

iConnect Ghana Newsletter

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Feature Story



Reviewing Parliament's Information Support System

Having trialed VakaYiko's Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM) course for Civil Servants at the Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC) earlier this year in Accra, information support staff at the ...

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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 policy makers 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

Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) refers to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) 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

It's an exciting time, and GINKS is happy to share with our audience developments within the fields of Evidence for Development and ICT for Development (ICT4D).

We begin with an article from Kirchuffs Atengble (GINKS) and Emily Hayter (INASP) who share some knowledge from a review exercise that was carried out at the Parliament of Ghana. It presents an overview of VakaYiko training in EIPM, a discussion of capacity gaps identified by the review exercise and the rationale for training of Parliamentary staff.

David Fleming from ITAD (Information Training and Agricultural Development) shares some experiences from the second annual roundtable meeting of the Africa Cabinet Government Network (ACGN). In his article, David discusses five thoughts which have helped shape his understanding of the inner workings of the Africa Cabinet Decision-making (ACD) programme.

In Zimbabwe, our VakaYiko partners Gilchriste Ndongwe and Ronald Munatsi are collaborating with the Public Affairs Section of the United States (US) Embassy to host a knowledge café on "Evidence Informed Policymaking in Zimbabwe: Challenges, Successes and Opportunities". Aggregated knowledge from this event will be presented in the next issue of iConnect Ghana.

In the area of ICT4D, a report from Ghanaweb.com discusses statements made by the First Deputy Speaker of Parliament and Member of Parliament for Cape Coast North Constituency, Ebo Barton Odro, that ICT must be a basic necessity in education. Also Aliyah Bayali from Ghana's Information Services Department (ISD) reports on the completion of a policy document on ICT by Ghana's Education Ministry.

Finally, Karimatu Anas, also from ISD, discusses the opening ceremony of the regional symposium held in Accra and organized by FIRST (Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams) and AfricaCERT.

Thank you for your time spent reading this issue of iConnect Ghana. We hope to have the feedback from you on the articles, and to our contributors we say thank you as always for sharing your resources with us.

Thank you.
 The Editorial Team

Reviewing Parliament's Information Support System

Having trialed VakaYiko's Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM) course for Civil Servants at the Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC) earlier this year in Accra, information support staff at the Parliamentary Service of Ghana was next on the radar of project administrators. A review exercise was conducted to gain insight into the information support system prevalent at the Legislature. These are presented in this piece, but it also includes an overview of VakaYiko training and the rationale for EIPM training in Parliament.

VakaYiko Training in EIPM

The VakaYiko EIPM Course is aimed at mid-level civil servants involved in accessing, synthesizing and communicating evidence to policymakers in resource-constrained settings. This includes researchers, policy analysts, library and ICT staff, and others. The course aims to provide participants with an overview of evidence informed policymaking as well as practical skills in finding, assessing and communicating research. It is strongly grounded in participants' own experience in their workplaces and includes an Action Plan component where participants design interventions appropriate for their contexts which they will implement after the course.

Capacity Gaps in Parliament's Information Support System

A number of challenges were identified in the legislature information support system, including:

- there are inadequate information support staff within departments such as Research, Library, ICT, Hansard and Committees (for example, the Review found that Research Department outputs were rated at an average of 60% for

quality, and there were some technical areas where the Department could not provide support)

- available staff have limited capacities to adequately communicate information to support legislative work
- very limited resources, particularly (electronic) library resources are available to support information supply to Parliamentarians
- there is a parallel structure (formal and informal) for providing information support to legislators, a situation which could pose problems for developing adequate quality assurance mechanisms for information managing

A full Needs Assessment questionnaire has been developed in order to provide further insights about these capacity gaps.

Rationale for EIPM Training in Parliament

Evidence-informed policymaking is a current national priority in Ghana as indicated in the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda II. The Parliament Review further confirmed that training in EIPM for staff of the Parliament of Ghana follows the strategic direction of the Parliamentary Service. The importance of capacity building for the Parliamentary Service has been recognized for some time, and plans are underway to expand such opportunities through establishment of a Parliamentary Training Institute in future. The VakaYiko EIPM training therefore comes at a time when both the use of evidence in policymaking, and the need for capacity building in the Parliamentary Service have been clearly established in Ghana.

More specifically, training in evidence informed policy making can address issues in Parliament's information support system in the following ways:

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- Reflection and discussion on the importance of the use of evidence in policymaking in the Ghanaian context, grounded in participants' own experience
- Strengthening staff capacity to identify and access appropriate sources of information on a wide range of technical subjects, including those they are not personally familiar with
- Providing information about the wide range of free and discounted sources of research as well as electronic library resources available in Ghana
- Enhancing capacity to effectively communicate information in a variety of formats to stakeholders involved in

legislative work

- Supporting participants to develop practical Action Plans to address organisational and other challenges affecting the way evidence is used in the Parliament of Ghana
- Providing an opportunity for the key departments involved in the supply of evidence to collaboratively discuss their role and engage in peer learning

Work is progressing steadily, and the first training for identified staff in the Parliamentary service will take place in January 2016.

