

# iConnect Ghana Newsletter

• ICTs for Development  
• Research Evidence for Development

Feature Story



## Parliamentary Knowledge-base, an Effective Resource For Evidence-informed Policy Making

At the beginning of this Millennium, Africa was referred to as the '21st century's development challenge at best and a hopeless continent at worst'.

[Read more on page 2](#)

### WHAT IS EVIDENCE INFORMED POLICY MAKING?

Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM) activities aim to increase the uptake of research in policy making.

EIPM is therefore an approach to development, where policymakers are equipped with necessary resources (improved skills, enhanced work processes, and enabling environments) that position them to assimilate evidence into policies.

This approach seeks to fill the information gap that exists between policymakers and researchers.

### INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (ICT4D)

Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) refers to the use of Information and Communication Technologies in the fields of socioeconomic development, international development and human rights.

ICT4D can refer to assisting disadvantaged populations anywhere in the world, but it is usually associated with applications in developing countries.

It is concerned with directly applying information technology approaches to poverty reduction.

Source – Wikipedia

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## EDITORIAL

The year has started with another issue of iConnect Ghana, the quarterly newsletter of Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS). This issue is dedicated to activities of VakaYiko, the Evidence Informed Policy Making (EIPM) project being implemented by GINKS, in partnership with its international partners.

The project entered into the second year of work, and started with its Parliamentary strand. The sensitization meeting held with Members and Staff of the Parliament of Ghana in February features prominently in this issue, with articles taken from speeches (with their prior consent) delivered at the event.

The article by Mr. Samuel Zan Akologo of the National Catholic Secretariat discusses parliamentary knowledge-base as an effective resource for evidence-informed policy making. In this article, he espouses key concepts in evidence-informed policy making, their relationships with Parliamentary knowledge-base, as well as critiques and concerns in the field.

Clara Richards, the newly appointed Acting Director of VakaYiko, discusses progress made in the first year across all project countries, and makes projections into the next phase. A profile of winners for the VakaYiko Small grants is also presented in this issue to provide understanding of the organizations and institutions working around the globe within the consortium to promote the use of evidence by governments.

Finally, Lynne Hendersen provides a background on the BCURE (Building Capacity for the Use of Research Evidence) programme issued by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). She touches on other initiatives from the department that are working to address weaknesses and issues in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and statistics in Ghana.

It is our hope that we engage our audience very much through the articles in our newsletter. While we dedicate this issue to the activities of VakaYiko, we do not in any way seek to underestimate the value of Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) which constitutes the second area of coverage for the publication. Such prioritizations are exceptions that are encouraged when the need arises. And once again, we appreciate your feedback.

Thank you.

## Parliamentary Knowledge-base, an Effective Resource for Evidence-Informed Policy Making

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Such notions emanated as a result of the continent's historical experience of failed democratic governance, weak public institutions and disastrous policy failures; albeit not it's making entirely. The reality 15 years later is that there is glimpse of hope!

Now, those that painted a bleak future for Africa are increasingly talking about 'AFRICA RISING'. This positive reality has emerged and is still potentially emerging largely due to the resolve to champion tolerant, accountable, democratic and inclusive social and economic development.

The role of Parliaments has been at the core of this achievement. Essentially, this rests with Parliaments' policy-making role.

### The Foundation of Public Policy

The foundation of public policy is composed of national constitutional laws and regulations. Strong public policies should solve problems efficiently and effectively, serve justice, support governmental institutions and encourage active citizenship.

Public policy is always a proposition to address a public issue by instituting laws, regulations, decisions or actions pertinent to the problem at hand. This central and critical role of policy-making to eliminating the causes of misery and enhancing opportunities for wellbeing requires new knowledge to confront new challenges now and in the future.

The international community is currently negotiating what is popularly called the Post-2015 Development Agenda or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs represent a framework that is

both inspirational and ambitious in tackling the root causes of poverty, exclusion, inequality and post-conflict and fragility. The SDGs will rely on sound public policies to deliver the intended outcomes. The Common Africa Position (CAP) and the fiftieth anniversary resolution – AGENDA 2063 of the Africa Union are remarkable regional governance initiatives.

However, they will remain meaningless unless they are consciously and purposefully domesticated in the respective national policies.

