

iConnect Ghana Newsletter

• ICTs for Development

• Research Evidence for Development

Feature Story



Policy Making Must be Sensitive to Needs of Citizenry

The Head of the Civil Service (HCS), Nana Ayekum Dwamena, has called on Civil Servants to be realistic and sensitive to the needs of the citizenry when formulating policies. He noted that research has shown that about 30% of policies are not fully implemented.

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

Another issue of iConnect Ghana is here; and we bring to our readers new and exciting developments in the arena of Research Evidence for Development and ICT for Development (ICT4D). As is always done, this issue presents stories from Ghana and internationally.

The Office of the Head of Civil Service (OHCS) in Ghana starts with a story of the launch of an Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM) course in Ghana, through the collaborative effort of GINKS, the Ghana Civil Service Training Centre, and the OHCS. This course is open to Ghanaian Civil Servants to apply for enrolment; hence a course announcement is carried in this issue.

Jan Liebnitzky (Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, VakaYiko) also presents an overview of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) activities in the VakaYiko Consortium to enable understanding of M&E in the environment of an international consortium. He discusses the essence, coverage, and tools being used in his department.

This issue of the newsletter also carries a review of activities undertaken by GINKS in the past quarter towards building the capacity of Civil Servants and the Legislature for EIPM in Ghana, describing these as “gaining momentum” for course delivery.

A story is also contributed from the WHO's Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) which organized a half-day workshop to understand the national landscape in terms of knowledge translation and knowledge brokering mechanisms in Tajikistan.

In the area of ICT4D, Savana Signatures contributes stories on SIM Box Fraud and the innovative use of technology in reproductive health, which were taken from monthly forums organized for them. A story from an ICT4D forum organized by GINKS to discuss ICT issues in Ghana's National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) is also presented.

We appreciate you taking the time to read this newsletter. We hope that it informs the public about updates in the areas of evidence-informed policy making and ICT for Development. Once again, we welcome any comments or suggestions from our readers as we are always working to improve iConnect Ghana.

Policy Making Must be Sensitive to Needs of Citizenry

The HCS Nana K. Agyekum Dwamena made these remarks at the sensitization and launch of an Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM) course to be organized at the Civil Service Training Center (CSTC) in Accra next year.



Nana K. Agyekum Dwamena delivering a speech

The HCS further noted that the process of policy formulation is very critical to the developmental agenda of Ghana, adding that it is important that issues are thought out critically to avoid having projects dotted all over the country without the requisite funds to implement them.

The Principal for CSTC, Mrs. Dora Dei-Tumi, in her welcome address explained that the EIPM course is an innovative approach to development, where policy makers will be equipped with resources that will position them to incorporate research at the formulation stage of policy making. She said with the decoupling of the Local Government Service from the Civil Service, one major task was to develop and formulate policy options for government. He thanked DFID for agreeing to sponsor the programme and Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS) for supporting the Ghana Civil Service with the EIPM course. She noted that the CSTC is motivated by the objective to support personnel in the Civil Service with cutting edge courses to discharge its duties creditably; hence its collaboration with GINKS is timely and most welcome.



Participants seated during the Launch at CSTC in Accra

The Board Chairman of GINKS, Dr. Joel Sam, noted that the EIPM will provide participants with the skills to respond to time sensitive requests for information and evidence to inform public decision making.



Dr. Joel Sam making a statement at the launch

He said the course will commence April 2015 and will be targeted at officers who inform the everyday decisions of Directors and Heads of Department; as well as officers who provide policy recommendation to government.

The Programme Manager of Star Ghana, Mr. Ibrahim Amidu Tanko in his presentation, said decision making now impacted on a very large and diverse population. He therefore advised that policy making should be based on consensus building especially in an environment that is polarized on issues. He called on policy makers to build a culture of collaborative relationships aimed at soliciting support to the process of policy making.

