

# iConnect Ghana Newsletter

• ICTs for Development

• Research Evidence for Development

Feature Story



## VakaYiko - Supporting Evidence in Decision Making

The VakaYiko Consortium is a group of five organisations, led by INASP, that work to improve the use of evidence in policy decision making processes. The consortium works primarily in Ghana, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

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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 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 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

## EDITORIAL

After a break in the production of iConnect Ghana, the newsletter has resurfaced with a wider coverage. The expansion reflects the operations of GINKS, as we seek to increase our influence in the development spheres of the country.

This issue therefore covers two (2) broad areas; Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D), and Research Evidence for Development.

Concerning the use of Research Evidence for Development, Dr. Alex Ademokun (EIPM Programme Manager at INASP) discusses progress made on the VakaYiko Consortium's project that is aimed at building capacity in three (3) Sub-Saharan countries –Ghana, South Africa and Zimbabwe to satisfy research uptake needs in policymaking. VakaYiko country partners (GINKS and ZEIPNET) also present project updates from the respective countries.

Dr. Rasheed Draman sums this section up with an article on information needs of parliament, and the need for legislative research.

In the area of ICT4D, an update on a Savana Signatures project dubbed “All Voices Matter, Speak up” was presented as typical in the use of mobile technology for social inclusive governance (MSIG).

Another piece in this issue explores common themes from a forum organized by GINKS on the use of Social Network Platforms for security and privacy considerations.

It is believed that our readers will be informed by the components of this issue, while following developments in these broad areas. We suggest therefore that you drop us a feedback after reading through, and we will appreciatively consider your feedbacks.

**Kirchuffs Atengble,**  
 On behalf of,  
 The Editorial Team

## VakaYiko-Supporting Evidence in Decision Making



Vaka is Shona  
 (Southern Africa) for  
 build' and Yiko is  
 Dagbani (Ghana) for

capacity which illustrates the main regions where the consortium works.

The consortium, made up of GINKS (Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing, Ghana), INASP (International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications, UK), ODI (Overseas Development Institute, UK), ZEIPNET (Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Making Network) and HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa) was set up in 2013 to build upon the experience of the five member organisations in capacity building. Each organisation had up to that point engaged with policy makers, parliaments, national and local government departments to build capacity for research use. From our collective experience we highlighted three main challenges to systematic use of research in policy making. The challenges we identified are:

- The capacity of individuals in government departments to access and use research evidence
- Strengthening processes for sourcing and handling evidence in government departments
- Supporting a wider enabling environment of engaged citizens, media and civil society to demand the use of evidence in policy making

These issues are complex and dependent on other factors beyond the control of the consortium; however VakaYiko is working with like-minded organisations, government departments and parliaments to address one main theme in each country.

### The story so far...

The consortium has been working together for nine months and it has been a period of learning and collaboration. We just finished our second annual meeting where we had the opportunity to look back on the last period and plan for the next few months.

In Ghana, GINKS and INASP are working with the Civil Service Training Centre to develop and pilot courses in skills for evidence informed policy making. We are at an exciting time, putting the content together and working with CSTC to ensure the content is useful and relevant to the civil service of Ghana. The consortium is not just about developing the content; VakaYiko will work with CSTC on pedagogy and delivery of the content as well.

In Zimbabwe, ZEIPNET have agreed to work with the research departments of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the Parliament of Zimbabwe. ZEIPNET will start a series of policy dialogues and knowledge cafes to look at the evidence base around major policy issues. These dialogues and cafes will bring together citizens, the media, policy makers and academics in spaces of open and frank dialogue. This is part of the approach to support the wider enabling environment for research use in policy making.

In South Africa, HSRC and ODI are starting a process to map how government departments systematically use evidence to inform policy design and implementation. This will inform how the project in South Africa is shaped in the coming months and will allow VakaYiko to work with existing policy processes instead of trying to start from scratch.

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## Research Evidence In Ghana

### *VakaYiko: an exciting engagement*

**E**stablished with a vision of a network of individuals and organizations sharing information and knowledge that puts information and communication technology (ICT) resources within the reach of all, GINKS has expanded its frontiers to include projects in evidence informed policy making (EIPM). The team therefore brings on board experience from prior projects implemented in the research uptake field, particularly involving Senior Research Scientists from all 13 Institutes of the CSIR (Ghana); elected assembly women in Northern Ghana; Civil Society Organizations in the Upper East Region of Ghana; and Journalists in the Northern Region of Ghana. From this depth of experience, GINKS seeks to establish itself as the “point of call” in the area of evidence informed policy making in Ghana.