The support of the Clerk of Parliament Mr.

Emmanuel K. Anyimadu is acknowledged for facilitating this strand of VakaYiko's work with the legislature, as well as Mr. Robert A. Apodolla, Alhaji Ibrahim Abdulai Gombila, Mr. Acquah, Mr. Mohammed Hardi Nyagsi (all of the Parliamentary Service), and staff of the Research Department for all forms of support.

Compiled by:

Kirchuffs Atengble, Project Coordinator - VakaYiko, GINKS, Ghana

Emily Hayter, Project Manager - EIPM, INASP, UK

Improving Evidence Use in Government Decision-Making

David Fleming from ITAD gives his thoughts on evidence use by governments from a case study in fragile/conflict-affected environments.

I recently attended the second annual roundtable meeting of the Africa Cabinet Government Network (ACGN) in Accra. The Network brings together Cabinet Secretaries and secretariat staff across twelve African governments to share knowledge, experiences and lessons in using evidence in Cabinet decision-making, and to sow the seeds for continued dialogue beyond the annual meetings.

The work of the ACGN forms part of the three-year Africa Cabinet Decision-making (ACD) programme, delivered by Adam Smith International and funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) under its Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) programme. The BCURE programme is funding five very different

capacity building approaches to increasing the demand for and use of evidence in government decision-making, including the ACD programme with its focus on engaging with Cabinet secretariats in three fragile/conflict-affected contexts: Sierra Leone, Liberia and South Sudan. In tackling some of the major impediments to accessing, appraising and applying research and other evidence – including, reinforcing Cabinet procedures to enable more effective access, building capacities within the secretariat and line ministries to strengthen evidence literacy, and boosting motivation and the demand for evidence use amongst Ministers – the ACD programme aims to increase the use of evidence in Cabinet decision-making and strengthen the role of the Cabinet secretariat in supporting change.

I am part of an ITAD team that is evaluating the BCURE programme to assess how each individual project is contributing to the promotion of evidence use. We are also researching more broadly how and why different approaches to

capacity building for evidence-informed policy making work. Although we are only just beginning the first round of data collection and analysis, we have started to develop a number of theories around what factors support or constrain a culture of working in an evidence-informed way. This has been informed, in particular, by a multi-disciplinary review of the existing evidence base led by my colleague Mel Panton.

I won't steal Mel's thunder – the evidence review will be published soon and makes for a really interesting read! – but here are five thoughts emerging from my discussions in Accra and based on Mel's work, which have helped to shape my understanding of the inner workings of the ACD programme.

1. Working in institutionally fragile contexts such as Liberia, South Sudan and Sierra Leone requires a slow and incremental approach to changing how evidence is understood and used.

It is important to recognise that an important first step in such contexts is to increase the use of evidence in its

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broadest sense, i.e. not just rigorous scientific evidence but also more anecdotal evidence, personal testimony and practical wisdom. Once greater demand for evidence has been created, the next challenge will be to improve the quality of that evidence and increase levels of understanding around what constitutes relevant and appropriate evidence in a particular policy context.

2. The ACD programme's approach to organisational-level change supports the theory that tools and processes can both facilitate and reinforce staff to adopt evidence-informed behaviours.

Through a combination of both top-down decree for strict adherence to new formats, and a training and mentoring approach that facilitates staff to discover for themselves how using evidence can make a difference to their own work (and improve the likelihood of their policy proposal getting through Cabinet), the programme aims to gradually build a collective interest in and understanding of working in a more evidence-informed way.

3. Another important factor in building an organisational culture of evidence within a resource-constrained environment is transformational leadership.

I encountered several good examples in Accra of powerful and proactive leaders, whose commitment to evidence-informed policy making, combined with close personal ties to the President and an ability to build effective relationships, appears to be an important driver of change in staff behaviours and attitudes towards the use of evidence in policy

formulation.

4. The programme's approach to embedding training within the broader process of procedural-level change supports the theory that social learning is an important factor in helping to establish an organisational culture that values evidence.

The primary focus of the ACD programme so far has been to gradually strengthen the systems and processes that support evidence-informed policy development across the three countries.