The energy crises in Ghana, also known as DUMSOR-DUMSOR, the burgeoning national debt, perverse corruption and threat of the Ebola viral disease (EVD); to mention a few, require public policy actions based on sound knowledge, experience and strategic thinking.

This brings us to the realm of the subject matter of EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY MAKING or also called EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING.

### Evidence-Informed Policy Making

The literature suggest that Evidence-Informed Policy Making was practiced from about the 15th century. It is public policy informed by rigorously established and objective evidence of what works and has desirable impact. It is an extension of evidence-based medicine to all areas of public policy.

This notion emphasizes use of scientifically rigorous studies. Another notion of Evidence-Based Policy Making emanates from the 1999 'Modernizing Government Paper' by the UK Government.

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## Parliamentary Knowledge-base, an Effective Resource for Evidence-Informed Policy Making

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It proposed to end the ideological led decision making for policy making. The paper set an agenda to 'produce policies that really deal with problems, which are forward-looking and shaped by evidence rather than a response to short-term pressures; that tackle causes NOT symptoms'.

Other notions place emphasis on constraints imposed by budgets and alternative choices in policy making. The Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative suggests that governments can reduce wasteful spending, expand innovative programmes and strengthen accountability through evidence-based policy making. The key components are:

- Programme assessment to determine effectiveness of public programmes.
- Budget development based on funding priorities
- Implementation oversight to ensure faithfulness to intended design
- Outcome monitoring – measuring and reporting outcome data against results
- Targeted evaluation that is rigorous.

### Parliamentary Knowledge-Base

Long tenure as MP and stability of parliamentary practice are solid Parliamentary knowledge-base. Ghana's Parliament still has individuals who have been MPs since 1993 consistently – having sustained parliamentary democracy since 1993. Surely, Parliament of Ghana can do a lot of introspection on how they have fared in the light of Evidence-informed Policy Making.

What challenges have been encountered by Parliament in its effort to aspire to the ideals of Evidence-Based Policy Making? Below is a recall of some policy initiatives for an individual evaluation of their evidence-base,

viewing them from conceptualization to implementation, and drawing up personal cost-benefit maps and matrices:

- The Single-Spine Pay Policy
- Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA)
- Now discarded One-Time Premium for the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)
- The Plant Breeders' Bill (PBB)
- New Regulations on Driving Licence
- Biofuels programme in Ghana

### Things to look out for

#### 1. Evidence versus propaganda:

Sometimes propaganda messages can become the basis for policy or programme interventions. This is common with humanitarian policies and interventions in Africa. Take for instance the view of Africa in 'DIRE NEED'. Bob Geldof and his team of BAND AID 30 is once again telling the most unsuspecting youth in Europe that in Africa people do not even know it is Christmas!

They appeal to Europeans that 'There's a world outside your window and it's a world of dread and fear!' How can EBOLA in just four of the 54 Africa countries make the entire continent one of 'DOOM'?

**2. Context and History can make a difference.** The idea of transplanting models for the simple reason that they have worked elsewhere is not always helpful. In fact context should even influence the framing of policy! Chinua Achebe says 'English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be new

English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings'.

In Germany, 'Don't put your head out on a moving train' is enough warning for compliance! In Italy, it has to be 'If you put your head out of a moving train, you will die' to ensure compliance! Unless history and context is taken into consideration in policy making and framing, there will always arise what I call 'Blaming the Victim'!

**3. Inaction:** Too much emphasis on evidence-informed decision making can lead to inaction and diffidence. Common sense is good sense in some matters requiring action! What further evidence do Ghanaian Policy-makers need to act on corruption when the manifestations are all over the place and biting the poor very hard and mercilessly?

**4. Whose evidence counts?** Evidence is not neutral all the time. They can be 'Hunters' tales' that ignore the evidence of the animals that were stalked. There is also sometimes the evidence based on the 'fallacy of economics' like GDP growth and single-digit inflation! These can lead to policy decisions that ignore the real plight of the poor and indigents.

**5. Autopsy report:** Policy response too late as a result of procrastination can be termed 'Autopsy Report'!

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## Parliamentary Knowledge-base, an Effective Resource for Evidence-Informed Policy Making

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One calls to mind the admissions now being made by the protagonists themselves of the earlier Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) on so-called Developing Countries. How can the harm and the disgraceful failings of those policies be undone now? Safe for the admonition that the 'memory of the dead is a warning to the living'!