As a member of the consortium, GINKS (Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing) has been responsible for implementing evidence informed policy making activities in Ghana.

Specifically, GINKS will be working with in-country stakeholders to institute a course in evidence informed policy making skills at the Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC). Later on in the programme, we will adapt the programme to deliver training at the information and research units of the parliament of Ghana. Ultimately, the programme seeks to leave a legacy of “better formulated and implemented policies and processes as a result of increased evaluation, scrutiny and use of research evidence”.

#### Achievements

As we come to the end of the first 9 months of the programme, GINKS can boast of successfully implementing critical milestones in the path to achieving the programme objectives. These successes have not been achieved alone, but in close collaboration with INASP and in-country partners (CSTC and OHSC). Among these include the following;

1. The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Civil

Service Training Centre (CSTC);

2. Implementing a course review exercise to ascertain the extent to which courses offered by CSTC reflects EIPM; and
3. The commencement of EIPM course development processes.

GINKS is currently at the stage of short-listing CSTC trainers to be involved in a Training of Trainers (ToT) exercise in order to equip them with relevant skills for delivering the EIPM course.

#### Conclusion

Altogether, it has been an exciting experience implementing VakaYiko in Ghana. An engagement that started with series of consultations has received the necessary support and buy-in. Going forward, we will continue to work closely with our partners to help deliver better formulated and implemented policies for Ghana and Ghanaians.

## VakaYiko: Supporting Evidence in Decision Making

### *Cont. from page 2*

#### Looking forward...

In the next few months VakaYiko will support projects beyond the three main countries by working with other organisations hoping to build capacity for research use in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This is a very exciting project for the consortium and will allow us to learn from a wide range of other organisations and share our resources and experience more widely.

In Ghana we will pilot the first two modules in our course, and should develop a full programme that responds to the needs of civil service of Ghana. In Zimbabwe we will develop a mentorship programme with the key research departments we are working with and continue to stimulate interest in the public debate on evidence use in policy making through our policy dialogues and knowledge cafes. In South Africa, we will begin work with a government department to map and

strengthen institutional use of evidence. These activities promise an exciting year ahead for the consortium. We will continue to keep you updated of our work but if you need to contact us please use the details below.

<http://www.inasp.info/en/work/vakayiko/>

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## Research Evidence In Zimbabwe

**Z**imbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network (**ZeipNet**) is part of the VakaYiko consortium. For the sustainable implementation of this project, ZeipNet has signed MoUs with the Parliament of Zimbabwe and Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment.

The programme's objective is to build capacity for the use of research evidence (B-CURE) among Ministries and Parliament of Zimbabwe to provide relevant information to policy makers. It aims to do this by building the skills of researchers, research intermediaries and communicators so that they can effectively access, evaluate, package and communicate research to support the policy-making process.

The other strand of the project aims to increase the uptake of research evidence in policy making and to also promote stakeholder and public engagement in the policy making process. This will take the form of policy dialogues and/or knowledge cafes. Topics with a bearing on gender policy issues will be collaboratively identified and ZeipNet will support the holding of the policy dialogues where relevant stakeholders and members of the public will be invited to make deliberations. Expert advice, policy options and recommendations will then be captured and documented.

### Mentorship Programme (EIPM Champions)

In order to promote sustainability of the project, individual participants of the

capacity building programme will be identified for mentorship so as to sustain the programme after the withdrawal of VakaYiko.



Pictures from consortium meeting in Harare

## Parliamentary Information needs and the need for Legislative Research

**M**ore than two decades ago, Frantzich (as cited in Miller et al. 2004) noted that Legislators need information that is complete, accurate, timely, relevant and often confidential, to perform their representative, legislative and oversight functions. This assertion is true for the US Congress as it is for emerging parliaments of developing countries.

In developing country parliaments such as those in Africa, the need for complete, accurate, timely and relevant information is even more important today, when citizens expect more from their parliaments in terms of its oversight role. It is not possible to conduct oversight and check government excesses without relevant and timely information.