However, to help embed a culture of evidence within government, it is also carrying out different approaches to training and mentoring staff in accessing, appraising and applying evidence. One particularly successful example was a recent workshop bringing together policy analysts from across the continent, which was designed around the principle of participatory and peer-to-peer learning, and fostering a collective approach to valuing the role of evidence in policy proposals.

The fact that the workshop has since been cited repeatedly by participants in the context of championing the work of the programme is testament to the power of social learning as a means of building both individual and collective support for change.

5. The role of networks and peer-to-peer learning can be seen as a critical factor in driving programme sustainability.

Whilst a sustainable training approach embedded within the national civil service training programme, combined with well-

established operational procedures, are clearly essential components to building sustainability, the strength and uniqueness of the ACD programme approach, and the core of its sustainability, arguably lie in its development of networks of peer support and exchange, such as the ACGN.

In the context of fragility, in particular, where the strength of institutions often does not extend far beyond its individuals, the fundamental role of networks in building a critical mass of individuals supportive of broader organisational change becomes even sharper.

Author: David Fleming, ITAD

Originally at:

<http://www.itad.com/improving-evidence-use/>

Lessons from VakaYiko Consortium Meeting in Accra



Partners at group discussion at the meeting
 Photo Credit, Joseph (joetigo@gmail.com)

From 28-30 July 2015, 14 participants from the five organizations involved in the consortium met in Accra to:

- Strengthen relationships amongst all partners
- Reflect and learn about work carried out so far
- Re-think future work as the project approaches its third year.

Vaka is Shona (Southern Africa) for 'build' and Yiko is Dagbani (Ghana) for capacity, which illustrates the main African regions where the consortium works.

Started in 2013, the VakaYiko Consortium is a three-year project working in Ghana, South Africa and Zimbabwe to build the capacity of policy makers to access, evaluate and use evidence in policy making.



Dr. Godfred Frimpong of STEPRI doing presentation
 Photo Credit, Joseph (joetigo@gmail.com)

The consortium is led by INASP's Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM) team and involves five organizations: Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS), Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Making Network (ZeipNET), the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and INASP.

The annual meeting provides the opportunity for consortium members to share experiences and identify lessons learned as they approach the third year of the project. In addition, participants spent an afternoon visiting the Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC) in Accra, Ghana.



Partners undertaken task at the meeting
 Photo Credit, Joseph (joetigo@gmail.com)

VakaYiko Director, Clara Richards, shares her expectation prior to the consortium meeting, she said: "I am really looking forward to sharing these three days with our partners.

It is such a great chance to reflect and learn from our work so far as we get ourselves ready for an exciting and challenging third year working together".
[Read Clara's blog about the event here.](#)

Consortium partners share their views and

experience about evidence informed policy making in video interviews.

[Click here to watch the interview video series](#)

The Event was broadcast live on social media such as Twitter with the hashtag #Vy2015.



Group presentation session
 Photo Credit, Joseph (joetigo@gmail.com)



John Stephen Agbenyo doing presentation
 Photo Credit, Joseph (joetigo@gmail.com)



Some partners in a cheerful group photo
 Photo Credit, Louise

ICT must be a basic necessity in education – Barton Odro



MP for Cape Coast North, Barton Odro

Mr Ebo Barton Odro, First Deputy Speaker of Parliament and Member of Parliament for Cape Coast North Constituency on Monday stated that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) must be a basic necessity for all pupils at the basic school level in the country.

He said education has gradually moved from the period of limiting teaching and learning to the classroom alone to a stage of ICT and internet connectivity and pupils at the basic school level should not be deprived of such an opportunity.

Mr Odro said this at a short ceremony to commission a modern ICT Centre at Pedu

and Efutu basic schools in the Cape Coast North Constituency, in a bid to win the hearts and minds of pupils towards developing their interest in the study of science at the basic school level.

The ICT Centre is expected to benefit school pupils at the Pedu cluster of schools and the Efutu MA basic school in the constituency.

The 13-seater and 20-seater ICT Centres at Pedu cluster of schools and the Efutu M.A basic school respectively are also fully connected to the internet. Mr Odro said with the establishment of the ICT Centres, students would get the opportunity to acquire scientific knowledge, practical process skills and attitudes through hands on activities and experimentation.

This, he believed, would go a long way to improve students and pupils knowledge of science and ICT subjects significantly in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Mr Odro advised teachers to upgrade their skills in ICT to be able to ensure that the pupils benefit effectively from the Centres, and urged parents and all stakeholders to ensure effective maintenance and sustenance of

the facilities. He advised the pupils to desist from using technology to engage in vices like cybercrime ('sakawa') and watching pornographic materials, but rather use it for their academic advancement.

Ms. Florence Inkoom, Metropolitan Director of the Ghana Education Service (GES) expressed her gratitude to the MP for his contribution to complement the efforts of GES towards the development and improvement in the quality of education in the constituency.

