

Knowledge Cafe

Use of Evidence in Gender Mainstreaming



ZeipNET & INASP

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Introduction

The VakaYiko consortium led by INASP involves five organizations working primarily in Ghana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe to develop the capacity of policy makers to use research evidence. Funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) under the Building Capacity for Use of Research Evidence (BCURE) programme, the project operates on the assumption that the routine use of research evidence 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; and a facilitating environment that identifies and responds appropriately to research uptake needs.

Knowledge cafés

Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Making Network (ZeipNET) with the support of the VakaYiko Consortium is conducting a series of knowledge cafés (KC).

KCs are targeted at the general public. These events aim to discuss the importance of using evidence in policy making. They can either discuss evidence-informed policy making (EIPM) in general or focus on a specific topic. KCs are informal events where content and language is made relevant for anyone interested in civic/public issues. Held in an informal setting, these events are open to everyone and will usually have approximately 40-70 participants. Furthermore, KCs provide ZeipNET with an opportunity to promote its work and be perceived as a credible organization that can engage researchers and policy makers to help improve Zimbabwe's EIPM processes.

A KC takes a participatory approach using audience-facilitated discussions that enables experience and maximum participation. For further information regarding KCs please read the [VakaYiko Strategy for Policy Dialogues and Knowledge Cafes in Zimbabwe](#).

“Use of Evidence in Gender Mainstreaming in Zimbabwe” knowledge café

On 24 March 2015 ZeipNET held a KC focusing on the ‘Use of Evidence in Gender Mainstreaming’ at the Book Café in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The KC was organized in partnership with the [Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe](#) (WCoZ). The WCoZ is a network of women rights activists and women’s organizations with the goal of achieving gender equity in Zimbabwe through the empowerment of women and girls. WCoZ is made up of institutional members working in diverse fields including health, legal aid, access to education, gender-based violence, torture, skills training, poverty reduction, research, property rights and governance issues.

A panel of three gender experts from the Ministry of Gender & Women Affairs and Gender Civic Society organizations, including a representative from ZeipNET, chaired the KC:

- The lead panellist was the Chairperson of the WCoZ and Executive Director of the Humanitarian Information Facilitation Centre (HIFC), Mrs Virginia Muwanigwa. She has extensive experience in the use of human rights-based approaches for women empowerment having worked in the field for almost 30 years in Zimbabwe with organizations like Action Aid and World Bank.
- The second panellist was Ms Tendai Wenyasha Garwe. She is a gender consultant who has worked for several women organizations like the Women Trust, Women Excel and the Zimbabwe Women Resource Centre & Network (ZWRCN) in both programme management and communications.
- The third panellist, Cleopatra Phiri-Hurungo works for the Ministry of Gender and Women Affairs as a Deputy Director. She has been with the ministry for over 10 years in policy, planning and development.

The panellists opened the KC with presentations covering the following topics:

- The current gender policy framework in Zimbabwe
- The evidence used to develop and review the framework
- How Zimbabwe has fared as a country in achieving gender mainstreaming in the years following the Beijing Declaration.

The audience were then invited to debate the topics and, at the end of the event, a facilitator concluded the KC by selecting key issues from the discussion and highlighting a number of recommendations.

Women rights and gender mainstreaming

Zimbabwe is a signatory to different international and regional conventions that seek to promote gender equality and women empowerment, as well as to prevent discrimination. These comprise, among others, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW)

(1991), the Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) and the Global Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration (1995)¹ In 1997, Zimbabwe signed the Southern African Development Community Declaration (SADC) on Gender and Development as well as its addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children.

The concept of gender mainstreaming derives from these conventions and particularly its articulation in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Since then, gender mainstreaming has generally been considered a “process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels”.²

In 1995 the Zimbabwean government created the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development (MWAGCD) to oversee coordination of all gender programmes and to facilitate gender mainstreaming in all sector ministries. These efforts were complemented with a National Gender Policy (2002), providing guidelines and the institutional framework to mainstream gender aspects in all policies, programmes, projects and activities at all levels of the society and economy.³ As a result of this policy, gender focal points have been established in ministries.

