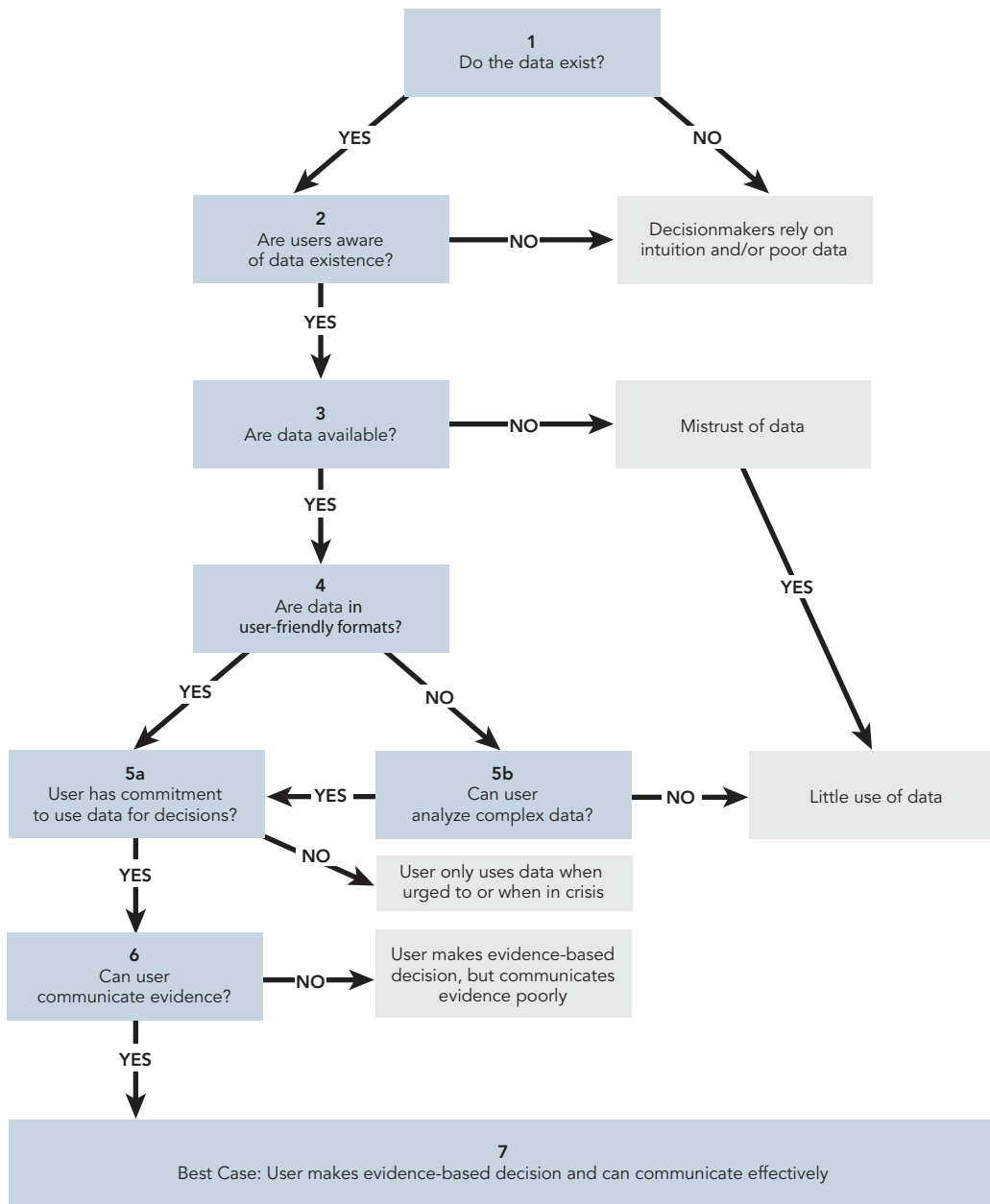
Fieldwork was carried out at federal and regional levels, between Nov. 17, 2007, and Jan. 6, 2008. The assessment teams from Ethiopia and Uganda met in Kampala, Uganda on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, 2008, to share experiences and insights regarding the assessment process; explore the similarities and differences in results; identify common challenges to decisionmaker and media use of demographic data; and explore opportunities to overcome these challenges.

Assessment Team

- Jason Bremner (PRB project leader).
- Ethiopia team: Charles Teller (country coordinator), Assefa Hailemariam, and Negash Teklu.
- Uganda team: Angela Akol and Grace Nagendi.

Summary of Main Findings and Recommendations

Discussions of common findings between the Ethiopia and Uganda teams led to the formation of a conceptual pathway depicting barriers to utilization of demographic data for decisionmaking from collection to use. The figure on page 3 depicts this pathway and is followed by a summary of each of the obstacles. More detailed discussions are available in the country case studies.



BARRIER 1: SOME DESIRABLE AND CRUCIAL DATA FOR THE TWO COUNTRIES DO NOT EXIST

Respondents in both countries reported that several types of data are not collected or are collected at such low levels of coverage as to be effectively useless. The desired data include: vital events registers (age, births, deaths, marriages, divorces); migration data (Ethiopia does not ask place of birth on the census); updated unemployment data; local denominators for critical beneficiary groups; and updated population projections at regional and subregional levels.

BARRIER 2: DATA EXIST BUT PEOPLE ARE OFTEN NOT AWARE OF THEIR EXISTENCE

Many informants lamented lack of data that are actually readily available in DHS reports and online. Examples included: teen pregnancy rates, total fertility rates (TFR), age-specific fertility rates, female genital mutilation (FGM) by age, and infant mortality estimates. The lack of awareness indicates a lack of knowledge among users as well as poor outreach by data producers.

BARRIER 3: DATA EXIST BUT ARE NOT ACCESSIBLE

Because of bureaucracy, physical distance, privacy concerns, and lack of experience with data sharing, a great deal of data that has been collected is not easily accessed by potential users. Levels of digital access to basic data do differ between the two countries, but there are similarities in the barriers to accessing more detailed data. Technological innovations for accessing online summary reports and basic tables are not familiar to most users, and access to more detailed data is hindered by bureaucratic hurdles. Moreover, physical distance can make data effectively unavailable to users outside of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and Kampala (Uganda) if data must be physically requested or gathered from statistical agency offices. Finally, surveys conducted by NGOs, universities, and international partners are often not easily accessed even when sponsored with public funds.

BARRIER 4: DATA ARE USUALLY NOT IN USER-FRIENDLY FORMATS

The majority of respondents reported that census and survey reports usually include extensive tables useful only for those with the technical capacity to analyze data. Thus, many census tables aren't used. Policy briefs, summary sheets, and fact sheets sometimes exist but often are in short supply, are not put into the right hands, and are quickly depleted. In general data producers were reported as having poor communication and outreach capacity. If data users have adequate skills to analyze and interpret data, they may not need data in user-friendly formats, but the majority of users lack such capacity.