Source: Office of Head of Civil Service (OHCS)

Link: <http://www.ohcs.gov.gh/policy-making-must-be-sensitive-needs-citizenry-hcs>

Evidence-Informed Policy Making Course Announced

VAKA
YIKO

2 WEEK

EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY-MAKING COURSE

THIS COURSE PROVIDES PARTICIPANTS WITH THE SKILLS TO RESPOND TO TIME-SENSITIVE REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION AND EVIDENCE TO INFORM PUBLIC DECISIONS.

THE COURSE WILL COVER:

- Introduction to the use of evidence
- A strategy to search for evidence efficiently
- Sources of evidence
- How to assess evidence
- Research methods
- Effective use and communication of evidence

TARGET AUDIENCE:

- Officers who inform the everyday decisions of Directors and Heads of Departments
- Officers who provide policy recommendations to government

DETAILS:

- Duration: two weeks
- April 2015

APPLICATION DETAILS:

Application deadline is on the **14th November, 2014 8pm**

You can download the application form from the Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC) website

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WWW.CSTC.GETAFRICAONLINE.COM

Gaining Momentum for delivering Evidence Course in Ghana

With the tick of every second, VakaYiko is moving close to programme deadline, and is currently bringing to an end its first year of project activities in Ghana. This quarter experienced the execution of many ambitious project milestones, which are pieces for measuring project success.

With foundations firmly secured for project implementation in the inception phase, and all necessary relationships built, GINKS started coordinating preliminary activities aimed at developing modules for the Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM) Course within the period July to September, 2014.

Among many things, GINKS was able to;

- a. coordinate the completion of the first module of the course
- b. decide with relevant stakeholders the number and final list of trainers to engage in the delivery for the course at the Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC) in Ghana
- c. conduct a one week pedagogy training for trainers
- d. successfully sensitize the wider public on the project, and launch the EIPM course at the CSTC
- e. engage with parliament in preparation for starting the parliamentary strand of the project in Ghana

With the launch of the course, applications have been opened. It is expected to draw together interested and qualified members of the policymaking arms of government to participate in the course, which will be piloted in April 2015.

The past three (3) months have been exciting at GINKS and the entire VakaYiko consortium because, every single activity has inched us closer to the core parts of the project.

We are hopeful that with particular interest and support from stakeholders, as exhibited during the launch of the course on October 1, we are heading straight for success. And we invite interested parties of evidence-based policy to follow us through to September 2016.

Ghana Country Partners

ginks

VAKA YIKO



Finding a home for the Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Platform in Tajikistan

As a network of networks, the WHO Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) Europe builds capacity in countries to promote the systematic use of research evidence in health policy development and implementation. It encourages the development of country-level teams (so-called Knowledge Translation Platforms) comprised of policy-makers, researchers and representatives of civil society, which plan and implement innovative strategies to foster research-policy linkages.

Implementation in Tajikistan

A pilot phase of the EVIPNet Europe was launched in Tajikistan in July 2014. As a first step, a national situation analysis is being conducted to understand the Evidence-informed Policy-Making

(EIPM) landscape in Tajikistan and identify the institutional niche for the future Knowledge Translation Platform. In this context, the WHO Country Office in Tajikistan arranged a half-day workshop for key national actors involved in the Evidence Informed Policy process on 30 September 2014.

The primary objective of the workshop was to understand the national landscape in terms of knowledge translation and knowledge brokering mechanisms. During the workshop, the following activities were undertaken:

- assessment of relationships between EIP actors;
- evaluation of information packaging and interactive knowledge mechanisms and

• assessment of country efforts towards EIP. The workshop process was guided by the EVIPNet Europe Situation Analysis Manual and facilitated by a WHO national consultant and a specialist of the Health Policy Analysis Unit of the Ministry of Health. The workshop participants included 15 representatives of national policy-making and research institutions identified as major EIP actors in Tajikistan.

