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Using Evidence in Policy and Practice – Lessons from Africa

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Using Evidence in Policy and Practice – Lessons from Africa

Wednesday 22 April 2020
12:45 – 14:00 BST













Research project

- Research project on Using Evidence for Policy and Practice
- 8 cases from 6 countries/West Africa, linked with the Twende Mbele countries
- Explores use of different types of evidence (evaluations, research, rapid synthesis, citizens engagement)
- And what supported evidence use to happen
- Book coming out in June 'Using Evidence for Policy and Practice – Lessons from Africa' https://www.routledge.com/Using-Evidence-in-Policy-and-Practice-Open-Access-Lessons-from-Africa/Goldman-Pabari/p/book/9780367440077

Chapters/cases

5 Using evaluations to inform policy and practice in a government department: The Case of the Department of Basic Education in South Africa

6 Use of evidence in a complex social programme: an evaluation of the state's response to violence against women and children in South Africa

7 The influence of local ownership and politics of the use of evaluations in policy making: The case of the public procurement evaluation in Uganda

8 Rapidly responding to policy queries with evidence: Learning from Rapid Response Services in Uganda

9 The challenges and potential of evaluations to positively inform reforms: working with producers in the Benin Agriculture Sector

10 Parliament and public participation in Kenya: The case of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act 2013

11 The contribution of civil society generated evidence to the improvement of sanitation services in Ghana

12 Using evidence for tobacco control in West Africa

Context - values and culture barriers to the use of evaluation in decision making and learning by ministries

(328 respondents: SA- 104, Benin – 149, Uganda – 75)

Barrier	% of responses saying always/often		
	SA	Benin	Uganda
Resistance by management to transparent decision-making	27.9	35.6	33.3
Little respect for the use of evidence	27.9	30.9	34.7
Difficult to discuss performance objectively because of the hierarchy	38.5	40.3	42.7
Senior managers fear admitting mistakes or problems	54.8	49.0	46.7
Senior managers consider M&E as a means to control staff	44.2	43.0	37.3
Problems not seen as an opportunity for learning and improvement	40.4	45.0	46.7

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Problems not seen as an opportunity for learning and improvement

Source: Chapter 4

Introduction to Analytical framework

Builds on :

- Science of Using Science's framework (Langer, Gough, Tripney 2016)
- The Context Matters framework (Weyrauch, Echt and Suliman, 2016)