BARRIER 5: LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AND/OR MOTIVATION TO USE DATA FOR DECISIONMAKING

One of the most significant barriers reported in both countries was the poor demand for available demographic data among decisionmakers and journalists, and a lack of commitment to evidence-based policies and reporting. Demand issues were linked to a host of factors including: perceptions of poor quality, doubts about complex data, lack of local involvement in data collection, perceived biases in the data, and a perception that evidence might not support desired results. Furthermore, data availability was perceived as inadequate in the context of the rapid needs of reporting and policymaking.

BARRIER 6: POOR COMMUNICATION OF EVIDENCE BASE

While not a specific topic of questioning for these assessments, PRB's work throughout sub-Saharan Africa has revealed the challenges of effectively communicating demographic and health data. Communications capacity among data producers, such as the Central Statistical Agency (CSA) and Uganda

Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), is limited, and most data users rely on the media and press releases from these agencies as their main means of communicating demographic data.

Other Common Challenges

While data producers strive for objectivity, data are often inseparable from the policy context and respondents spoke frequently of its importance in the use and lack of use of demographic data for decisionmaking and reporting. Respondents reported that policy needs at the local level and at the national level differ and often lead to selective reporting of data. For example, a national-level policymaker will cite increases in school enrollment as a success of education initiatives. A local-level policymaker may highlight how increased school enrollment has resulted in overcrowding of schools and teacher shortages to argue for more funding. Demographic data are not protected from misuse for policy, institutional, or other reasons, and the lack of an enabling policy environment that promotes the transparent use of data for programming, budgeting, and prioritizing further contributes to this misuse.

The capacity of policymakers to appreciate and use data, and the technical capacity to analyze, translate, and interpret data into policies and programs remain a great challenge at virtually all levels. The government remuneration system does not often facilitate retention of statistical experts or promote capacity building among technical staff and advisers.

Problems of inconsistent concepts and definitions hinder understanding of basic demographic and health data and further decrease the likelihood of use. Poor understanding of data and perceived sensitivity of issues were commonly reported as a barrier to use. Furthermore, respondents reported that crisis events often drive data use, and during these times data are used selectively to illustrate crisis impacts, urgency, and vulnerability.

Specific Challenges for the Media

Interviews with the media revealed multiple barriers to transparent data use and challenges at multiple levels. First, media respondents reported little knowledge, understanding, and capacity to interpret data, leading to a reliance on interviewing officials or publicly released documents as the main sources for stories. Furthermore, media reported perceived sensitivity of information and reluctance to enter into misunderstandings over data.

Other types of data issues were reported at the editorial and national levels. At the editorial level, either poor understanding of data or reluctance of high-level managers to address these issues affect the desire to use demographic information. Furthermore, at the national level such issues exist due to the desire to use selective data to promote national progress or national image.

Finally, interviewing revealed a mutual suspicion between media and data producers based mostly on fears of misrepresentation and misquoting of data. On the other hand, expert

informants stressed the role that the media must play in increasing demand for demographic data.

Recommendations

The common challenges identified in the Ethiopia and Uganda case studies led us to offer the following recommendations for improving the demand, access, and use of demographic data for decisionmaking:

CREATING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND DEVELOPING DEMAND FOR DATA

In order to develop a culture of data use, it is necessary to create awareness among professionals and the public about the importance of demographic data for development efforts.

- Create nontechnical materials that communicate important data to the public.
- Support media training and media awards that encourage journalists to report on population issues using data (Uganda Population Secretariat (POPSEC) and the Population Media Center media award program in Ethiopia and Uganda are examples).
- Work with CSA and UBOS to conduct better outreach and awareness raising of existing data sources among current and potential users.

HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

In order to improve the capacity of policymakers and the media to understand, access, use, and communicate demographic data, it is necessary to invest in human capital through focused capacity-building efforts.

- Increase capacity of key politicians and key committees to understand data and perform basic interpretation.
- Increase capacity of media to understand, interpret, and communicate data.
- Improve outreach skills of data-producing agencies; activities such as participatory planning, coordination with local governments, and outreach to media could all be strengthened.
- Increase the technical capacity of producers, planners,

advisers, and technical staff to access, analyze, and interpret data, and communicate results.

- Strengthen the training skills of local trainers, drawing on institutions that have existing capacity-building programs for technical staff and the media, UBOS, CSA, and POPSEC.
- Strengthen curricula at select regional universities and national universities so that graduates are well versed in demographic data.
- Create or strengthen professional networks/communities of practice, including national and international networks.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND INSTITUTIONAL INVESTMENTS

In order to improve access to data, it is necessary to invest in the infrastructure for data production and storage as well as software interfaces with users. In addition, organizational strengthening is necessary with the relevant institutions.

- Develop a Central Data Bank that serves as a single repository where data are stored and coordinated, and where its use is promoted.
- Improve Internet infrastructure and improve the availability of data over the Internet.
- Improve information systems at local and national levels, including vital registration systems, improved service statistics, health management information systems, and monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Provide increased budget support and up-to-date information to district and region-level population officers so that they are retained to work on population issues and not lost to work on new priorities.
- Strengthen—and in some cases establish—data collection departments that have not been adequately prioritized.
- As part of internationally supported data collection efforts, donors need to put a greater emphasis on developing local leadership capacity to plan, carry out, analyze, and disseminate data.
- Strengthen the organizational capacity of coordinating bodies, such as the POPSEC in Uganda and the National Population Council in Ethiopia. (These agencies coordinate the implementation of national population policies and the incorporation of population and development issues across different ministries.)

ETHIOPIA CASE STUDY

Methods, Strategic Approach, and In-Country Activities

PRB assembled and coordinated a consulting team consisting of high-level, respected professionals who had access to decisionmakers through their roles as regular policy advisers. PRB focused the interviewing on federal and regional government decisionmakers, their population advisers, and other key individuals. Participants represented diverse institutions including government, research institutions, the media, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and bilateral and multilateral organizations. A total of 38 full interviews were conducted, and additional insight was provided by dozens of partial and/or spontaneous informants. Open-ended interviews were conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire, and a follow-up interview was conducted when clarification or further information on emerging topics were necessary. Key media participants included international and national print, radio, and television (10 media interviews were conducted). Interviewing took place from Nov. 17, 2008, to Dec. 24, 2008.

To ensure the future use of the assessment findings, PRB actively engaged the government through discussions with the coordination body for population: the National Population Office within the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED). An ad-hoc task force on population and development was formed, which represented key government, academic, and international organizations, and is coordinated by the Population Office, which is responsible for coordinating the formulation and implementation of the National Population Policy Plan of Action.