Source: WHO

Link: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/data-and-evidence/evidence-informed-policy-making/news/news/2014/finding-a-home-for-the-evidence-informed-policy-network-evipnet-platform-in-tajikistan>

Monitoring and Evaluation in VakaYiko - a challenge

The biggest challenges of the 21st century - climate change, population growth and food security, to name a few - require policy makers to effectively access, evaluate and use research evidence in the formulation of policy. For this goal, VakaYiko trains policy makers in Ghana, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Furthermore, VakaYiko works on a facilitating environment, for example in policy departments of governments, which allows for the better usage of research evidence in the policy making process.

Programmes such as VakaYiko pose a challenge to Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), due to their complexity. But before digging deeper into the problem of how to find out about making a difference, I will shortly describe what M&E is and why it is useful. Then I will outline what has been done so far in VakaYiko concerning M&E.

What is M&E? Why is it useful?

Monitoring means the ongoing observation of a programme's activities with the goal to keep it on the right track. Evaluation can be described best as the determination of the success of a programme as a whole (programme evaluation) sometimes undertaken by external consultants in order to have better objectivity. Or instead, evaluation could target parts of VakaYiko, e.g. training of policy makers in evidence-informed policy making (EIPM).

Both, Monitoring and Evaluation, serve on the one hand accountability and reporting purposes, for instance to our donors, and on the other hand internal learning and optimization processes. In general it is important that findings from M&E are shared with a broader audience

so that mistakes are not repeated but learned from. This is why M&E is an integral part of VakaYiko as well as most other development programmes.

What has been done in terms of M&E in VakaYiko so far?

All activities of VakaYiko are monitored on a regular basis. There is a big Microsoft Excel table which provides an overview on the different activities and milestones we want to achieve by a certain time, for example if training material on EIPM has been prepared already or if it is still in the process; if the needs assessment in the Ministry of Youth has been carried out in time or not; etc. These examples feed the accountability side of Monitoring and help to steer the programme.

However, as we are at an early stage in VakaYiko, preparing the training material at the moment, we do something else than just monitoring. The training development undergoes a constant reflection and adaptation process, such as cross checking its content with different experts in Ghana, Zimbabwe and South Africa and testing training methodology in pilot workshops. This process which one could call formative evaluation is participative and serves the goal of learning and optimization. Because in the end, we want to have developed the best training in order to make the biggest possible difference.

How do we know that VakaYiko made a difference, that there is an impact?

How do we know that future policies in Ghana are made with the help of research evidence and that these policies address the problems of the 21st century? And even if we knew that, how do we ascertain that VakaYiko made this difference? These questions cannot be answered before years after the programme's end – and even then,

the causality that VakaYiko succeeded in EIPM is hard to establish. This is called the 'attribution problem' in Evaluation.

Therefore, we speak of contribution rather than attribution because multiple interlinked factors influence a certain impact – not just the VakaYiko programme! These external factors can be economic, social and political in nature and influence policy making process in a positive and / or negative way. A positive reinforcing factor could be, for example, that similar programmes work in the same country and thematic area, hence, reaching a broader range of people. Negative influencing factors could comprise the change of the political landscape due to elections, and thus, a reduced commitment to EIPM by the government.

These external factors were addressed in our theory of change (ToC) before the start of VakaYiko in order to mitigate risks and grasp opportunities. So what we try to do in programme evaluation, in contrast to formative evaluation, is to make sense of a highly complex and dynamic system. We have to acknowledge though, that we can only shed light on a part of that system.

In case of VakaYiko, programme evaluation will be carried out by an external consultant agency. The consultants will conduct interviews with VakaYiko programme staff, e.g. GINKS, and training participants. Further, they will analyse policy output and carry out little surveys. In the end they will write a publicly available evaluation report which serves as the ultimate proof of VakaYiko's success. Make sure you don't miss it!

Jan Liebnitzky
(M&E Officer, VakaYiko)

Further readings: A guide to monitoring and evaluating policy influence, ODI www.odi.org/resources/docs/6453.pdf

SIM Box Fraud

The monthly GINKS Northern ICT4D forum on the topic “SIM BOX FRAUD”.

Mr. John Stephen Agbenyo, Director of Savana Signatures took up the challenge of making the presentation since all the telecommunication networks invited to speak to the issue had turned down the invitation at the last minute.