In these countries, it is generally believed that the democratic process is predominantly dominated by the Executive, and Parliaments are usually viewed as 'appendages' of the Executive, with very little resources of their own, thus, making the need for parliamentary

information probably even greater. In these Parliaments, there is a huge 'information asymmetry' and what has often been described as 'Executive Monopoly' of information.

Against this background, parliaments need free (of government influence) and reliable information to understand government choices, decisions and policies; to assess whether they are valuable or not and, if not, to criticize them and propose policy alternatives.

Not surprisingly, legislatures' inability to keep governments accountable for their actions often reflects their lack of independent information or the inability of parliamentarians to process available information. If the only information available is provided by the government, or if the legislature is unable to understand the available information, then the legislature cannot question in any substantive way the content of government choices, decisions and actions.

### Categorizing Parliaments and their Information Needs

Reflecting on the challenge of lack of information and drawing on earlier work by Nelson Polsby, Miko and Robinson (as cited in Miller et al. 2004) developed a typology of Parliaments linking their information needs to their functional levels. They argued that the desired level of parliamentary functioning will have an important bearing on the need for information and research. Categorizing Parliaments into four, they note that:

**The rubber stamp legislature:** Will have little need for information other than the time and place to vote.

**The emerging legislature:** Needs information in order to participate effectively in the legislative process; here, a parliamentary library is established, with reference materials, a research service may be created and permanent staff provided for parliamentary committees.

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## Social Media Platforms for Security & Privacy Considerations

**T**he GINKS ICT4D forum was organized on the topic, **Social Network Platforms for Security and Privacy Considerations.**

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsup, to mention but a few, offer opportunity for users of common interest to connect and share information or ideas.

Facilitating the session, Mr. Kennedy Kubuga, Country Capacity Support Officer of IICD in Ghana, asked the participants if they have used any social media platform before. He continued to say that he was impressed to see the many hands of participants who have used some of the social media. He asked again if any one of them considered the portion about the terms and conditions of the platform that requested them to agree or disagree.

Only a few could remember that part. He then went on to say, that, when people sign on to social media platforms, they hardly read through some of these conditions which most of the time tell you that the

service provider will not be responsible for any mishap that may arise due to information that you will post or share on your time line. But most people just agree or click yes or accept without even looking at what is written and for that matter what they agree to.

He further stated that, online postings are like making a report of one's self to the general public which could be read positively or negatively depending on individual interpretation. He said, mobile phones have now become a means of identification, exposure on location etc especially with the new application on some phones called Trucaller.

Once a person's contact details is entered into any of these social media platforms, Trucaller can be used to provide the name of a person when the phone number is dialed. Though this makes identification very easy, it has also increased the vulnerability of people. There were a few people in the group who testified about their experience

with this application and how they were amazed at the information they got about themselves.

Mr. Kubuga also stated that some pictures that people upload onto their accounts can be downloaded by others and used for various purposes. He therefore advised the participants to be cautious of themselves and the kind of information they put out on social media platforms. He said all information posted on these various social networks can be found online. For this reason, one can just Google a person's name and every information the person may have put out in any social media platform can be retrieved.

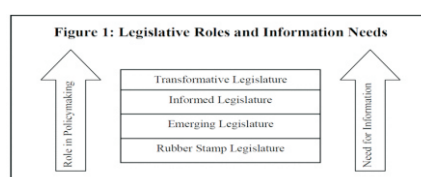
In conclusion, he advised participants to be more discrete about information they put out on social media platforms and also to be more careful about the way they dispose off old gadgets like Personal Computers (PC), pen drives and hard disk since information on them can easily be retrieved.

## Parliamentary Information needs and the need for Legislative Research

*Cont. from page 4*

**The informed legislature:** Typically has a parliamentary library and research service which provides reference services, produces reports, offers a clipping service that is distributed to all members and may track the progress of key legislation. At this level, the parliamentary information service is providing a full array of services and is distinguished from the next level only by the scale of resources and the fact that it stops short of providing substantial research and analysis services that identify policy options and their impacts.

**The transformative legislature:** Has substantial resource requirements and typically has a generous allotment of personal staff, strong and well-staffed committees and large research groups capable of developing policy options (see Figure 1).