Basic Findings: Main Themes in Demographic Data for Decisionmaking: The Demand-Access-Use Continuum

DEMAND

Interviewing revealed that there has been an increase in both the real demand for data in recent years by government, media, private sector, and their international partners, as well as the perceived need for data among the key informants. This demand however, may be outstripping timely access to quality data. Ethiopia's third National Census, for example, should have been conducted in 2004 but was delayed until 2007, and results were not released until 18 months later, in December 2008. This lack of timeliness has fueled doubts about data quality and spurred a debate over a possible undercount in two major regions.

Doubts about demographic data lead to hesitancy about its use, and this hesitancy is further fueled by debates over conflicting indicators coming from internationally produced data versus data from national service statistics. Examples of debated indicators mentioned include: hunger/food insecurity, income/poverty, contraceptive use, HIV prevalence, unemployment

and underemployment, migratory movements, and population distribution. When faced with such conflicts, data users report a reluctance to report data based on the confusion of having to select one institution's data over another's.

International partners have had a strong influence on the demand for data but have often not been strategic in supporting sustainable data collection systems with government agencies. For example, in 2008, there have been three major population and health surveys implemented (on reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and community-based health services), but a few informants reported that some were carried out without full government partnership and without long-term capacity-building efforts on management, supervision, and quality monitoring.

There is also often a lack of government use and endorsement for internally driven data and sustainable information systems. Informants reported that CSA, as with other government technical offices, is suffering from staff turnover due to higher salaries at international organizations. In addition, data are often only called upon irregularly, such as when driven by particular events (World Population Day, HIV/AIDS Day) or crises (drought, hunger, cholera epidemic, flood). Informants reported that this opportunistic use of data undermines a culture of appropriate and regular use of data for purposes of planning and monitoring of service provision and programs (education, health, housing, food).

Several respondents also noted a lack of consistency between Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) targets, National Population Policy targets, and particular ministry targets. For example, the National Population Policy Contraceptive Prevalence Rate target will move from 14 percent in 2005 to 44 percent for the year 2015; but the MOH has modified the target to a more-easily obtainable Contraceptive Acceptance Rate target of 55 percent for the year 2010. Many respondents reported that the lack of internal consistency of such indicators contributes to confusion and less demand for data.

ACCESS

Rising demand for demographic and health data is being hindered by the inability to easily access such data. Access problems exist at all levels, in large part due to Ethiopia's underdeveloped information systems and technologies for accessing data. Census data beyond the summary report and most basic tables, for example, must still be requested via written letter, and respondents reported that access can be a lengthy and bureaucratic process. Moreover, for those without digital access to the main census report, printed census reports containing summary tables must be purchased at a small Central Statistical Agency (CSA) bookstore in Addis Ababa, assuming the user can afford it.

There are now some examples of systems that are being significantly strengthened by the government, including the Health

Management Information System (HMIS) and the new Education Management Information System (EMIS). The HMIS improvement includes the development of “Information Use Guidelines and Display Tools” to be piloted in 11 districts in five regions. This “display” of information is meant to enhance the understanding of health priorities in these districts. In Education, under the new EMIS, data are collected twice a month for tracking numbers of teachers and students.

Creating digital access to demographic and health data, however, will not quickly resolve the difficulty of access as many professionals, researchers, and the media have limited access to the Internet for accessing population-related publications and web-based data. Respondents reported that it takes an inordinate amount of time to download demographic data even when there is access—very few respondents were able to download the 99 pages of the 2007 Census tables during the month after it was released and debated, and unfortunately a large census report remains the only form in which the basic data are available. Informants reported that a result of this poor access is that government officials use CSA press releases for their demographic data in most cases.

Issues of access, however, are not limited to the ability to easily obtain data. Capacity to understand, analyze, and interpret demographic data is low, especially among influential government planners. This lack of capacity, combined with a lack of brief and simply understood materials from the census and other surveys, means that most data are functionally inaccessible. Adding to this inaccessibility is the confusion that respondents reported concerning different indicators: TFR vs. birth rates, urbanization vs. urban growth, and contraceptive prevalence rate (internationally accepted indicator) vs. contraceptive acceptance rate (used by the MOH).

Lack of understanding among users and inadequate explanations by data producers lead to a tendency to select the indica-

tor most easily accessed or that most supports the particular policy or media storyline. One example has been the controversy over the number of drought-affected and food-needy people in different periods throughout 2008. A consortium of international agencies has estimated this number as high as 13.2 million chronically and acutely affected people, a figure that donors often cited to justify their claims for increased food aid requirements. A more modest government figure of 4.2 million includes only the chronically food insecure who need more long-term humanitarian and development assistance.

USE

Overall, respondents reported inadequate engagement and motivation of policymakers to use available information to inform their decisionmaking. Former high-level policymakers reported not having had the time or commitment to seek out the best evidence. Many data producers and analysts believe there are stakeholders who manipulate data for policy-driven use, regardless of accessibility. Whether this misuse or lack of use of data affects the motivation of data producers to make data more accessible and timely was not clear from interviewing.

When decisionmakers did report using data for decisionmaking, the timeliness issue was frequently cited as a reason for not using the most current demographic and health data. This problem is in part related to the lack of well-established systems to meet the needs of data users, forcing decisionmakers to turn to whatever data product they have on hand, even if those data are outdated. For example, until the release of the most recent census data for 2007, decisionmakers have relied on medium-variant projections from the 1994 Census for figures on population size, composition, and distribution. These projections, which arguably shouldn't have been used after a five-year period, were never updated based on input from the DHS 2000 and 2005 results or other available service statistics.

A Special Case: The Ethiopian National Census of 2007

The results for the 2007 National Population Census were released in December 2008, just a week after the assessment team began interviews. The current controversy over the much delayed release of the 2007 Census (and official admission of concerns over underreporting) is a prime example of the barriers that exist from production to use of demographic data for decisionmaking. A close evaluation of the census has just been completed by a team of national and international demographers (March-April 2009). However, in the meantime, some ministry planners admit they are torn between having to use the official census data or their own differing estimates of their target populations.

This census has also revealed that emotional reaction, often in relation to tribe, religion, or regional results, is more common than informed technical analysis. For example, the slower growth of the Amhara Region vs. the rapid increase in the

Oromo Region was surprising to many decisionmakers despite a number of studies on the Amhara Region that might have alerted policymakers and the media to lower population growth in that region before the 2007 Census results. These studies, including a large study by Addis Ababa University on Migration, Gender, Health, and Development and graduate theses on the Amhara Region, provide clear evidence of an advanced fertility transition, with delayed age at marriage, higher contraceptive use, greater women's empowerment, and out-migration. Yet these research results were not disseminated widely outside of the university, and full copies are only available through the Graduate School (a compilation of abstracts is available). Better dissemination of existing research findings and updates of CSA projections using available DHS data might have hinted at the changing demographic picture highlighted by the 2007 Census, and dampened the controversy and suspicion that now threaten the long-term confidence in and use of the census data.