She indicated that the science resource Centre would help the Ghana Education Service to achieve its objective of raising a new generation of students with strong foundation in science and technology and a strong ability for creative thinking.

Shalom Attom, a pupil at Efutu M/A Basic School expressed joy as he and other school mates had to previously trek to Asapatu, a nearby community to pay GH 40p to have practical ICT lessons.

Originally posted on: [ghanaweb.com](http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/ICT-must-be-a-basic-necessity-in-education-Barton-Odro-372631)
<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/ICT-must-be-a-basic-necessity-in-education-Barton-Odro-372631>

Education Ministry Finalizes work on ICT in Education Policy

A workshop to finalize the policy document on Information Communication Technology (ICT) has been held in Accra.

The workshop aimed to produce a workable policy document that could serve as a framework or building block for integrating ICT in education in Ghana, promote improvement in education service delivery and create a generation

of computer literate workforce and entrepreneurs to compete globally.

The one-day workshop also sought to prepare the ground for bridging the gap between policy and current actual practices in ICT in Education and to address critical issues of access, equality and quality in Education as well as governance, sustainability, funding and

risk management issues, among others. It was organized by the Ministry of Education (MoE).

In an address delivered on his behalf at the opening of the workshop, the Minister for Education, Prof. Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, said ICT could be used to facilitate teaching and learning, and improve living conditions,

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info@ginks.org

Education Ministry Finalizes work on ICT in Education Policy

adding that countries had transformed their education systems and fortunes through ICT in education and that Ghana could not afford to, and should not, be left out of the huge benefits that ICT offered in the 21st century.

Prof. Opoku-Agyemang said when ICT policy in education was implemented, it would go a long way to address the unemployment challenge among the youth. She said ICT was a career path option and that Ghana should not continuously depend on software applications developed by foreign

countries.

She disclosed that as part of the Ministry's efforts to ensure that ICT policy was responsive to the changing times and circumstances, the Education Ministry organized two workshops and technical meetings to look at governance issues, the learning environment, infrastructure and technical support, partner organizations and other critical issues that could affect the implementation of the policy.

The five-chapter policy document explains why ICT was an important part of modern

society and the role it plays in the education sector. The policy also seeks to underpin the vision and mission of MoE, with a view to identifying how the sector could use ICT to develop the requisite human resource for the country and meet the demand of the labour market, locally and internationally.

Source: ISD (Aliyah Bayali)

<http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/media-center/news/2091-education-ministry-finalizes-work-on-ict-in-education-policy>

Ghana to Put In Place A Cyber Security Framework

The Deputy Minister for Communications, Mr. Ato Sarpong, has noted that government was working hard to put in place a national framework to guide the country in dealing with incidents of cyber security.

According to him, in July this year, a validation workshop for the draft of the cyber security policy and strategy was held to prepare a document for government to approve for implementation.

The Deputy Minister, who was speaking at the opening ceremony of the FIRST and AfricaCERT regional symposium held in Accra, said that Ghana was keen on developing its cyber security community and ecosystem.

The event was co-hosted by the Ministry of Communications and AfricaCERT.

Mr. Sarpong said in order to provide a lasting solution to the whole continent, Africa must learn to work together, adding that more cooperative efforts were needed between governments, security agencies, IT professionals, public sector, private sector to align laws, capacity building and policies.

"The AU convention on cyber security and cybercrime seeks to speed up the member nations' ability to fight against the cyber menace and to promote regional cooperation in the fight against cyber security and maintaining safe cyber space," he said.

Mr. Koichiro Komiyama, a representative of FIRST, said the symposium was the first ever organized by FIRST in Africa Region.

According to him, the symposium would bring on board high-profile speakers in the internet and its security world to address

issues relating to security in cyberspace with focus on Africa. It would again provide the platform for member teams to share information about vulnerabilities, and all others issues that affect the operation of incident response and security teams.

Source: ISD (Karimatu Anas)

<http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/media-center/news/1992-gov-t-to-put-in-place-a-cyber-security-framework>

Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Venue
Second Batch of EIPM Training for Civil Servants	26 Oct - 6 Nov. 2015	CSTC, Accra
EIPM Policy Dialogue: public event	3 December 2015	Ho, Ghana
First Batch of EIPM Training for Parliamentary staff	11 Jan. - 20 Jan. 2016	Accra
Third Batch of EIPM Training for Civil Servants	March/ April 2016	CSTC, Accra
Second Batch of EIPM Training for Parliamentary staff	May - July 2016	Accra
Fourth Batch of EIPM Training for Civil Servants	June/ July 2016	CSTC, 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 Vaka Yiko.

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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