

# CONTRIBUTIONS OF PARLIAMENTS TO PRIMARY RESEARCH: THE RESEARCH UNIT'S SAFEGUARDING SOUTH AFRICA'S LAND BORDERS PROJECT

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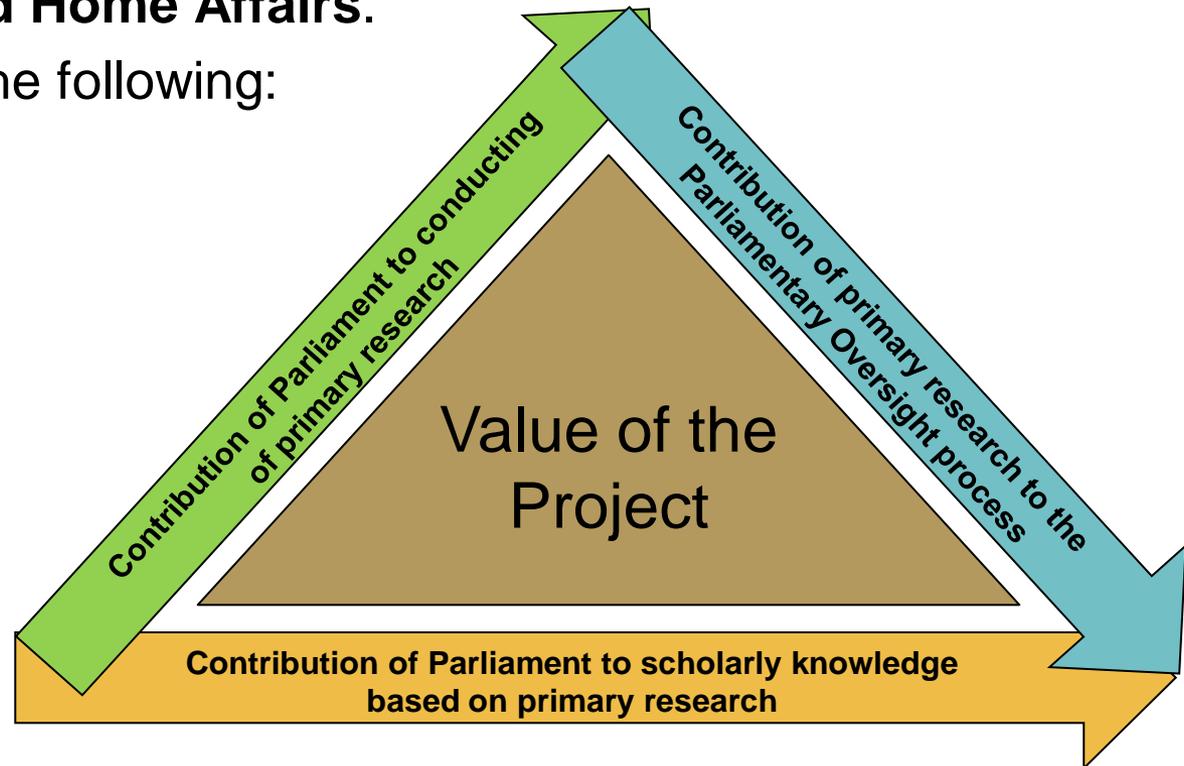
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PARLIAMENT  
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# INTRODUCTION

- Parliaments and other legislatures are in a unique position to contribute to primary research due to *access*.
- Access means the Research Unit can conduct primary research and produce high quality research outputs.
- Recent project: **Safeguarding South Africa's Land Borders: The role of the South African National Defence Force, the South African Police Service and Home Affairs.**
- Project illustrated the following:



# INTRODUCTION

- Aim of the paper is to illustrate the contribution of the Parliament of South Africa to primary research. The following will be discussed:
  - Background and Rationale of the study, its purpose, and significance and research methodology.
  - Ethical issues of interviews.
  - Practical considerations of the study during qualitative data gathering from the Maseru Bridge, Ficksburg Bridge, Beit Bridge and Lebombo ports of entry and surrounds.
  - Synopsis of how recommendations can assist Parliament's oversight function.
  - An overview of Parliament's contribution to primary research.

# BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE BORDER SAFEGUARDING PROJECT

- Porousness of land borders.
- Border Safeguarding is a Government priority; National Development Plan 2030, the Medium Term Strategic Framework, and departmental policies and targets (Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans).
- Various departments play different roles in border safeguarding, but challenges remain.
  - *South African National Defence Force (SANDF): Land borderline*
  - *South African Police Service: Land border posts (Ports of Entry)*
  - *Department of Home Affairs: Land border posts (Ports of Entry)*
- Parliament provides oversight to other branches of Government: Thus, study fits in that role.
- Shortcomings and Government efforts to strengthen border security informed the rationale of the study.