Source: Miko, Francis and William, Robinson culled from Miller et al, 2004

**Legislative Researchers as "Transmitters and Synthesizers" of Information**

According to Miller et al. (2004), parliamentary "information providers" play a vital role as transmitters, interpreters and synthesizers of information. With a wide range of sources to choose from, 'information providers' face the challenge of adapting available information into usable information, presented in easily accessible form, and provided in a timely manner (see Figure 2).

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## Mobile for Social Inclusive Governance (MSIG)

**T**he All Voices Matter, Speak up Project is a Mobile for Social Inclusive Governance programme. The project seeks to influence government policy and planning to increase the participation of women, youth and people with disabilities (PWDs) in local governance.

The project is being implemented in the following districts: Tamale Metropolis, Savelugu Municipality, Yendi Municipality, Wa Municipality. Currently, many barriers such as distance, access, mobility, cultural norms, social status, and political affiliation, impede the access of women, youth and PWDs to engage with Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs).

The intended result of this project is for women, youth and PWDs to use a new communication pathway to contribute to MMDAs development planning processes for the allocation of public goods and services. The project has identified 4 major milestones to achieving its result:

- Increased clarity on the current participation of women, youth and PWDs in MMDA planning
- Awareness created about social inclusion in developmental decision making
- Data on the opinions of marginalised groups generated and analyzed by MMDAs for development planning
- Opinions of marginalised groups captured in development decisions of MMDAs.

MMDAs and marginalized groups have therefore been trained in the use of VOTO technology/platform to register themselves in order to take part in surveys to be conducted by MMDA's. The partners have assisted the MMDAs in creating a panel of 300 participants comprising women, youth

and PWDs for each district to be the subject of these surveys. The registration process is listed in box 1.

By the end of the project, MMDAs will be proficient in using this technology and would have conducted 2-3 surveys in 3 quarters, for a total of 6-9 surveys with the target groups. We wish to use this medium to encourage women, youth and PWDs in the selected districts to actively participate in the surveys when they are sent out to them. We want to also encourage others who have not successfully registered onto the platform to also get involved by calling the system number **0236874163**.

The project is a collaboration between Savana Signatures, Amplify Governance, VOTO and the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS), sponsored by STAR-Ghana.

**Savana Signatures'** strategy is inspired by Ghana's vision of a just and free society as espoused by the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution. Savana Signatures has a mission to equip youth, women and vulnerable groups with ICT skills to mobilize and interface with the state for transparent and accountable governance at local and national levels.

The organisation also has a vision of a society where relevant information, knowledge and skills for development are enhanced by equal access to and use of ICT, and everyone asserting their right to social services in a responsive policy environment. The Mobile for Social Inclusive Governance is a project under the Gender and Social Inclusion Programme of Savana Signatures that has an objective of ensuring that Women are actively participating in local governance and the poor and marginalized are equipped with ICT skills to improve their livelihoods.

### Amplify Governance

Amplify Governance's vision is to see people flourishing through participation with governance systems that continuously improve their quality of life. Amplify works to support the development of a governance system that can adapt to the various challenges and complexities experienced within Ghana's movement towards decentralization. We focus specifically on four areas of governance; 1) Developing adaptive leadership culture through creating learning opportunities for political and technocrat officials in positions of responsibility at Assemblies, 2) Enhancing local revenue collection systems with support for the technical and human capacities of property tax and business licenses, 3) Creating opportunities and incentives for citizen engagement in development and service delivery decision making, 4) Improving the efficiency of data collection, management and analysis systems to support people-centered decision-making.)

### Box 1: Steps to join MSIG

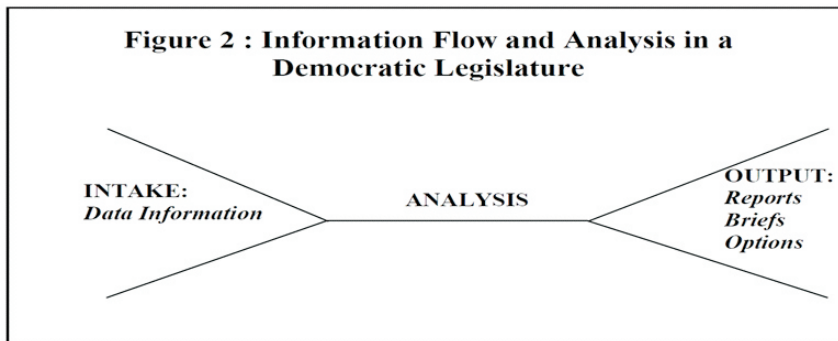
- Step 1.** Use your phone to dial 0236874163
- Step 2.** Hang up after the busy tone
- Step 3.** The system would call you back within a short time
- Step 4.** Follow voice instruction to register

### Voto Mobile

VOTO Mobile is a Ghana-based social enterprise, with the mission to increase participation, transparency and accountability in the services delivered to citizens, and to empower communities to collect and share information to drive positive social change.