Mr. Agbenyo started by stating that SIM boxing is the reason people see local phone numbers on their handset screens even when they get a call from overseas. He went on to say that some fraudsters abroad, working with another set of

fraudsters in Ghana, route calls coming from overseas through the internet and terminate them through SIM boxes in Ghana fitted with local SIM cards. He also mentioned that the international rate for calls to Ghana by law is a minimum of 19 cents (67.08Gp) per minute, out of which the state is supposed to get 6 cents but due to the operation of these fraudsters, the calls come in at a cheaper rate and the government loses revenue through this since the calls are not passed through the appropriate channels. When the fraudsters channel the calls through SIM boxes, they pay only between

3Gp and 15Gp and keep the difference. So the state loses the 6 cents (21.12Gp) and the telecommunication networks also get between 3Gp and 15Gp instead of 13cents (45.96Gp). Stephen then posed questions to the participants. Are the staff of the telecommunication networks compromised? Is it our own greed?



The Room of a Typical SIM Box Frauster

Innovative Use Of Technology In Promoting Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights

The August edition of the monthly ICT4D Forum was on the topic “innovative use of technology in promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights”.

Mr. Abdul-Rashid Imoro, the Project Officer in charge of sexual & reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Savana Signatures who was the main resource person indicated that the essence of the topic was to have a close look at the accessibility and availability of SRHR information to the general public and especially for the youth.

He explained that Savana Signatures is using some very innovative means of spreading the message through the use of ICT in some of their projects. He started with the SHE project which seeks to use the tools most available to the youth of today, the feature mobile phone, to provide the youth with direct access to the information they seek to lead healthy lives. Youth will have the option of receiving text messages, recorded voice messages or talk to a nurse regarding all their sexual health needs, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as well as get directions to clinics where they can have access to

SRHR services and pharmacies where they can access SRHR commodities. To access information on this platform, just text SHE to 7000 on MTN and 1904 on Vodafone, Airtel and Expresso or call 023-377 8889 for Volta Region and 023-377 8855 for Northern Region to interact with a health professional.

Rashid went on further to talk about the technology for maternal health project which seeks to improve the maternal health situation in Ghana through innovative means such as sending out text & voice messages in English and Dagbanli through the mobile phones of registered expectant mothers, on how to maintain good health practices at various stages of pregnancy. 60 Midwives and Community Health Nurses were trained in ICT for them to access maternal health information which they can use for knowledge sharing sessions when rendering antenatal care services. He urged all expectant mothers to flash the number 0232157030 and get registered onto the platform so they can start receiving text and voice messages on their phones. Rashid went on to talk about The World Starts with Me, a project which

aims to deliver Comprehensive Sexuality education (CSE) to young people in the three Northern Regions of Ghana and the Volta region using the World Start With Me (WSWM) for schools with electricity and an offline content for schools in rural communities without electricity. The CSE is positive in nature & recognizes the diversity of young people with regard to sexual development, identity, relationship and health. It gives young people the necessary support and information to make informed healthy choices regarding their sexual lives. All options are open to exploration and no specific option is communicated as the best. The project also aims at setting up Youth Friendly centers equipped with computers with SRH content installed to allow the young ones easy access to information on adolescent and reproductive health. The Ghana Education Service as well as the Ghana Health Service would be adequately engaged in the project from the start to get their support for the project to ensure the sustainability of the project. He urged the participants to take advantage of these opportunities provided which are also free, accessible, convenient and private.

ICT & National Health Insurance; Challenges & Impact on Performance of Nurses and Mid-wives

GINKS organized a knowledge sharing forum to educate students of 37 Military Hospital Nurses Training College on the challenges affecting ICT and National Health Insurance in Ghana.