One final barrier reported by a key informant is that data from large evaluation surveys of health and development programs are often never released. Cited reasons have included poor data quality, but informants also reported suspicion that supporters, often international agencies, might not have liked some of the findings. The failure to provide access to these large surveys leads to perceptions of them being unrepresentative, of poor quality, and self-serving.

Media Findings

Media reported feeling a “heavy burden” in trying to access reliable and timely data, and key media respondents expressed a need for a “breakthrough” in their own use of data; that is, an urgent change in the way they meet the information needs of the general public. Respondents stressed the importance of improving media access to timely, trusted, and reliable data as a means of achieving such a breakthrough.

Some media interviewees admitted to a lack of knowledge and frustration with the Internet, perhaps due to the often-limited Internet access in Ethiopia. Respondents reported a lack of media capacity and know-how on using appropriate technology to access the best quality data and some attribute this to a lack of commitment and willingness to develop that capacity. They also reported a lack of well-established systems to meet the needs of media data users, though they admitted that existing systems for accessing data are mostly unknown and not appreciated by the media. One reporter noted that most of the available demographic data are in age and sex specific tables and there are few user-friendly graphs, and reported that media often copy press releases verbatim rather than look at more extensive data tables. Furthermore, they do not return to data websites to see if other forms of the data are available.

Media respondents also reported that decisionmakers lack capacity to access, analyze, and communicate data, and often use the media and packaged press releases. This further highlighted a major gap between data availability and user-friendly access since even many high-level users are perceived as viewing data (in the form of tables and spreadsheets) as “bulky.”

Finally, media informants generally noted inadequate knowledge about demographic data and limited capacity to analyze and interpret data. This lack of knowledge, along with a perception that demographic data can be sensitive or controversial, lead to avoidance of reporting the data. Such selective reporting is also reportedly common inside academic and technical consulting agencies for the same reasons of sensitivity.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the objectives of improving demand and reducing public mistrust of population data, improving access to high-quality but easy-to-use data, and building capacity for proper data use. The objectives require three main strategies:

- Generating demand for demographic data by raising awareness about its importance.

- Strengthening national and local statistical and demographic information systems and improving access to priority data.
- Building the capacity of potential users of data including government institutions, the media, and development professionals.

GENERATING DEMAND

Among the strongest appeals for action was the need for a radical change in Ethiopia to a culture of transparent production and use of data. This change is perceived as needed in order to rebuild public trust in information. Such a shift would start with improving demand for demographic data and will require significant commitment from both national policymakers and donors. Key informants stressed the importance of creating awareness among the general public of the value of demographic data for decisionmaking. It was felt that the media could play a major role in promoting this value and advocating for the proper and timely use among decisionmakers and the public. The media, however, have limited understanding of demographic data. Thus, there is a great need for training of journalists in population data, means of access, and basic interpretation. Such training should be incorporated into curricula at schools of communication and journalism in order to reach the next generation of journalists, but should also be available to active journalists through the types of short courses and media networks that PRB has implemented successfully in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Also essential is the protection of the perception of objectivity of CSA. The public’s confidence in census data has been affected in 2008 by delays, inconsistent communication and outreach, and unfavorable media reports. Part of the doubt about the census comes from the importance it has for resource allocation and budgeting, but also comes from lack of capacity to rapidly produce data and respond effectively to concerns. Creating a mechanism to empower CSA or the National Statistical Council to have final say on data collected at the national level might help to alleviate some of these issues and thus improve demand for the data.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

Improving demand must happen in concert with a sustained effort to strengthen national statistical and demographic information systems and improve access to priority data. This will involve building the capacity of key institutions such as the national population technical group on population and development under MOFED, and CSA in its role of generating and disseminating data of national interest. The strengthening of CSA is of particular importance, and must begin with a focus on retention of well-trained analytical demographers and related experts, attention to the production of timely data, and the improvement of means of access to digital data. International partners already working with CSA to collect census and DHS data should focus on management, supervision, and monitor-

ing of data collection, and should also create opportunities for sharing of experiences with strong African statistical agencies, such as STATS/South Africa, CSO/Kenya, and UBOS/Uganda.

Several informants stressed the importance of improving the capacity of CSA to communicate with the public about census data collection, to disseminate data in easy-to-use formats, and to conduct outreach to potential users. This outreach should include the education of decisionmakers, their advisers, research institutes, and planners (federal and regional) in means of data access.

BUILDING CAPACITY OF POTENTIAL USERS

Increased access alone will not ensure proper use without increased capacity among users to understand, analyze, and interpret data. Interviews revealed that there is now increasing data demand coming from sub-national level planners who, under decentralization, now need data for budgets, personnel allocation, and for monitoring indicators of health, education, and welfare service provision and performance. Promoting regional, zonal, district, and subdistrict (*kebele*) data use depends on a basic understanding of the data available and its proper use. Therefore, training courses should begin with this priority group of users who are unlikely to have specific training on demographic data.

Another important area for capacity building involves improving the technical capacity of the next generation of social scientists to analyze demographic data. This can be accomplished by continuing to improve population training institutes and university programs through curriculum improvement, research grants, and opportunities for application of skills. There are currently great opportunities to shape the future of population training due to the rapid university and postgraduate expansion currently underway. These opportunities are particularly needed at newer regional universities.

Existing research and professional associations and organizational networks (the Ethiopian Society of Population Studies, Ethiopian Economics Association, Ethiopian Statistical Society, Consortium for the Integration of Population, Health, and Environment, Consortium of Reproductive Health Associations, etc.) represent a large body of existing and potential new users of demographic data. The capacity of the members of these associations and networks should be assessed for gaps in knowledge and analysis skills. The outreach ability of these groups could be then be used to leverage capacity-building efforts through short courses on demographic analysis, technical forums on data analysis and use, and dissemination of other skills-building materials.

It is also important to reach out to new users of statistical information, including the private sector, who can use regional and local demographic data for planning and marketing. Increased outreach by data producers, and more easily understood cen-

sus reports and analysis briefs, would also facilitate use by the public and private sectors.

OTHER SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES

The assessment revealed other additional opportunities to support ongoing efforts in Ethiopia, including:

- Support the data demand-use priority actions included in the new National Population Policy's Plan of Action, 2008/09–2015/16. Four of the seven priority areas in the Pop-Development theme are related to demand, access, and use.
- Accelerate functioning of the National Population Council (NPC), which was proposed under the 1993 National Population Policy as an advisory body to the government on matters relating to population and development but was not implemented. The NPC membership is drawn from key ministries, regional representatives, religious leaders, NGOs, community-based organizations, and other development partners.
- Support the implementation of the Plan of Action for Sustainable Development to End Poverty (PASDEP III), which has identified population as a major constraint to poverty reduction.
- Encourage the recently established National Statistical Council to unify and reorganize data into a national information system.
- Support Parliament's initial approval (in 2008) for the 2009 enactment of the new Vital Registration System (VRS).
- Promote technological disseminations such as GIS/maps, GAPMINDER, photographs, graphs, DEV-INFO, and webcasts.