### **6. Risk of one-size fits all**

**prescriptions:** Evidence-Based Policy Making has the tendency to have fixed prescriptions for all.

### **7. Risk of repudiating indigenous**

**knowledge:** Some framing of Evidence-Based Policy Making focus only on scientific knowledge.

This risks consciously or unconsciously repudiating 'native sense'! Marcus

Garvey spoke such wisdom years ago, when he said that 'a people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots'. Not all knowledge or evidence needs to fit the parochial conditions of scientific knowledge in its entirety.

### **8. Endless policy experimentation:**

Evidence-Based Policy Making risks being endless policy experimentation. Policy experimentation is good sometimes but over reliance can reduce emerging democracies to 'guinea-pigs of policy making'.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, it is worth noting that Evidence-Based Policy Making has already received much impetus from the glory of its proposition and the rigour of intellectual support.

However, it should not be taken hook, line and sinker in its application. Existing notions have to be unpacked and interpreted in local context. Moreover, the sense of urgency may necessitate short-term and provisional policy decision-making to save lives. Whatever policy choices we make need to be in full awareness and respect the common good at all times.



*Mr. Samuel Zan Akologo  
Executive Secretary, Dept. of Human Dev't.  
National Catholic Secretariat*

## VakaYiko Consortium at Implementation Phase of EIPM

**W**e are entering the second year of the VakaYiko project with much excitement – building capacities for the use of research evidence. Having spent a whole year planning, this year finds us in the implementation phase of the main activities of the project. And work continues in all project target countries.

In Zimbabwe, we have piloted the first module of the EIPM course that has been developed. The course focused on evidence as a concept, and outlined the main challenges and opportunities associated with handling the resource. The training was delivered to officials and researchers from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and

Economic Empowerment (MYIEE).

The training was facilitated by the Zimbabwean Evidence Informed Policy Network (ZeipNET), and feedback from participants was very positive. In year two, we will deliver the remaining modules of the course, combined with a series of activities that we hope will support participants' learning process.

Furthermore, ZeipNET held a policy dialogue in the previous year with the MYIEE which provided a platform for young people, policy-makers and social partners to exchange views on the youth economic empowerment situation in the country. The forum also identified barriers to economic participation for the youth, share experiences and good practices on

skills development and youth economic empowerment. These series of policy dialogues and knowledge cafes will continue bringing people together, and the upcoming event is a knowledge café that will explore evidence-informed policymaking, what it means and why it is important.

In Ghana, we have reached the final planning stage of the EIPM course to be delivered at the Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC). GINKS is closely working with CSTC and its trainers to make this happen. The course is scheduled to kick off on the 20th of April 2015 and we are looking forward to receiving participants from different ministries, including those from planning, monitoring and evaluation units.

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## VakaYiko Consortium at Implementation Phase of EIPM

The partnership between GINKS and CSTC is growing, and we are shaping a strong team for the implementation of the course. Moreover, year two will see the Parliament of Ghana getting involved in the EIPM field.

A familiarisation event was held with the leadership and staff of Parliament on 7th February 2015 and parliamentary staff will be invited to participate in the first trial of the EIPM course at CSTC – the objective of which is to expose them to EIPM issues.

In South Africa we are going through a fresh start of partnership with the Department of Environmental Affairs. Project partners Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), together with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) will be engaging the government department to improve upon its processes and systems, and to handle evidence more effectively.

We also completed the final list of winners for the VakaYiko Small Grants Scheme. These organisations received grants as part of the VakaYiko project to find innovative ways of encouraging the use of research evidence by policymakers, and have already taken off (see profile of grant winners in Box1).

We believe that year two will produce a lot of lessons learned from these different approaches – developing a course to be delivered to government ministries in Zimbabwe and embedded at a civil service training school in Ghana; promoting EIPM through policy dialogues and knowledge cafes in Zimbabwe; engaging government departments in South Africa to improve upon its processes and systems; building the capacity of Parliament to evaluate government policies based on evidence; and encouraging the use of research evidence by policymakers in other jurisdictions.

