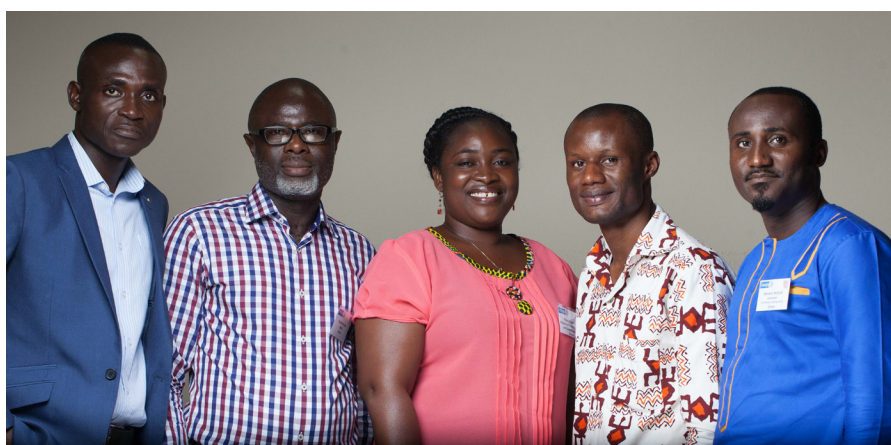


Building capacity for the use of research evidence in Ghana's Ministry of Employment

Supporting the use of information and statistics in employment policy

The importance of evidence in public policy making is widely recognized in Ghana at top levels of government. The overarching national development strategy, the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Strategy (GSGDA II), sees evidence playing a key role in strong and efficient development planning and economic management. This is reflected in sector policies including the National Employment Policy, which takes an explicitly evidence-based approach, including focusing on promoting and supporting research to inform employment policy and formally including local think tanks and research institutes in its consultations for policy development.

However, for effectively implementing this approach, civil servants need to have the skills and knowledge for finding, analysing and communicating research evidence. In his opening address at the VakaYiko project's evidence-informed policy making (EIPM) pilot course at Ghana's Civil Service Training Centre, the Head of Civil Service stated that he felt "The problems we are having in this country are a result of policy failure...civil servants play a key role in this enterprise. The analysis that should go into these decisions and policies is not completed".



George Amoah (second from right) pictured with fellow CSTC trainer Ebenezer Amankwah (far right), EIPM course participant Thywill Eyra Kpe (centre) and Kirchuffs Atengble (far left) and Ibrahim Inusah (second from left) of GINKS

Research, statistics and information for employment and labour relations

The Research, Statistics and Information Management Directorate (RSMID) serves as the main research and dissemination wing of Ghana's Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations. It coordinates, collates, analyses and disseminates employment and labour-related statistics for use by the Ministry and other social partners for policy formulation, planning, monitoring and evaluation.

The Directorate, as part of its mission to help strengthen the

statistical systems of the Ministry, especially under the Ghana Statistics Development Project (GSDP), has initiated new measures for more effective collection and use of evidence since 2014. Since then, it has started producing regular annual statistical reports using base data from all its associated Departments/Agencies as well as the Ghana Statistical Service. This is to let the Departments/Agencies know the extent to which the data they generate are valued so that they will be encouraged to do more.

The Directorate also works on capacity building for use of evidence, organizing training and commissioning a needs assessment to ascertain the data/information management and research



“Against the realisation that weak institutions undermine national development efforts, the government’s Transformation Agenda will aim to strengthen state institutions responsible for development planning and economic management as well as develop efficient mechanisms for citizens’ engagement in the development process. Evidence-based public policy making and enhancing development communication will form a major part of these initiatives.”

Ghana Shared Growth and Development Strategy

capacity of the Departments/ Agencies under the Ministry. The results of this capacity needs assessment will feed in to a Statistical Plan aimed at further strengthening their capacity. “We seek to make our officers who are involved in the collection of data/stats/information aware of the fact that every single piece of information they gather is of relevance to policy making,” says George Amoah, Assistant Director of RSMID.

This year, the Ministry has been working on building a documentation centre and a labour market information system as well as contributing to the Ministry’s relaunch of its website to enhance public engagement. “We have a lot on our plate and evidence is crucial of all our activities,” explains Mr Amoah.

Engagement with the VakaYiko project

In addition to his role at the RSMID, Mr Amoah serves as an adjunct trainer at the Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC), which is the official central body for strengthening skills

in the Ghanaian Civil Service. CSTC is partnering with the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS) to pilot and adopt a new course on evidence-informed policy making (EIPM) as part of the VakaYiko project.

Mr Amoah co-led the first pilot of the EIPM course at CSTC in April 2015 in collaboration with CSTC in-house trainers. As a published researcher himself in the areas of trade and foreign direct investment, Mr Amoah was able to share unique insights from his academic as well as his professional experience on the role of research in public policy making.

Through the pilot, Mr Amoah trained 23 participants from 15 different Ministries, including personnel from his own Ministry as well as from Research, Statistics and Information Management divisions and Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PPMED) Directorates in other Ministries. The training was well received by participants, with 97% indicating that it was relevant to their work and 96% describing it

as practical.