# LINKING PRIMARY RESEARCH TO THE PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- **Purpose of the study:** Largely descriptive.
- To ensure originality and relevance, the study included an aspect of **primary research**.
  - In-depth understanding of actual challenges faced on the borders.
  - Supplemented the information that exist in the public domain from both Government and other sources.
  - Comprehension of how higher order decisions impact on service delivery on the ground, and vice versa.
- **Significance of the study:** Assist Members of Parliament and Committees to fulfil their monitoring and oversight functions pertaining to border safeguarding.

# LINKING PRIMARY RESEARCH TO THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

- **Research Design:** Case Study.
- **Units of analysis:** Organisations and institutions of the Department of Defence, Department of Police and Department of Home Affairs.
- **Research Methodology:** Qualitative approach.
- **Techniques or data collection methods:**
  - Literature study (primary and secondary sources).
  - Semi-structured interviews.
  - Observations.

# ETHICAL ISSUES OF INTERVIEWS

- **Clearance obtained from Departments**
- **Support of Committee Chairpersons**
- **Ethical dimensions outlined in Consent to Participate in Research as follow:**
  - *Purpose of the Study.*
  - *Procedures.*
  - *Potential risks and discomforts.*
  - *Potential benefits to participants/or to society.*
  - *Payment for participation.*
  - *Confidentiality.*
  - *Participation and withdrawal.*

NB: The combination of institutional permission and practical means of addressing ethical considerations laid the theoretical foundation for conducting of primary research.

# PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF DATA GATHERING

Main challenge: To obtain sufficient and high quality information through primary research.

## **Reliability, Validity and Perspective:**

*Reliability* refers to the “quality of the measurement methods that suggests that the same data would have been collected each time.” – This is challenging in qualitative data gathering.

Qualitative interviewing proves stronger in terms of ensuring *Validity*, both *face validity* and *criterion-related validity*.

Validity was enhanced in the research project through:

- Division of interview groups according to rank (in case of the SANDF)
- Perspective obtained through reviewing inputs from personnel at various levels.

# PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF DATA GATHERING (2)

Main challenge: To obtain sufficient and high quality information through primary research.

## **The research environment:**

Need for researcher to be relaxed and conduct interviews in an appropriate setting. The interview site itself embodies and constitutes multiple scales of spatial relations and meaning.

During data gathering, members of the SANDF, SAPS and DHA were interviewed in their places of employment/deployment. This contributed to a relaxed/familiar environment and further allowed for observations.

The setting for interviews also assisted researchers to pay attention to what the participant says about the place, generating useful research material.

# PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF DATA GATHERING (3)

**The research environment:**



# DIRECTING THE MEANS TO JUSTIFY THE ENDS

Parliamentary research differs from academic research in that it is required to be client-specific (supporting MPs in their oversight and other roles).

## **Support to MPs was achieved by means of the following:**

- The final research product was aimed at the MPs of four specific Committees. This was also reflected in the structure of the document.
- An intersectoral element was provided in the research document.
- Specific Recommendations were included for MPs on the enhancement of border safeguarding.
  - Sector-specific (committee-specific) recommendations
  - General (overarching) recommendations

# PRIMARY RESEARCH: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

## Support to Parliament

The main aim of the project was to support Parliament in its oversight role. The success of the project was based on the following:

- *Clear alignment with the National Development Plan (NDP)*
- *Clear alignment with the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) and other policies*
- *Proactive research and forward thinking*
- *Support from Chairpersons*
- *User-friendly packaging of information*
- *Solution orientated recommendations*

# PRIMARY RESEARCH: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES (2)

## **Contribution to Scholarly knowledge**

The primary advantage in a Parliament-driven primary research project relates to *access*. Accessibility to information from government departments and entities poses less of a challenge.

Primary data obtained in two ways:

- Government institutions make regular presentations to Parliament
- Parliament, through its various Committees, conducts oversight visits

However, the Parliamentary programme often does not provide sufficient time to focus on matters at operational and tactical levels. The Research Unit can fill this information vacuum by conducting primary research.

The scholarly contribution lies in the publishing of such information which will make the research available to the broader academic community for additional scrutiny.

# PRIMARY RESEARCH: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES (3)

## Challenges

Although there are prospects regarding the contribution of Parliament to primary research, several challenges exist:

- *Lack of a Publication Ethics Committee*
- *The publication of research*
- *Dealing with two Worlds (Balancing the needs of clients versus scholarly inquiry)*
- *Time constraints*

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

Moving towards the future, institutional support for primary research by the Research Unit remains important as part of evolution and innovation to meet the information needs of Parliament.

The value of parliament-driven primary research lies in unparalleled access.

- *Increases value to MPs.*
- *Improve the parliamentary oversight processes.*
- *Holds potential contribution to scholarly knowledge.*

The need remains to address challenges to maximise the potential of primary research

# Thank you

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