We are excited as a consortium to go forward into the implementation phase and are happy to share further lessons in the future. We are also working towards strengthening our own capacities in terms of monitoring and evaluation, communications, evidence use and pedagogical skills. We are going to continue working together to ensure we are learning from what we do, communicating it proactively and focusing on the content of the courses and the best methods to deliver it effectively.

Finally, I want to take the opportunity to thank Alex Ademokun, former Director of the VakaYiko consortium for putting so much effort and energy during the planification and first year of this project. We wish him all the best in his new role at the Department for International Development (DFID). As for my role, I am really looking forward to taking the consortium to its next level. I am sure that with the support of all our partners we will do so successfully.

**Clara Richards**  
 Acting Director, VakaYiko Consortium

## Profile of VakaYiko Small Grant Winners

**African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS):** is an international think tank which works to strengthen the capacity of African countries and institutions to harness science, technology, and innovation for sustainable development. The Kenya Climate Science, Technology and Policy Roundtable is a project of ACTS to bridge the gap between research and policy making in climate change in Kenya. The project aims to provide effective mechanisms for facilitating the use of research evidence in climate change legislation.

**Ateneo de Manila University:** is a private university in the Philippines which seeks to contribute to social development through research and community outreach programmes. The project led by the university's Department of Political Science aims to address the gap in the Philippines between evidence and policy making at the sub-national level of government; the gap between the Department of Education and local policy makers; and the gap between the local executive and local legislative body. Six capacity building modules for local school board representatives and local council members will be developed in consultation with education and policy experts. These will be implemented in two provinces – one in Luzon and one in Visayas.

**Center for Public Policy Alternatives (CPPA):** is an independent public policy think tank based in Nigeria. **INFODATA-LIT-LG – Improving information literacy for urban service planning and delivery at local government level in Nigeria** is one of their projects that aims to develop the capacity of policy makers to use research information at the local government level in Lagos through the targeting of the city's service delivery units. CPPA seeks to first carry out needs assessment interviews to identify the challenges for urban service delivery by local government in Lagos, secondly develop an information literacy curriculum and data collection framework for service agencies, thirdly deliver training for service agencies, and lastly roll out the training programme and framework in other local government areas in Lagos.

**Jimma University:** is a public university in Ethiopia known for its public health training and emphasis on community-based education. The team from the university's College of Public Health and Medical Sciences are working to develop the capacity of policy makers in the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health to effectively use research evidence in decision making. The project's key objectives are to train health ministers to access and critically appraise research evidence, and to establish broader links between health ministers, think tanks, and researchers in Ethiopia.

**Politics & Ideas (P&I):** is a joint initiative of researchers and professionals to co-produce and share knowledge on the link between ideas and policy in developing countries. The project seeks to enhance the capacity of Latin American policymakers to promote the use of evidence in policymaking. A six-week online course combining theoretical modules with practical exercises is being developed by P&I in order to: i) develop participants' abilities to identify, generate, and use information within the framework of their organisations; ii) promote knowledge among peers through the exchange of experience and practice related to information use; and iii) generate relevant and useful knowledge to contribute to the use of information in the public sector.

## DFID on BCURE at Sensitization Meeting with Parliament

**T**aking decisions based on evidence may seem obvious, but it's not always done. In the UK, evidence-based decision making has been in the public discourse for a number of years, rising to particular prominence in the 1990s. This approach has been mainstreamed into the UK Government's process and is being enthusiastically pursued, as shown by the announcement in March 2013 of "[new world leading evidence centres to drive better decisions across £200bn of public services](#)".

Outside of the UK, the importance of undertaking research is also recognised. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has commissioned significant amounts of high-quality research in recent years on a wide range of development issues. In the past DFID has focused on supplying and promoting this research, with less of an emphasis on ensuring that there is a corresponding demand for evidence use by practitioners. Therefore, outputs from this research have not always translated into impacts at the policy and programme level.

Emerging evidence suggests that there are significant gaps in the capacity of decision makers in low and middle income countries to use research effectively, which is hampering the use of evidence in practice. Effective use of research and evidence can play a crucial role in making more successful policy decisions. As a result, and in recognition of these capacity gaps, DFID is funding a programme of work to build the skills, knowledge and systems that will allow policy makers and practitioners in low and middle income countries to access, appraise and use rigorous evidence. The Building Capacity for the Use of Research Evidence (BCURE)

programme is a £13 million three-year programme aimed at increasing the ability of policy makers, practitioners and research intermediaries in developing countries to use research evidence for decision-making. It is made up of five strategically linked programmes spanning a variety of sectors and working across 12 low and middle income countries.