Next Steps in Ethiopia

One surprising benefit of our 3-D Assessment strategy has been the keen interest of the partner government organization—the Population Department of MoFED (recently renamed Population Process Coordinating Office)—in using the findings. This important coordinating body for the National Population Policy Plan of Action and its ad-hoc task force on population and development had already identified some of the data use gaps, and was pleased to find corroboration, as well as new gaps from this assessment. The Population Department has suggested convening a special task force for the organization of technical roundtables to discuss the obstacles to data use and to make short-term and long-term plans of action. Other organizational members of the task force as well as international partners have expressed interest in this partnership approach, and PRB is working with these partners to move forward with future roundtable discussions.

UGANDA CASE STUDY

Methods

Using a qualitative design, 30 policymakers and 13 members of the media were purposively selected from government ministries and agencies, local governments, Parliament, and the major media houses in Kampala. In the government agencies the officers in charge of planning were selected; in Parliament, members and leaders of key committees and fora were chosen. At the local-government level, planning officers, district health officers, administrative officers, and district political leaders were preferred. Six districts were randomly selected and interviews were conducted in Kasese, Bundibugyo, Jinja, Mbale, Kumi, and Soroti districts.

Fourteen media practitioners were interviewed, drawn from major government (four) and nongovernmental (10) media houses in Kampala. Representation was sought from print media (six), radio broadcast (four), and TV broadcast (three) media. There was one participant from a local-languages radio station and one participant from the Uganda government media center, which monitors the activities of all media houses. Many of the journalists covered health issues. Many were also producers of media shows and editors in addition to being reporters.

Policymaker Findings

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Twenty government officials and policymakers were interviewed, including eight members of Parliament (MP), eight local government heads, three planning officials, and one research/analyst from the government media center. Two participants represented a data producing office, four were consumers/policymakers, and five were technical assistance advisers.

All the interview participants were involved in use of data for planning, budgeting, and reporting activities as part of their key roles and functions. The participants used data regularly in their day-to-day activities and reported their major sources of data to be the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and the Population Secretariat (POPSEC). In addition to use of data for planning and reporting, some respondents at the district level also reported being involved in data collection and the integration of that data into the planning process.

DECISIONMAKERS' REQUESTS FOR DATA

Most of the participants received regular requests for data from their superiors or from other decisionmakers. The exception was members of Parliament, for whom requests are primarily from the Parliamentary speaker and plenary for reports on committee activities, not necessarily for data. For most government officials, requests for data were frequently received from their ministers, Parliament, and/or the ministry of finance, plan-

ning, and economic development. For all the officials, the requests were for status reports on the constituencies they are mandated to work with, such as special interest populations or people living with HIV/AIDS.

At the local government level, respondents mentioned they received requests for demographic data, service statistics, and expenditure reports. In one case, for example, a recent request had been received from Parliament to report on maternal health issues in the district. Commonly these requests for data come from peers at the district level or from leaders at lower administrative units. At times local government officials receive requests from development partners in the districts who are supporting various programs. The local government respondents reported their main source of data to be their own service statistics and other data collected on programs (for those who are collecting the data) and secondary data, including UBOS reports for denominators and DHS for health information.

All participants reported having received requests for data driven by donors. At the national level, for example, there were requirements to report to the UN General Assembly Special Session Declaration on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) and other international bodies, as part of the requirements of international agreements and treaties that the government had entered into. In other cases, there were requests from in-country donors as part of reporting on donor funded projects at the national and sub-national levels. Generally, service data were used for this reporting but where data were unavailable, estimates based on previous data were often used.

DATA OF HIGHEST PRIORITY

For all participants, the most important data related to variables derived from the requirements for reporting on the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), which is the government's development planning framework. These variables and data requirements vary from sector to sector. Variables of universal interest were general population size and population characteristics, as well as poverty indices. This data is important because all participants were involved in budgeting, and the budgeting framework requires that poverty and population be considered in arriving at budget allocations.

Other variables of interest to all participants were variables related to social services. Health indices, education statistics, sanitation, and safe water coverage were cited in the majority of cases. A few participants involved in gender budgeting and social protection mentioned gender aspects of data. Also discussed was production data reported to be important in the agricultural sector, including data on the sources of production, the level of production, acreage, and number of livestock. Types of data that are of interest, but not readily available,

include data on the elderly and on disabilities. Apart from the numbers of elderly and people with disabilities, policymakers would like to have in-depth data including poverty levels among vulnerable populations, their location, disease burden, and access to social services.

QUALITY OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Most of the respondents believed that demographic data from surveys was generally of good quality and easily accessible. According to a respondent from Kumi, the quality was good in particular because the level of disaggregation available, scope, and analysis had improved with time.

Two caveats were expressed, however, regarding quality of survey and census data. First, there is a belief that the reliability of data for some areas has been affected by the inability to access conflict areas at the time particular surveys were conducted. In particular, this led to misgivings about the accuracy and reliability of estimates for northern Uganda and Karamoja. Furthermore, the use of estimates is misunderstood by many to mean that the data are not of good quality. This is principally due to the belief that the word “estimate” is akin to a guess or based on speculation, since it is not understood that estimates are based on data. Second, regarding HIV/AIDS data, there is a sentiment that because the data have implications for Uganda’s image and level of funding for HIV/AIDS, it is subject to undue political interest. As such, current estimates of HIV prevalence are deemed unreliable.

“The quality of data is wanting. There are many implementers, each with different capacities of data management and different objectives for gathering the data.”
—Respondent, government organization

“The quality is generally good; however I feel that data from the disturbed areas under conflict may not be accurate and reliable”
—Respondent, government organization

Other reservations in terms of quality of demographic data included:

- **Inadequate desegregation of data** beyond the regional level or parish level. Local government respondents singled this out as a major cause of poor data availability.
- **Length of time between data collection and report dissemination** is too long, and some indicators usually change within short periods of time.
- Long intercensal periods coupled with **inadequate provision of updated data or projections** frustrate the quality of data available.
- **Delays in accessing** data caused by bureaucracies and the need to justify the need for the data affect perceptions of quality. Participants reported that census data was not particularly useful or relevant because it was neither updated nor well structured.

“Census data requires update. We are still quoting 2002 figures and you find that you are missing the point. There is need for it to be updated.”
—Respondent, MP

The availability of other demographic data from surveys was reported as good by all respondents, and additionally, comparability was deemed good because of the series of similar, comparable, representative surveys (such as DHS and livestock surveys) that have been conducted with technical support from international partners. The major issues with these surveys were not with quality, but rather with the lack of availability of small area statistics due to limited sampling.