Taking advantage of the wide-spread penetration of mobile phones, VOTO makes it easy for public and social-sector service providers to gather feedback from their constituents. VOTO's platform focusses on voice feedback in local languages, so it is accessible to all people regardless of location, literacy, and language. Using the VOTO platform, organizations can send messages, build polls, and offer menu-driven call-in services to connect people to the information they need.

## Parliamentary Information needs and the need for Legislative Research *Cont. from page 5*



Source: Diagram by Miko, Francis and William, Robinson culled from Miller et al, 2004

The left-hand funnel captures a broad range of information for use by the legislature while the right-hand side symbolizes broad distribution. The narrow segment in between is the critical juncture occupied by the parliamentary researcher or analyst, whose responsibility is to sift information and to digest and shape it to make it readily accessible for use in the legislative process.

Having access to up-to-date information is particularly important at the committee level, where members carry out in-depth analysis and debate issues. Parliamentary researchers therefore, must have a clear understanding of the information needs of Members of Parliament, and should possess the requisite researching skills to provide independent sources of information on national issues.

### Why Legislative Research is Important

Independent research services are essential to supporting the work of parliamentary committees and Members of Parliament for two key reasons.

1. First, while the executive branch often gets help from a large professional staff from the Ministries, Departments and Agencies, the Legislature does not usually benefit from that kind of support. Thus, it is

critical for parliament to explore all possible avenues to help bridge this gap of expertise and ensure that MPs have access to accurate and up-to-date information to perform their work effectively.

2. Second, and equally important for parliament, is not to rely solely on information provided by the Executive but to complement it with independent sources in order to understand what the alternatives are, and to have a total picture of every issue before passing laws and making policy choices. For these reasons, parliaments need to explore sources of information from their legislative researchers, other independent research, and also seek information from government sources.

In addition to the above, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) identifies three key benefits of having a dedicated research service within a Parliament:

1. A politically impartial service can provide advice and analysis in which, if it is functioning well, parliamentarians of all parties can have confidence and the analysis and factual briefing it provides will be generally accepted as accurate.

2. It can provide the contrary arguments to those likely to be received from political

advisors, which can be useful in anticipating criticisms of a given policy and ensuring that it is robust.

3. It can rely on a collective memory and can call on the collective knowledge and experience of all those who work within it. It can provide systemised access to reliable sources.

In the last few decades, the growth in the number of Parliaments around the world has been phenomenal. Today, 190 of 193 countries around the world have some form of functioning Legislature with a total of more than 46,000 representatives. This growth has come with increased public expectations of what Parliaments can and should be doing in the interest of the citizens that they represent. To be effective, Parliaments need accurate, timely, reliable and confidential information, hence the need for legislative research.

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## Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Venue
Final Version of EIPM Course Content	September, 2014	GINKS, Accra
Final Trainers Selected for EIPM Course	September 2014	GINKS, Accra
Training Needs Assessment	September 2014	CSTC, Accra
Familiarization Meeting with Parliament	September, 2014	Parliament House, Accra
Sensitization Workshop (General)	September, 2014	Accra
One (1) Week Pedagogy Training	Sept. - Dec., 2014	CSTC, Accra
EIPM Training of Trainers	October, 2014	CSTC, Accra
Sensitization Meeting with Parliament	December, 2014	Parliament House, Accra
Tool Developed for Parliamentary Overview	December, 2014	GINKS, Accra
Forum on ICT and Education: Assessing the ICT factor in Technical and Vocational Education	July - Sept., 2014	Accra
Northern ICT4D Series	August 28, 2014	Tamale, Ghana
ICT and Health Forum: Healthcare and ICT, How far is Ghana? - Selected students and health professionals	July - Sept., 2014	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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