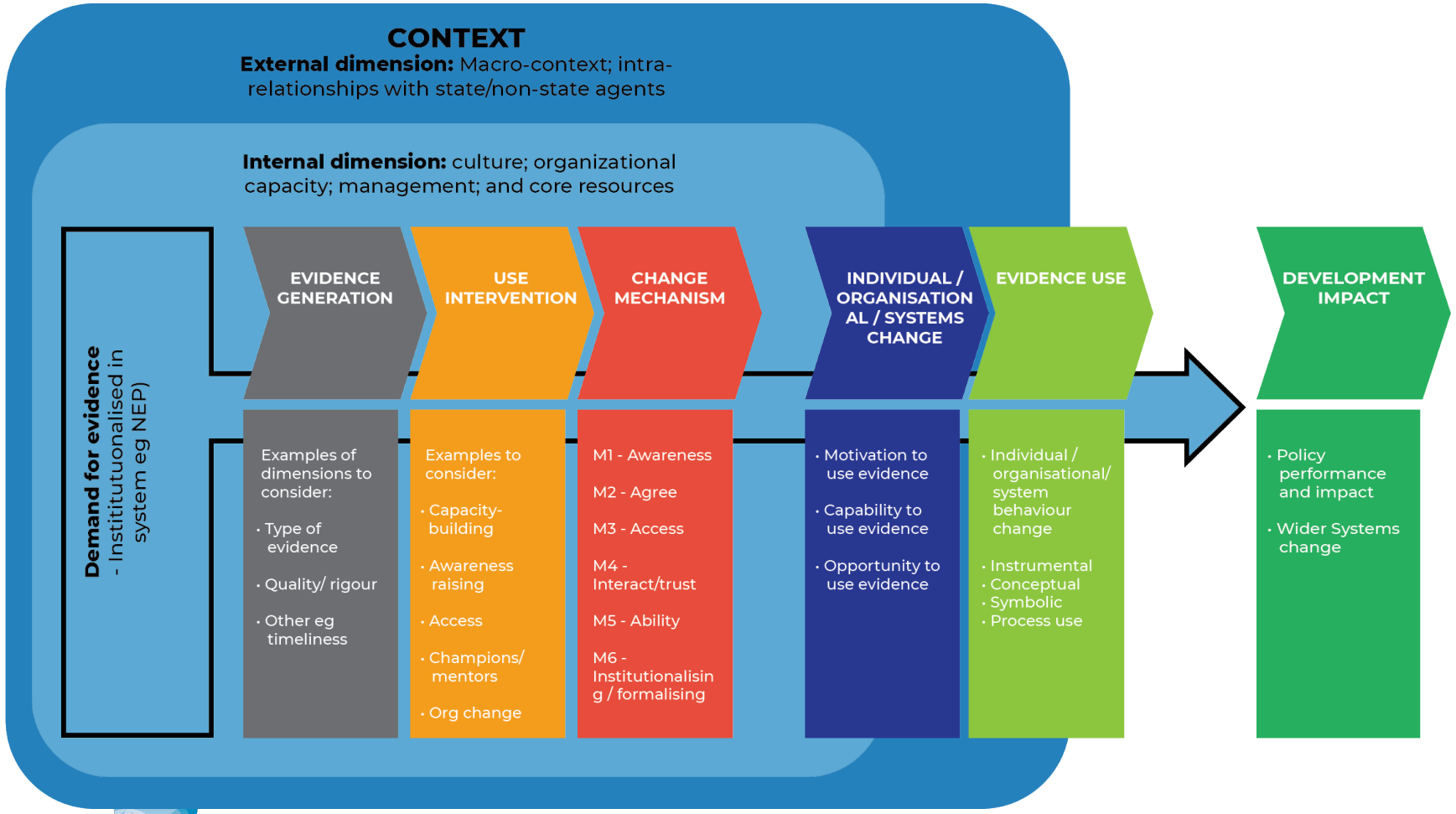
What does the framework do?

- to investigate and unpack the effectiveness of programmes and instruments aiming to support decision-makers' use of evidence.
- to present an inductive analytical tool to explore evidence-use interventions. The framework does not constitute a deductive analytical tool or normative framework outlining what or how interventions *should* lead to positive impacts on decision-makers' use of evidence.
- to structure the generated research and tacit knowledge evidence-base in a consistent manner which allows us to identify patterns in the *overall* evidence-base *across* case studies;

  → allows for cross-learning and collaboration around synergies of different EIDM interventions and approaches.

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Analytical framework/TOC



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Use for policy and practice

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What instrumental change happened?

Case	Policy change /legislation	Change in procedures/ processes	Change in budget
Education		Eg guidelines and criteria	Modernise MIS
Violence	PoA, informed Victim Emp. Bill, GBV Strategic Plan	Coordinating structure. Targets for MTSF (Plan)	$13 m 2018/19, $22m 2019/2020.
Procurement	Input to new law	Revised thresholds for procurement	
Rapid Response Service	Evidence used for Policy for Food Fortification	Issuing microprostol through healthcare workers. Printers at hub points	
Agriculture	New policy and draft Act	Involvement of producers in sector management	
Wildlife	New Act passed	Board of KWS. Wildlife recognised as land use option and landowners can apply for licenses Processes and outcomes of wildlife crime cases	Changes in compensation for wildlife mooted but lack of funds to implement
Tobacco taxation	New tax directive passed by ECOWAS.		