Madam Rita Wurapa, Public Health Nurse making a presentation

The resource person, Madam Rita Wurapa, a practicing Public Health Nurse at the Afajato South Health Directorate in the Volta and also Masters Student at the School of Public Health of the University of Ghana said the main role of nurses and mid-wives is observation, reflection, analysis, evaluation and planning of cure. This she said can be done through studying facial expressions of patients. She added that ICT has really come to stay and it is being used across all sectors of life. ICT has revolutionized everyday life from the way we manage our finances to how we watch movies. Technological advancement is changing the way we address health of our communities thereby making big impact & changing how healthcare is being addressed. Rita stressed that as up-and-coming nurses and mid-wives, they should embrace the use of ICT in healthcare delivery.

Problems with Paper Records

- Handwritten notes and typed reports
- Stored in a paper file system
- Cryptic abbreviations
- Difficult to search
- Difficult to share with other facilities

Manual documentation by far is not transferable and searching for patients' medical file can be a tedious task but with ICT it is easy. Appointments can be done through phone or using email communication to maximize time as well as hand held devices e.g. mobile phone, tablets can be used for transferring information which is vital in health care delivery. If files are well documented through the computer, it is safer and in case of disaster, information can be retrieved from emails or cloud online. As much as ICT is very important in health care delivery, it has some challenges especially in rural areas. In these areas, there is less network coverage making connectivity with other health facilities very difficult. Most health workers in the rural areas also lack ICT skills and may not be able to operate computers if they should have them.

Paper Workflow Points

- All information documented during patient visit entered by hand
- Records accessible to one person at a time
- Records must be physically "handed off" from one person to the next

Fragmented and Disconnected Care*

- Multiple Records
- Incomplete Information for Providers
- Unavailable data in 81% cases.
- 4 missing elements per case.
- Unwired System

*Blackford Middleton, MD, MPH, MSc -

Chairman, Center for IT Leadership - Harvard

Ultimately, the vision of government in instituting a health insurance scheme in the country is to assure equitable and universal access for all residents of Ghana to an acceptable quality package of essential

healthcare. Every resident of Ghana shall belong to a health insurance scheme that adequately covers him or her against the need to pay out of pocket at the point of service use in order to obtain access to a defined package of acceptable quality of health service.

The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) has come for all of us to get equal quality healthcare in Ghana but is the NHIS performing the exact task? There are constraints mainly with the ICT system.

- NHIS is useful in accessing health care
- Slowness of the system
- Large numbers of subscribers and low numbers of scheme staff

National health infrastructure is therefore needed to;

- Provide immediate access to complete patient information and decision support tools for clinicians and their patients
- Capture patient safety information as a by-product of care and use of this information to design even safer delivery systems

Challenge for Nurses and Mid-wives

There is work overload for health workers.
-Service abuse by the insured
-Data-driven system shift focus from main work

With National Health Insurance, when a form is submitted, a nurse must fill the form which consumes time. Every nurse needs in-service training to build capacity. These are static because of delay in disbursement of funds to pay casual workers, procurement of consumables and non-consumables, motivation for Nurses, improving standards of health facility, inability to implement planned program on time. Nurses and mid-wives are technologically challenged as they are not familiar with the use of ICT tools which means the computers can be available but nurses are afraid to use them. They are also resistant to change.

Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Venue
Deadline for EIPM Course Application	November 14, 2014	CSTC, Accra
Sensitization Meeting with Parliament	December, 2014	Parliament House, Accra
Tool Developed for Parliamentary Overview	December, 2014	GINKS, Accra
First Trial of EIPM Course	April, 2015	CSTC, Accra
Northern ICT4D Series	November, 2014	Tamale, Ghana
ICT & Health Forum: Healthcare & ICT, How far is Ghana? - Selected students & health professionals	December, 2014	Accra
ICT in Education: ICT Quiz Competition for Junior High Students	November 2014	Accra
ICT in Education: ICT Practical Project Competition for JHS Students	December 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 VakaYiko.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Coordinator
 Ghana Information Network for
 Knowledge Sharing (GINKS)

OUR LOCATION

GINKS Secretariat
 Behind Gold House, Airport
 Residential Area (on the same
 compound with CSIR-INSTI HQ.)

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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