Service statistics were thought to be of poor quality, and causes of poor data quality included: poor recording skills of staff; a lack of appreciation of the importance of correct entries; lack of equipment (computers); and, in one case, the absence of a system for regular collection, processing, storage, and retrieval of data. Respondents also mentioned that it was not easy to access service statistics. In many cases the person requesting service statistics data must justify the need for this data, and the process to obtain the data is long. Additionally, some facilities do not keep statistics on some key indicators. The combination of poor quality, difficult access, and neglectful collection make it hard for anyone other than the primary data collector to use service statistics data. One MP noted the importance of service statistics data and stated that it should be regularly disseminated to communities and planning units and should be analyzed and used for decisionmaking.

Participants mentioned that the vital registration system (VR) produces better and up-to-date data, but unfortunately it has not been fully implemented. This was attributed to a lack of resources, poor appreciation in communities of the importance of registration, and an inadequate number of parish chiefs who are the primary collectors of this data. It was mentioned that some districts even have the database and VR forms but lack the support to operationalize the system.

INTERVENTIONS TO IMPROVE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA USE

There was agreement among all the participants that the existing system for reporting on progress in their sectors required data use. By default, therefore, use of data was being enhanced through compliance with existing reporting guidelines.

“The Strategic Investment Plan for the sector requires to be backed by data—it is an established system. Approval from political leaders depends on evidence that the process was informed by data. The planning process demands that data be used.”
—Respondent, ministry planner

The Prosperity for All Program that is being implemented by the Ministry of Finance is instituting a community-based information system that will enhance data use. Additionally, the Parliament has approved a loan to set up national archives and a center of excellence for data management by civil servants. Related to this, improvements in information communications technology have led to linking districts and sectors through e-commerce and e-governance. However, most participants knew of nothing being done currently to enhance demographic data use by policymakers.

Participants suggested several strategies for improving data use. First, in relation to dissemination there is a perceived need to regularly publicize data (through various channels such as print and electronic) on key indicators, which would improve demand and use of available data. The target audience of this dissemination should include lawmakers at all levels and also include the communities where data is actually collected. Data should be presented in simple formats including tables and simple frequencies, because according to one MP, the current bulky reports are not very user friendly and don't encourage use of data. Furthermore, there is a need for data producers to regularly supply policymakers with data in simple formats, and policymakers need to be further sensitized on demographic data use and how it can be integrated into other sectors. Mechanisms cited for improving dissemination of existing data included the Internet, electronic list serves, and pamphlets, and it was felt that this should be the responsibility of UBOS and POPSEC.

Better storage of data was another reported suggestion for improving use. There is need for national archives for data. Mbale, for example, has departmental information collected and stored within departments. One respondent from Mbale mentioned the need to harmonize and merge these data from different departments so that there is a one-stop center where all district data can be accessed. The district level currently has no capacity to do this.

Finally, as was mentioned earlier, having data that is disaggregated beyond the sub-county would increase usage, especially for planning. A prerequisite for all of these suggestions was the perceived need to build confidence of data users in the quality of data from various sources, but especially in relation to estimates related to the census and service statistics.

CRITICAL AREAS FOR TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

All respondents agreed that the most critical area for capacity building was to build the appreciation of leaders, managers, and policymakers for the importance of data for decisionmaking. In Kumi and Jinja, respondents noted that policymakers often ignore data in decisionmaking because they feel accountable to their constituencies in terms of influencing resource allocation to their constituency rather than to indicators of need. For example, although data may show a particular service is urgently needed in an area, lawmakers may often decide otherwise for political reasons. Thus, efforts to build the capacity of lawmakers

to make evidence-based decisions must be approached with a proper understanding of the political context in which they work.

A variety of other suggestions for improving data use in decisionmaking were cited in the interviews:

- Training of decisionmakers and policymakers on how to access data was cited as an area for capacity building, because even when data are available, decisionmakers often do not access it for various reasons including lack of knowledge of existence, lack of knowledge of availability, and reluctance to use.
- A respondent from a local government mentioned the need for capacity building for data producers to extract and present data in user-friendly formats to consumers.
- Other participants felt there was a need to equip key departments with enough human and technical resources for collection and processing of data. In particular, the research department in Parliament and the local governments need this help.
- A data bank was suggested to which all government sectors contribute data and to which all departments and stakeholders have access.
- One case stated a need to establish basic systems for regular data collection, processing and retrieval, as well as capable human resources.
- One MP mentioned that her peers need skills in analyzing and interpreting data, especially numerical data, since not everyone had such skills prior to joining Parliament.

Local government respondents mentioned that UBOS has worked with them to build their capacity to design surveys, and to collect, analyze, report, and disseminate data, but what is lacking in the training is the practical application of these skills. For example, according to respondents from Jinja and Kumi, UBOS often collects data from their districts with little involvement of the district-trained personnel. This lack of involvement not only provides little motivation to district staff, but is also a missed opportunity for them to put skills into practice. Local government respondents believed that if they were involved in collecting their own data, they would have confidence in the data, increasing its use and demand at the district level.

Other problems related to improving access and uses of data were mentioned. For example, in Soroti, there is no access to the Internet, which obviously limits the ability to access various updates to information including intercensal projections.

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF POLICYMAKERS' DEMAND, ACCESS, AND USE OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The overall impression from the respondents was that the demand for quality demographic data is high. The challenge, however, is to meet the demand. Accessibility of demographic data was reported as quite good, but the views on quality of

demographic data are mixed, with some data viewed as good and other data as unreliable. Respondents thought that, in general, the main challenge was inadequate use of existing data for decision making.

It was agreed generally that political will for generation and processing of data is high. However, political will and the political process do not adequately support use of data, and in some cases data were consciously not used in planning and budgeting processes, in order to influence resource allocation.

“Adhoc planning and budgeting processes allow little time for data assembly and use; there is little accountability and results orientation.”

—Respondent, government planning

Media Findings

KEY ROLES AND FUNCTIONS, TOPICAL AREAS COVERED, AND DEALING WITH DATA

The roles of media practitioners vary in the different media houses. Most journalists were involved in conducting the background research on the stories they reported. Most went to the field to collect information, write and edit scripts, and present them. Others were involved in editing stories of other journalists, and ensuring that journalist stories were credible. Talk show hosts tended to develop the story idea, do background research, invite show participants, and conduct the shows.

All the participants dealt with data on an ongoing basis in their jobs. It is a policy requirement at all the media houses that the participants represented for stories be backed by researched evidence. Thus, data is reported as very important to Ugandan media.

“We use research reports, the UBOS statistics, data from the Internet, and where specific data is required that we do not have, we reach out to relevant organizations. We also commission our own research...”