Conceptual, process, symbolic use important too

- **Conceptual use**
  - Tobacco – capability and understanding to argue for tobacco control at international fora.
  - DBE – NSNP - deepened stakeholders' understanding of the activities, opportunities for better implementation, and utility
- **Process use**
  - FLBP – the TOC workshop brought together officials from higher education, National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), civil society groups, provincial/national officials to better understand key components of the programme (conceptual and process use).
- **Positive symbolic use**
  - Benin - as one of the first evaluations commissioned by the BEPP, the 2009 agricultural sector evaluation enhanced the importance of evaluations in providing evidence for policy making and implementation.
  - Uganda - demonstrating to PPDA the importance of evaluations to review of regulations, guidelines.
- **Some *unintended uses* included :**
  - The lessons being used to widen the work e.g. from community participation in one sector to development of guidelines for wider public participation with Parliament, Kenya Wildlife;
  - Rebuilding trust between government and stakeholders e.g. Kenya, Benin and SA VAWC;
  - The evaluation being used for teaching (e.g. Uganda Procurement);
  - Promoting further research in the area (e.g. ECOWAS Tobacco).

10

Immediate outcomes – changes in capability, motivation or opportunity

Changes in *capability* (to generate and use evidence, to advocate for the programme or policy, for funding)

- Benin Agriculture, strengthening technical capability of producer organisations in content and evidence skills, helped them to play a strong role. Also strengthened their confidence (psychological capability) to play a leading role in development of the policy and the Act.

Changes in *motivation* to use evidence

- Motivation contrasts with compliance mindset common to these countries.
- Eg Parliament of Kenya which used the experience with wildlife to develop guidelines for participation across the board.

Stimulating/taking advantage of *opportunities* to use evidence

- Eg in Violence case the dialogue process involved National Treasury, so provided opportunity of national budget process to increase the budget for violence prevention.

And in combination

- In many cases was combination that led to significant and sustained change.
- Eg opportunity to provide inputs into the new wildlife act matched by increased capability of Parliament to manage a participatory process, and to supply and use evidence. Motivation often driven by key champions, but also by collective energy from stakeholders. If motivation of key champions or stakeholders were not sustained, the Act might have passed, but the drive to take forward the key elements of the Act might have been compromised.

Examples of use interventions around the Diagnostic Review of Violence Against Women and Children

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Mechanism	Example of interventions to promote use arising in the cases
Awareness of the potential of evidence (M1)	Training senior managers in the public service in SA, Benin and Uganda on evidence (Goldman et al., 2019) Training and awareness raising on the potential and value of evidence (e.g. Rapid Response Services) Training of citizen groups in Ghana to analyse and utilise data to demand accountability and better sanitation services as well as in governance and accountability literacy more broadly
Agreement/ understanding/ commitment (M2)	Establishing dialogue processes to build agreement and commitment Use of evaluation steering committees to formalise partnerships
Access to evidence (M3)	Producing accessible short reports and policy briefs Workshops Knowledge repositories
Interaction and trust (M4)	Dialogue processes Knowledge brokering Workshops/ breakfast meetings Networks and communities of practice
Ability and confidence (M5)	Capacity-building (e.g. learning-by-doing, workshops, training courses) Coaching/mentoring Experiential learning Online learning
Institutionalising/ formalising (M6)	Use of management responses and improvement plans to formalise action Embedded support e.g. knowledge brokering Institutionalisation of NES Making public the analysis

Associated with a NES

- **Demand** from government
- Evaluation Steering Committee, **managing collaboratively** the evaluation process
- **Process facilitation/knowledge brokering** by central government unit
- **Capacity building** of key stakeholders around evaluation
- Developing elements (eg theory of change) with stakeholders
- **Independent evaluators** to ensure credibility
- Validation **workshop** with stakeholders
- **Simple evaluation report** (1/5/25)
- Management response/ **Improvement plan**
- **Quality assessment** of the evaluation
- **Report public** on website
- **Approval by Cabinet**