While the legal and institutional framework in Zimbabwe provides an enabling environment for gender equality and women empowerment, the translation of these policies into different areas remains a challenge and the situation for women is still worrisome. For example:

- According to UN Women 2011-2012, 30% of women experience physical violence from a partner, while 19% experienced sexual violence.⁴
- With regard to women in political decision making positions it can be seen that parliamentary representation of women with 39% of seats for women is comparably high. However, only three out of 27 ministers are female.⁵

Evidence in gender mainstreaming

Zimbabwe has some examples of the use of evidence in various institutions. However, a common understanding on what constitutes EIPM is fairly illusive and not at all clear when it comes to gender mainstreaming. Reliable statistics from government departments or NGOs are often not accessible or do not exist⁶ and, as a result, external sources often have to be relied on.

¹ OHCHR, “Zimbabwe”, 2015, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/countries/AfricaRegion/Pages/ZWIndex.aspx> last accessed 10.04.2015

² United Nations. “[Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997](#)”. A/52/3.18 September 1997

³ UNFPA Zimbabwe, “Promoting gender equality and protection of women’s rights”, 2011, <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/zimbabwe/2010/11/20/2892/gender/> last accessed 10.04.2015)

⁴ UN WOMEN, “Progress of the World’s Women”, 2011-2012, (<http://progress.unwomen.org/pdfs/EN-Report-Progress.pdf> last accessed 10.04.2015)

⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Unit, “Progress for women in politics, but glass ceiling remains firm”, 2014, (<http://www.ipu.org/press-e/pressrelease201403111.htm> last accessed 10.04.2015)

⁶ SN Thabethe, “SADC GENDER PROTOCOL BAROMETER BASELINE STUDY ZIMBABWE”, 2009 (http://www.safaid.net/files/10142_zimbabwebarometerreport_nw_0909.pdf last accessed 10.04.2015)

Evidence and especially research evidence should inform and evaluate policies or programmes with regard to their impact on gender issues.⁷

It is within this context that ZeipNET and WCoZ convened the KC.

Objectives & methodology

By discussing evidence use in gender mainstreaming in Zimbabwe, this KC wants to raise awareness of the importance of evidence in gender mainstreaming, identify gender inequity priority areas where evidence gaps exist and recommend evidence strategies in gender mainstreaming. Additionally, this KC seeks to increase visibility of ZeipNET and VakaYiko.⁸

a) To discuss relevant policy issue (gender mainstreaming) by involving a balanced range of relevant stakeholders in an inclusive and participatory environment

A summary of the key points of the KC will provide an overview of the relevance of the discussion. An observational rubric⁹ containing measures (observable indicators) for interaction, facilitation and power dynamics during the KC, as well as a list of participants with institutional affiliation, will provide evidence concerning the participation of relevant stakeholders. The observational rubric was completed by a neutral person so as to be more objective.

Participant feedback forms are employed to further indicate success regarding this objective.

b) To increase the visibility of ZeipNET and VakaYiko

A feedback form and media uptake of the KC will be used to evaluate this objective.

Results

a) To discuss relevant policy issue (gender mainstreaming) by involving a balanced range of relevant stakeholders in an inclusive and participatory environment

The two hour KC attracted 43 delegates from various institutions and organisations. There were 23 male and 20 female participants. The represented institutions included Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development (MWAGCD), Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, civil society organizations with a stake in gender issues and higher learning institutions such as Harare Polytechnic and Women University in Africa. The different media houses, such as Zimbabwe Online and Harare Day, were also represented.

⁷ UN WOMEN, "Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming", 2014, (<http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/unsystemcoordination/gendermainstreaming-issuesbrief-en%20pdf.pdf> last accessed 10.04.2015)

⁸ J. Liebnitzky and C. Richards, "Vaka Yiko Strategy for Policy Dialogues and Knowledge Café in Zimbabwe", 2013

⁹ An observational rubric is a table which contains different observable indicators in the rows and categories of judgement in the columns, eg how often reference was made to evidence and empirical research – never, 1-2 times, 3-4 times etc.