—Respondent, print

DEMAND FOR DATA—MEDIA PERSPECTIVES ON POLICYMAKERS’ USE OF DATA

Almost all journalists believed that policymakers and decisionmakers do not use data to inform policies and programs. Others thought that decisionmakers used data to an extent, though they were reactive.

“I highly doubt (that policymakers use data). Some of the policymakers do not understand the language used in reports. If you look at Parliament today, there are people who do not understand how the world of science works. Unless you reproduce the data for them, they may not understand. In some countries I have seen policy brief-

ings used. If we used them they might help, but in Uganda we have not used them much.”

—Respondent, print

“No...research reports are not likely to be read by policymakers.”

—Respondent, radio

“Policymakers depend on us to interpret the data and produce a story...we explain the meaning of data for the end user...policymakers react to our stories. When we ignore something they also ignore it.”—Respondent, print

The Ministry of Health, however, was given credit by journalists for using demographic data.

“The Ministry of Health needs to be given credit. In some cases they approach industry experts to react to the data...they came up with policy guidelines on infant feeding after reviewing local research.” —Respondent, radio

Reasons cited for inadequate use of data by policymakers and decisionmakers included poor attitudes concerning data; a lack of appreciation for data; inability by decisionmakers to read research reports and interpret the data; and low commitment from policymakers to use data for decisionmaking.

MEDIA USE OF DATA IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS

In the last five years the reporters had covered various issues depending on their assignments. Many health reporters had covered HIV/AIDS, ebola, cholera, reproductive health, and malaria. Three had covered health research, two had written about circumcision, and one had covered hepatitis and meningitis.

Some respondents reported using internal data sources for reporting, including the Millennium Development Goal indicators, UBOS, PEAP, the roadmap to reducing maternal mortality, Vision 2025 national population policy, and various NGOs. Not all journalists were aware that these documents exist. Others mentioned that they use external data including data from the Internet or other organizations like the World Health Organization. The preference for external data is in part due to the bureaucracy involved in getting data from the government, since journalists, like others, have to justify their need for data. Furthermore, usefulness of internal and external data was dependent on familiarity with the types of data or the availability of technical resources to interpret information.

ISSUES OF MEDIA ACCESS TO DATA

Data needs by Ugandan media depend greatly on the topical areas covered by particular journalists. Most media practitioners cited needs for data on: access to services, type of housing, standard of living, population size and characteristics, and national health statistics such as the number of people living with HIV/AIDS

(PLHAs), HIV/AIDS-related deaths, and PLHAs accessing antiretroviral therapy (ART). Many others felt the need for environmental data and sanitation data. The need for education statistics as well as recent poverty data and trends was also often reported.

Respondents also mentioned data they would like to use for reporting but couldn't find: data on rural areas, analysis of rapid population growth and what aspects of population contribute to it, and data on access to services. Participants were unified in their view that often there were data they would like to have used but could not find.

"Data on cervical and breast cancers is lacking, so we use estimates from the hospitals." —Respondent, TV

"Sometimes the data available is old. I may want data for 2008 but all I can find is 2006 data. Sometimes it is because surveys are done periodically but as journalists we do not understand that." —Respondent, print

In other instances the problem of using data for reporting was related to an inability to access available data. Access was reported as a universal problem for all the journalists interviewed. Data were reported as not always available and accessible, especially if it has to come from government sources.

"Even if data is available online, due to our poor Internet connections you may fail to download it. Sometimes even if you get the data, you need an expert to interpret it but they are too busy. You may fail to get an appointment yet you have a deadline to beat." —Respondent, print

Further still, the unavailability of data was linked to government bureaucracy.

"...Especially when data needs to come from government officials, they are not responsive." —Respondent, government

The importance of accuracy of the data was emphasized. One respondent mentioned the need to know development targets set by organizations in the area of health and population. One journalist mentioned he would like data that are unique to cultural identities and show trends. Much of this data already exist.

"I would like to have Demographic and Health reports; the State of Uganda Population Report; World Malaria Reports; annual UNAIDS reports are also important and annual sector performance reviews. Sometimes getting them is a problem." —Respondent, print

"Hard copy reports are really hard to get. Thank God they upload the documents to the web so we can be able to get them." —Respondent, print

"Use the census? Yes, we do. Only that the last time I tried to download it I failed." —Respondent, print

All journalists cited the Internet and workshops as important data sources. Many sought interviews with researchers to get data from them. However, all participants felt that there were constraints to accessing data that were unique to journalists. The most pervasive constraint was the negative perception that journalists will misrepresent facts and distort information. One respondent mentioned the seeming disconnect between researchers and the media, and that journalists are not trusted by researchers and government officers.

"...Researchers are suspicious of journalist intentions, yet media is a partner in development." —Respondent, talk show producer

This suspicion reportedly contributes to delays in journalists' ability to obtain data and reluctance among data producers to provide data to journalists.

"Particularly in government offices, journalists are not given access to information. There is a belief that journalists distort information. There are bureaucratic restrictions." —Respondent, radio

"I was once taking pictures of the Ministry of Health. A certain doctor got out of his car and threatened me. He said if I reported wrong information he would make sure I got into trouble." —Respondent, TV

Another major constraint to journalists was time. Because journalists have a time limit within which to file a story, delays in getting the most recent data were a serious constraint to data use. As a result, many journalists use the most up-to-date data they can find. For example, many respondents said they still used the 2002 Uganda Census. Whereas some are equipped with simple skills on analyzing and projecting the census data, others are not and either used the 2002 figures or had trouble finding updated data. The respondents who had no access to updated or projected census figures said it was a challenge using the census data.

Although a number of respondents wanted data available in simple formats (tabulations, percentages, frequencies, etc.), others required detailed reports. These different needs suggest a very diverse audience of data users.

QUALITY OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Most of the media personnel felt that the quality of the existing demographic data was good, but some voiced concern about political influence on data. There was a view that the data quality had improved greatly since 2004/2005; one journalist felt that even though the data quality was good, there was room for improvement.

"The quality is good, especially the documents provided by UBOS—the population census, livestock census... However, results are not utilized by policymakers. Surveys are done for their sake." —Respondent, radio

However, the general perception was that the formats in which data are presented are not user friendly. There is general agreement that the data is too technical and needs more interpretation to be useful for journalists.

“The data need to be broken down into simple chunks. Interpretation of data and how it is communicated is important.”
—Respondent, TV

One area singled out for improvement was the perceived reliability of data. There is a real perception among media that the reliability of demographic data is affected by political interests; and that the survey data are only estimates that do not reflect reality.

One respondent pointed out that data cannot be of good quality when it is tailored to suit interests of politicians. This respondent mentioned that low involvement of the media at every stage of research contributes to the perception that data quality is not good and is tailored to suit political interests. Other reasons for perceiving data as of poor quality include: data doesn't capture trends; is not correlated with previous research; and shows abnormal changes in status of indicators over short periods of time.