Pre- and post- assessment scores from INASP showed that participants significantly improved their knowledge about evidence-informed policy making, with an average increase of 31%. The participants’ report noted the focus on practical processes, saying: “The training was very informative and a deviation from the normal training programmes on policy making. It placed more emphasis on the processes of collecting the right evidence to inform policy.”

Framing the role of evidence in policy making

Mr Amoah has integrated his insights from the VakaYiko Evidence-informed Policy Making Toolkit (www.inasp.info/vytoolkit) into the Ministry’s training materials, which he has since used in workshops with staff under the Ministry’s oversight. He says that the most valuable part of the course for him was in reflecting on the difference between “evidence-based” and “evidence-informed”



“The skills I have acquired will not only help me source for evidence but (also) enable me filter and narrow down to the most relevant ones to use.”

Participant in the first pilot course at Ghana’s Civil Service Training Centre

policy making. The latter phrase emphasizes the complexity of the policy-making landscape and sees evidence as one factor influencing policy making, alongside political realities and other elements. But more importantly, it reflects the need for multiple types and pieces of research to inform policy rather than one, making sure that the research that informs policy is neutral and considers all points of view on an issue. It acknowledges that evidence-informed policy making does not always take up evidence, but could systematically consider and reject it after an informed debate.

The phrase “evidence-based”, which is more commonly used in the Ghanaian policy context, implies a more rigid, and perhaps less realistic, relationship between evidence and policy making that does not make as much provision for other factors such as political



George Amoah shares his experiences of running EIPM training in Ghana at the VakaYiko Symposium 2016

realities, public debates and cultural factors. “This [distinction] was helpful when I was facilitating workshops with staff of Departments/Agencies/training institutions under the Ministry and the Ministry itself,” Mr Amoah explains. “The participants will know to consult varied types of evidence when making decisions but should not worry too much in the event that some external factors cause their proposals/recommendations, based on the evidence they consulted, are rejected. So they will continue to do diligent work any time they are required to.”

Key factors in success

Building on existing systems and activities, GINKS and VakaYiko have been able to take advantage of CSTC’s adjunct trainer system to tap in to existing momentum on evidence-informed policy in the Ghanaian Civil Service. Using a trainer who is already leading change in his Ministry with regards to evidence use, as well as training colleagues in his sector on evidence, ensured that

key elements of the course could be immediately adapted and incorporated into other capacity-building initiatives happening beyond the direct reach of the

“This kind of course will be crucial for our staff at the district and regional levels if the Ministry’s proposed labour market information system is to be well implemented at that level”

**George Amoah,
Assistant Director,
RSIMD**

programme. This process of pairing adjunct trainers who have practical experience of the topic of the training, and full-time permanent trainers is a feature of CSTC's structure.

Embracing complexity

VakaYiko's approach to evidence-informed policy making embraces complexity, seeing evidence as one part of a broad and highly nuanced policy-making landscape. This struck a chord with Mr Amoah who is now sharing this interpretation within his own sector and incorporating it into his own training on evidence in policy. Although a more complex approach can be more challenging in many ways, it is clear that in this case it has been able to contribute towards a potential conceptual shift in viewing the role of evidence in the policy making. VakaYiko's approach of combining practical skills with more conceptual framings is therefore one way to enhance applicability and relevance in different levels and sectors.

Learning

Mr Amoah's participation enabled VakaYiko to facilitate a learning process between Ghanaian government institutions working on EIPM, the CSTC, and the VakaYiko team. Mr Amoah gained a new perspective on the use of evidence in policy making, as well as experience of delivering a course that he believes could be useful in the future to build capacity for his Ministry's labour market information system. In turn, he was able to support the skills development and EIPM knowledge of the permanent CSTC trainers through CSTC's peer-review exercise and then through co-delivering the pilot with them. He also shared detailed feedback and suggestions on the course materials from his own experience which have been incorporated into revisions of the materials.

Conclusion

Although VakaYiko's activities in Ghana focus primarily on building individual skills through CSTC,

this case study demonstrates that the programme has also been able to influence capacity building for EIPM in other contact institutions. Through working with CSTC's existing structure, taking an approach that embraces complexity, and maximizes learning opportunities, VakaYiko has been able both to feed in to capacity building for EIPM in the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, and to learn from the expertise of a senior civil servant involved in the collection and use of evidence for policy making. The result was a strong and practical training at the Civil Service Training Centre as well as an excellent opportunity to facilitate interdepartmental knowledge sharing and capacity building through interpersonal relationships in the Ghanaian civil service.

*With thanks to
George Amoah*



About VakaYiko

The VakaYiko Consortium is a three-year project involving five organizations working primarily in three countries in the first phase: Ghana, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Work in a fourth country, Uganda, started in late 2015. This project is funded by DFID under the Building Capacity for Use of Research Evidence (BCURE) programme.

The project starts with the understanding that the routine use of research to inform policy requires at least three factors to be in place:

- Individuals with the skills to access, evaluate and use research evidence
- Processes for handling research evidence in policy making departments
- A wider enabling environment of engaged citizens, media and civil society

The consortium works to build capacity at all three levels.
For more information see www.inasp.info/vakayiko.