Elements seen outside the NES

- **Demand**, eg from donor/other stakeholders
- Use of **international standards** and conventions as a reference
- Creation of **coalition**, e.g. civil society coalition in Senegal to support action on tobacco taxation
- **Process facilitation/knowledge brokering** role of internal unit, either in government (eg Procurement), parliament (Wildlife) or CSO (eg CDD in Sanitation case)
- **Templates** and processes for stakeholder inputs
- Scoping study/**situation analysis**
- **Proactive outreach** and engagement with communities
- **Capacity building** of stakeholders e.g. CSOs
- Variety of **dialogue** methods including debates and 1:1 meetings
- Frequent **briefings** of key stakeholders during the process
- **Sharing drafts** amongst stakeholders
- Sharing evidence in **accessible formats** e.g. short evidence briefs.
- Presenting and showcasing findings at different **fora**
- Use of **peer comparison** to promote use

Emerging lessons

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Emerging lessons: context is critical

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Evidence use does not take place in a vacuum – context is critical..

Significance of the policy challenge/ question	Commitments made to international or regional agreements
	High levels of financial investments
	Legal requirement for legislative review
Catalysts of change	Crises
	Pressure from development partners
	Pressure from civil society
Broader political and socio-cultural environment	Timing, for example, proximity to election period
	Space for public participation and civil society engagement
	Level of interest and engagement of stakeholders
Institutional environment	Systems and processes
	Evidence champions
	Leadership
	Mandates and capacities
	Culture – Learning and accountability
	Linkages and relationships

What have we learned about promoting the use of evidence?

- **Context matters** – make sure you understand it

  'Evaluation is a rational enterprise that takes place in a political context'
  (Weiss, 1993 p94)

- **Evidence use is complex**. It begins long before an evidence journey and needs to be planned for and woven into the individual and institutional culture. It is a worthwhile investment.
- **Ensure there is demand**
- **Ensure credibility, quality and legitimacy** in the evidence journey - often it is the messenger as well as the message
- Evidence use **takes place in in multiple ways** (instrumental, conceptual, symbolic, process use, etc.)

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Applying evidence use interventions to build capability and motivation

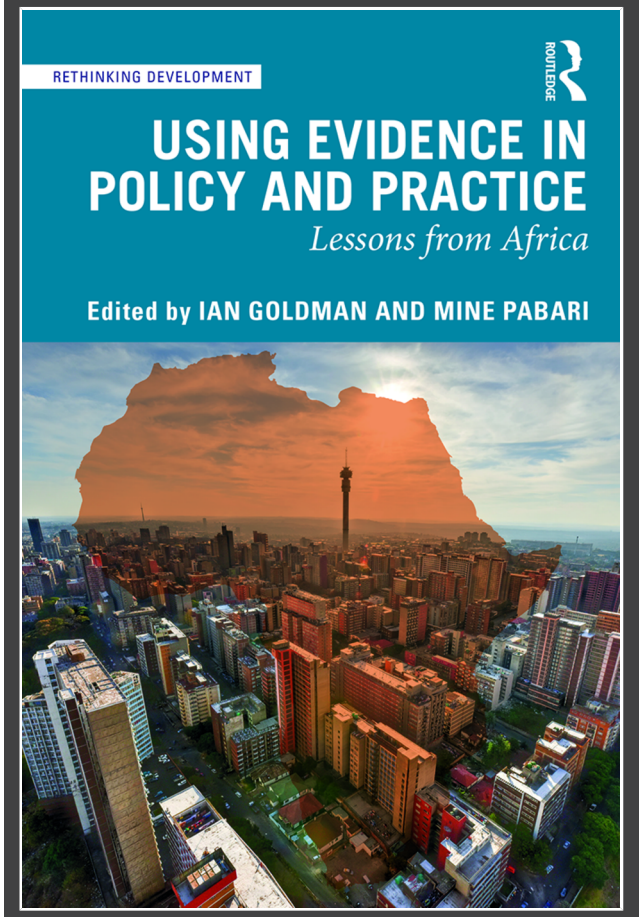
- **Passive provision** of evidence does not work
- The process needs **active facilitation** and **knowledge brokering**
- Establishing **formal structures** to manage the process and maintain ownership of stakeholders
- **Build capacity** of managers, decision makers and stakeholders
- **Package and communicate** the evidence simply and effectively
  - Ensuring evidence **relevant** to policy concerns, evidence stakeholders and wider context;
  - Going beyond simply describing a problem to providing **practical and realistic solutions**;
  - Evidence and recommendations being as **specific** as possible – the more generic, the less likely they are to be used;
  - Evidence recognising the **values** of its recipients.
    - In the case of Violence, disconnect in underlying values of researchers and public servants. Recognising this, researchers focused findings on systems and processes rather than beliefs and values – which, in turn, mitigated risks of rejection and enabled use;
  - Formats of reports being **readable and accessible**, e.g. 1/5/25 page for reports.
- Having an **evidence system** makes some of the elements automatic.