The overall goal of the BCURE programme is for "policy and practice to be informed by research evidence" in the hope that this will lead to poverty reduction and improved quality of life for some of the world's poorest people. The programme works through a consortium of organisations who focus on building capacity to make evidence informed decisions. Examples include:

- Focusing on the high level decision making process to improve evidence use by Cabinet Ministers.
- Using innovative online training methods to improve the skills of individuals to make evidence informed decisions.
- Developing a toolkit which enables civil servants to take a strategic overview of the evidence base.
- Establishing open policy dialogues between senior civil servants to promote the use of evidence in decision making.
- Development of the African Evidence Network – a sustainable and engaging community for policy makers and practitioners to discuss and share lessons on evidence use.

BCURE is being delivered with a specific focus on building the capacity of locally based organisations in the low and middle income countries where projects are operating.

Each BCURE project has a primary

provider, who will oversee the development of organisational systems and incentives and the skills of individuals in key decision making institutions which are central to policy and practice in that country.

The Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS) is the lead agency for this initiative in Ghana. This focus on strengthening the environment for the use and demand for evidence informed policy and decision making is timely. It very much aligns with other initiatives to improve the supply – both quantity and quality – of information and statistics, to strengthen capacity, at different levels (Media, citizens, public servants, parliamentarians) to use and understand the information, and to strengthen the delivery and accountability environment within government in which Parliament plays a fundamental role.

One such initiative is the Joint Agenda for Strengthening Monitoring & Evaluation and Statistics, led by the National Development Planning Commission and the Ghana Statistical Service with support from Development Partners.

This was developed to address weaknesses and issues in M&E and statistics in Ghana with a view to improve evidence-based decision making and accountability and transparency in public sector governance. The JASMES builds on the existing institutions and framework for M&E and statistics in Ghana. It recognizes the existing strengths and attempts to address the weaknesses, while mitigating the threats and making the most of opportunities. It is based around four pillars – each reflecting a characteristic considered fundamental to a successful M&E and statistical system:

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## DFID on B-CURE at Sensitization Meeting with Parliament

Intensive *utilization* of the M&E information in one or more stages of the policy cycle

- Information that meets standards for *data quality and evaluation reliability*;

- Sustainability, by which the system is institutionalized and will survive a change in administration, government ministers, or top officials

- Underpinning all these characteristics is *leadership* – the importance of top level commitment to M&E and statistics, to the use of information and to ensuring a sustainable system.

This initiative talked about here today clearly links to a number of these areas – use, sustainability and perhaps most importantly, leadership.

All these initiatives – building the capacity of Ghana's Parliament to use and present evidence, strengthening accountability and challenge, ensuring decisions are made based on evidence – can add up to much more than the mere sum of their individual parts and thereby, in combination, make a real difference to the lives of Ghanaians.



**Lynne Hendersen**  
*Country Donor Statistician (Ghana)*  
*Statistics for Results Facility*  
*Department for International Development*

## Photos at Sensitization Meeting with Parliament





## Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Venue
Northern ICT4D Series	March, 2015	Tamale, Ghana
ICT & Health Forum for Nurses in Accra	March, 2015	Accra
Peer-Review Exercise for EIPM Trainers	April, 2015	CSTC, Accra
First Trial of EIPM Course	April, 2015	CSTC, Accra
ICT in Education: ICT Quiz Competition for Junior High Students	April 2015	Accra
ICT in Education: ICT Practical Project Competition for JHS Students	May 2015	Accra

### About iConnect Ghana Newsletter

iConnect Ghana is an online, offline and email service knowledge vehicle that seeks to bring together developments in the areas of ICT4D and Evidence Informed Policy Making (EIPM) for enhancing development. It is a joint initiative of GINKS, IICD and VakaYiko.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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### ABOUT GINKS

GINKS is a network of individuals and organizations sharing information and knowledge that influences EIPM and puts ICT resources for public good.

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