IMPROVING DEMOGRAPHIC DATA USE BY UGANDAN MEDIA

All respondents highlighted the need for better dissemination of demographic data as a strategy for improving use. Respondents reported that dissemination could be improved through various ways including websites, e-mail, policy briefs, improved packaging of data, media talk shows, and press conferences. Regular updates of data and a proactive outreach strategy to media were encouraged.

“Use press conferences more often. Use every opportunity to disseminate data”
—Respondent, TV

“We need a focal point for accessing all data, with a reliable website on all sectors, to eliminate the need for frequent visits to many websites. The website needs to be user friendly and protected from editing. It should be hosted by a neutral body, free from political leanings.”

—Respondent, media

It was also suggested that dissemination of data needs to be extended to include media houses outside Kampala; and that after dissemination, monitoring of data use by the media needs to be done.

“There is need for wider dissemination beyond the main media houses in Kampala, to increase use. Those stations also have a wide listenership. After dissemination, we need to monitor use of the data disseminated.”
—Respondent, radio

The need to enhance media houses' appreciation of data was also highlighted. This could be done through workshops and/or training sessions, using media people to train their peers.

“Some media houses do not appreciate the importance of data. There is a need to have workshops on how to use data. Work with people within the media to teach other media houses the importance of data in reporting.”
—Respondent, radio

Additionally, many respondents were unified in their view that technical experts must help interpret data. To eliminate the distrust between media and government officials, it was suggested that cooperation between the media and the government should be improved. Data producers should also be sensitized on the important role of media as a partner in development, to eliminate suspicion from the data producers that can lead to delayed or no access to data by journalists.

There is a need to produce data more regularly—this will improve use because data will be more reliable. Alternatively, journalists should be provided with population projections and estimates regularly.

According to one respondent, “journalists should be involved in research right from the start, not only at dissemination stage during a press conference.” This journalist also said that when journalists are involved, they are able to report and publicize the research from the beginning through planning, data collection, analysis, report writing, and dissemination. This also improves reliability and usability of the data.

There is also a continual need to train a crop of journalists to report frequently on findings from population research. These journalists will need regular updates. Since journalists are not trained at preservice level in data use and analysis, there is a need to train them in data collection, and how to report research findings. One journalist highly commended PRB for the quality of training they provide and wished those who provide training to in-country journalists on population issues could emulate the style and training content of PRB.

A senior editor with a local paper highlighted the need to advertise data regularly in print and electronic media. He felt that if demographic data are continuously advertised, people will be encouraged to use the data for reporting and decisionmaking.

“Government officials need to open up. The media should report truthfully and objectively. Cooperation between media and the government needs to be improved.”

—Respondent, government media agency

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF MEDIA DEMAND, ACCESS, AND USE OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The interview participants agreed that demand for data in the media is high. But access and use are lagging far behind

demand. The media are critical to shaping the development agenda, but they do not adequately appreciate demographic data. It was widely believed that journalists need training on data and analysis to help them report on research findings. Related to this, journalists need to know where to go to get data. It was also agreed that dialogue between the media and policymakers needs to be enhanced. Data needs interpretation, especially for local language reporters. Participants felt that data and reporting need to be independent of political leanings. They also suggested that we learn from other countries that have made it easier for journalists to access demographic data.

Discussion of Findings

Use of data is a regular need among policymakers. Established reporting procedures require that decisionmakers outside of government and policymakers within government access and use data regularly. Demand for data, therefore, is perceived to be high. It is important to note that data needs are guided by the requirements for reporting on sectoral progress according to the PEAP. All departments involved in planning and budgeting will need to have, at a minimum, data on population estimates and poverty levels. Furthermore, data and indicators related to the five pillars of the PEAP are important. Decisionmakers therefore need data on health, education, water and sanitation, production, development indices, and resource distribution/equity between regions, among others.

Another guiding principle for priority data is the development precedence for a particular financial year. In FY 08/09, the development priority is health, so important variables include maternal and infant health indices. Gender variables are cross-cutting and are important in health, social protection, production, and economic development.

The quality of the available DHS data is generally perceived as good, because DHS is conducted according to internationally approved methodologies and supported by international partners. Also, because a series of surveys has been conducted, the data are considered to be comparable over time. The only caveat is that perceived reliability of the data is affected by a perception that the areas under conflict are underrepresented in survey data and that small-area estimates are unavailable. In addition, there was some perception that political interests may affect data quality and dissemination because of the importance of indicators such as HIV/AIDS prevalence, poverty indicators, and education statistics for Uganda's national image.

Access to demographic survey data is also good, but is not always perceived as easy for some MPs. Government decisionmakers frequently access data from printed reports published by UBOS and from websites maintained by UBOS and other organizations. Within Parliament, a research department can acquire data for MPs who request it; however, the depart-

ment's capacity is limited by small numbers of staff who have limited capacity. A particular gap in data availability is within the agricultural sector where no reliable national surveys have been conducted since the 1960s.

While census data are generally considered reliable, the data are also perceived as not very useful because information is dated and structured in a format that does not lend itself to being utilized. Most officials recognize that projections are meant to be used during the intercensal period. However these projections are not often used because they are available only on request from UBOS and there is a general distrust of the quality of data estimates.

The quality of service statistics is impaired by lack of skills among records staff; a lack of appreciation of the importance of service data; lack of equipment/stationery for recording and storing data; and, less frequently, the absence of systems for regular collection, processing, storage, and retrieval of data.

In spite of high demand and reasonably good access to demographic data, its use is less than optimal. A lack of appreciation among leaders, managers, and planners of the importance of demographic data for development planning negatively affects demographic data use. As a result, decisionmakers use data for reporting purposes but do not interpret it adequately for program planning. Use is also affected by the capacity of decisionmakers to understand data and draw out its meaning for programs.

Currently, little is being done to enhance use of demographic data among decisionmakers in government. The Prosperity for All Program implemented by the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development is establishing a Community Based Information System, which might lead to enhanced data use. In addition, approximately five years ago there was an initiative by the Population Secretariat to train local governments on the use of CSPro software to enhance their use of demographic data. That initiative ended and was neither monitored nor replaced with another initiative. Consequently, there are perceived to be many needs for training and capacity building to enhance data demand, access, and use.

One such need is appreciation of the importance of data for development planning. There is wide agreement that government policymakers and decisionmakers need to appreciate the importance of data for management and development planning, beyond using it only for reporting. Part of this process would involve enhancing the interpretation of data to draw out its implications for government programs.

Additionally, building the capacity of government departments to help them regularly collect, analyze and use data is important. This capacity would include increasing the quantity and skills of personnel, and providing them with necessary equipment.