The KC on the Use of Evidence in Gender Mainstreaming brought together a wide range of different stakeholders and the discussions brought out the following key points regarding:

Evidence in gender mainstreaming in Zimbabwe

- Gender mainstreaming issues are dealt with by different ministries depending on the particular sector. The role of the MWAGCD is only to coordinate.
- The MWAGCD does not have a research and development unit. It relies mainly on consultancy when it comes to the generation of evidence to inform policy processes.
- The evidence base of the ministries' and civic society is guided mainly by the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer, which benchmarks progress by SADC countries towards achieving each of the 28 targets of the SADC Gender Protocol by 2015. Since the baseline barometer in 2009, the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance has produced a barometer each year, assessing progress in the count down to 2015. The Southern Africa Gender and Development Index (SGDI) is a tool based on empirical data for 23 indicators. This is complemented by the Citizen Score, a tool that gives ordinary citizens an opportunity to hold their governments to account. Case studies of the [SADC Gender Protocol @ Work](#) provide qualitative insights on how the SADC Gender Protocol is used as an evidence tool to promote gender equality.¹⁰
- The evidence that informs gender mainstreaming is predominantly data and statistics obtained mostly from baseline surveys such as the Gender Protocol Barometer done by the SADC. There is lack of qualitative research to complement survey data. This poses challenges, particularly where a policy is supposed to be informed by what works when and how.
- The MWAGCD has engagement challenges at grassroots level even though the local context is where much of the evidence for policy making is supposed to come from.
- Zimbabwe National Gender Policy (2002) is out-dated. A good example of its limitations is that it does not cover gender-based violence, now widely recognized and acknowledged as a serious issue affecting the country that needs to be addressed in the legal and policy frameworks.
- Evidence to support gender-mainstreaming interventions generally comes from ministries and civic society.
- There are challenges with getting research to inform policy. However, there have been some successful interventions. Different civic society organisations like the Women Resource Centre & Network (ZWR CN), for example, feed evidence into policy by actively engaging parliament through portfolio committees. A success story has been the ZWR CN Gender Budgeting Programme that directly works with MPs and other Policy Makers to inform the Budgeting process.
- The gender mainstreaming agenda is generally driven by emotions (activism and advocacy) and not by evidence. Many times civic society pushes for certain interventions based on ideology and this sometimes has backlash effects because it is not based on evidence.

Policy areas with evidence gaps

- Female participation in the private sector, trade and industry
- Monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation
- Temporal measures like Affirmative Action interventions and their impact
- Women with disabilities

¹⁰ <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/sadc-research> (accessed 26.03.2015)

Recommended evidence strategies in gender mainstreaming

- In order to ensure research uptake and utilization by policy makers, civic society and research institutes should try to engage government throughout the whole process of problem identification, from the commissioning of research to the dissemination of results. Currently civic society only engages government when they want to communicate the research. By engaging government from the onset, there is bound to be ownership and buy-in and, as a result, more likelihood of research uptake and utilization to inform policy.
- Zimbabwe has a good legal framework to support gender mainstreaming. Challenges are on implementation of policies. This results in failure of the framework to trickle down to alleviate poverty, improve universal education and health coverage. Zimbabwe has however seen reduction of maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS. There is therefore serious need to strengthen active engagement of policy makers by civic society and other stakeholders, scaling up monitoring and evaluation, including coordination of framework, across all sectors by the Ministry of Gender. The National Review Process currently underway is an opportunity to engage.

A total of 33 participants (from a possible 45) completed the participants' feedback form (73% return rate). 85% of the participants felt that the topic of discussion was relevant as it related to key gender issues affecting Zimbabwe. There were mixed reactions on whether presenters linked their arguments to research evidence; 42.2% of the participants only partly agreed on the presenters' use of research evidence to support arguments.