Conclusions

- **Analytical framework** very helpful to be explicit about behaviour changes required for evidence to be used, and to understand what leads to that change. Should be valuable for policy makers and practitioners seeking to expand use of evidence in their work.
- Cases demonstrate it **is possible to use evidence to get improved policies** and improved practice, though not yet possible to conclude this results in improved longer-term societal and developmental impact.
- **Key factors** in successful use of evidence to improve policy making include understanding context, involving stakeholders continuously, ensuring demand for evidence and an appropriate supply, using change mechanisms, building capability and motivation, establishing buy-in at higher levels, and exploiting opportunities within the policy process.
- To do this effectively the **key roles of process facilitation and knowledge brokering** have to be given more weight, in centre of government and internal evidence/M&E units, and in the skill sets and job descriptions of the people employed there. This is also true for researchers who seek to influence policy and practice.



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Table of Contents

Forewords, *Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister, Republic of Uganda and Paul Cairney, University of Stirling*; 1. Introduction to the Book; 2. An Introduction to Evidence-Informed Policy and Practice in Africa; 3. Using Evidence in Africa; 4. Mere Compliance or Learning; 5. Using Evaluations to Inform Policy and Practice in a Government Department; 6. Use of Evidence in a Complex Social

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Future webinars

7 May 09.00 New York time, organised by UNICEF/EVALSDGs. Focuses on Chapter 5, a case study on the use of evaluation evidence by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in South Africa, a department which has been a pioneer of using evaluations and other evidence. The webinar will draw out the lessons for evidence use emerging from this example of country-driven evaluation. Key speaker is Carol Nuga Deliwe, Chief Director, DBE. https://meet.unicef.org/trossmuller/PLHZ2Z9T

3 June 16.00-17.15 Kenya time. Hosted by AFIDEP. Chapter 10 'Parliament and public participation in Kenya'. Explores the role of Parliament in policy making through citizen engagement and public participation, drawing on the review of Kenya's Wildlife Conservation and Management Act 2013.

July Chapter 8 'Rapidly responding to policy queries with evidence: Learning from Rapid Response Services in Uganda'.

Aug (in French) Chapter 12 'Using evidence for tobacco control in West Africa'.

Sept Chapter 7 'The influence of local ownership and politics of the use of evaluations in policy making: The case of the public procurement evaluation in Uganda'.

Oct Chapter 11 'The contribution of civil society generated evidence to the improvement of sanitation services in Ghana'.

Nov Chapter 6 'Use of evidence in a complex social programme: case of an evaluation of the state's response to violence against women and children in South Africa'.

Dec (in French) Chapter 11 'The challenges and potential of evaluations to positively inform reforms: working with producers in the Benin Agriculture Sector'.

Evidence use is complex and begins long before an evidence journey. Evidence use needs to be planned for and woven into the individual and institutional culture – it is ultimately a worthwhile investment!

We will be working with specific government partners in 2020 to apply these lessons. If you would be interested to collaborate on this contact the editors below

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