Interaction during the policy dialogue and power dynamics

The observational rubric deduced that the level of interaction was high as most participants asked relevant questions which stimulated debate and received responses from the panellists. There was general agreement on gender mainstreaming achievements and constraints between the two main panel speakers, albeit from different perspectives. For example, both concurred that there had been significant progress in coming up with a legal framework that promotes gender equality but this had not been matched by success in implementing the legal framework so that it achieved tangible benefits for ordinary women.

Questions from the audience presented some challenges to the picture being presented and prompted responses from the panel.

There could have been an opportunity for more challenging discussions and more probing of gender mainstreaming if participants from implementing ministries or sector representatives had been part of panel. Some of the gender issues and evidence-related discussions were quite abstract. This would have allowed exploration of the challenges of mainstreaming gender in implementation, and how evidence did or did not play a role in this. Examples could then have been more specific.

Minorities and women in the audience participated in the discussions through making contributions and asking questions. There were no dominant participants.

Facilitation

Facilitation was competent and generally encouraged audience participation. However, the main facilitator could be argued to have been too knowledgeable and close to the subject. She sometimes made her own assessment of understanding without being challenged. However, 75% of the participants felt that the facilitator engaged well with audience.

Having a gender expert as a facilitator hampered more critical questioning and balanced debate as she was not moderate in some instances, for example, she almost became personal when a participant raised a gender sensitive point. The knowledgeable expert panel also seemed to slightly intimidate some participants, limiting their engagement. The initial panel 'speeches' were too long, and not focused enough. This restricted audience's participation.

Whilst the nature of the roving facilitator and the café environment set this apart from a more conventional 'head table and audience' discussion, there still was not enough made of this informal opportunity. However, with a slightly different facilitation, and perhaps a different approach to panel selection, the café approach could have worked better. This would have required skilled facilitation to deal with conflicts and encourage broad inclusivity. Next time it may be useful to use the fish-bowl or world café discussion methodology instead of the traditional panel method so as to encourage participants' contributions and inclusivity. It may also be helpful to arrange the chairs and tables so that there is no 'high table' and everyone feels they are peers.

Overall, the KC on the Use of Evidence in Gender Mainstreaming brought together a wide range of stakeholders who felt that the topic was relevant and important for Zimbabwe. The discussion points prove the relevance of evidence for gender mainstreaming and the different challenges connected to it for Zimbabwe, such as evidence gaps in monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation, and the availability and generation of reliable statistics within the country. A slightly different facilitation technique and perhaps a different approach to panel selection could improve future KCs.

b) To increase the visibility of ZeipNET and VakaYiko

A representative from ZeipNET gave an overview of the organization and the VakaYiko Consortium including the BCURE programme for the benefit of delegates. The representative also highlighted the importance of using evidence in policy making, implementation and review. The ZeipNET banner was displayed and brochures and fliers were distributed during the event. There was no visible media uptake after the event and more should be done to attract relevant and interested media personnel who have a direct interest in the topic. These are more likely to spread the word of the KC and EIPM instead of those who end up coming to the knowledge café because they do not have anywhere else to go.

All in all, the event exposed ZeipNET to many important stakeholders and networks.

Conclusion

Overall, the KC met the objectives of discussing the use of evidence in gender mainstreaming in Zimbabwe by bringing together a broad range of stakeholders in an inclusive and participatory environment. The importance of evidence use in gender mainstreaming was highlighted in more detail than discussion around identifying gaps in mainstreaming initiatives and this was mainly due to facilitation of the event.

The subject of the KC was a bit broad, making it difficult to address critical evidence gaps other than by general comments. This could have been addressed, as suggested above, by having representatives of implementing organizations (government, civil society, private) as part of the panel, or targeted members of the audience. However, there could also have been a chance that discussions would have then been more limited to one sector. Pre-arranged discussion questions for the panel could also have helped to guide the discussions instead of having their discussions being guided by the concept note only.

In terms of visibility, the event exposed ZeipNET to a lot of important stakeholders and networks.