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Using Evidence in Policy and Practice – Lessons from Africa

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CLEAR-AA
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Book launch

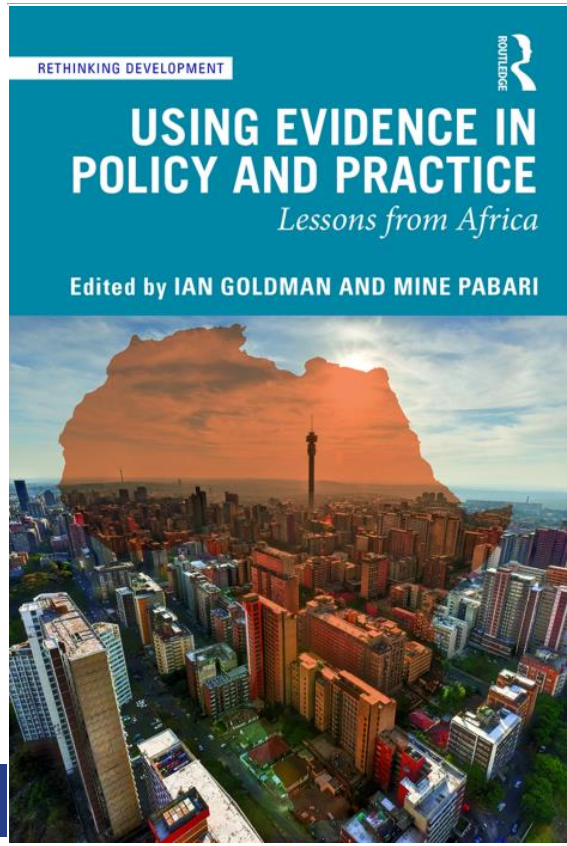
Debate Motion: The response to COVID-19 has been adequately informed by evidence.

How do the arguments in the debate relate to the framework in the book?

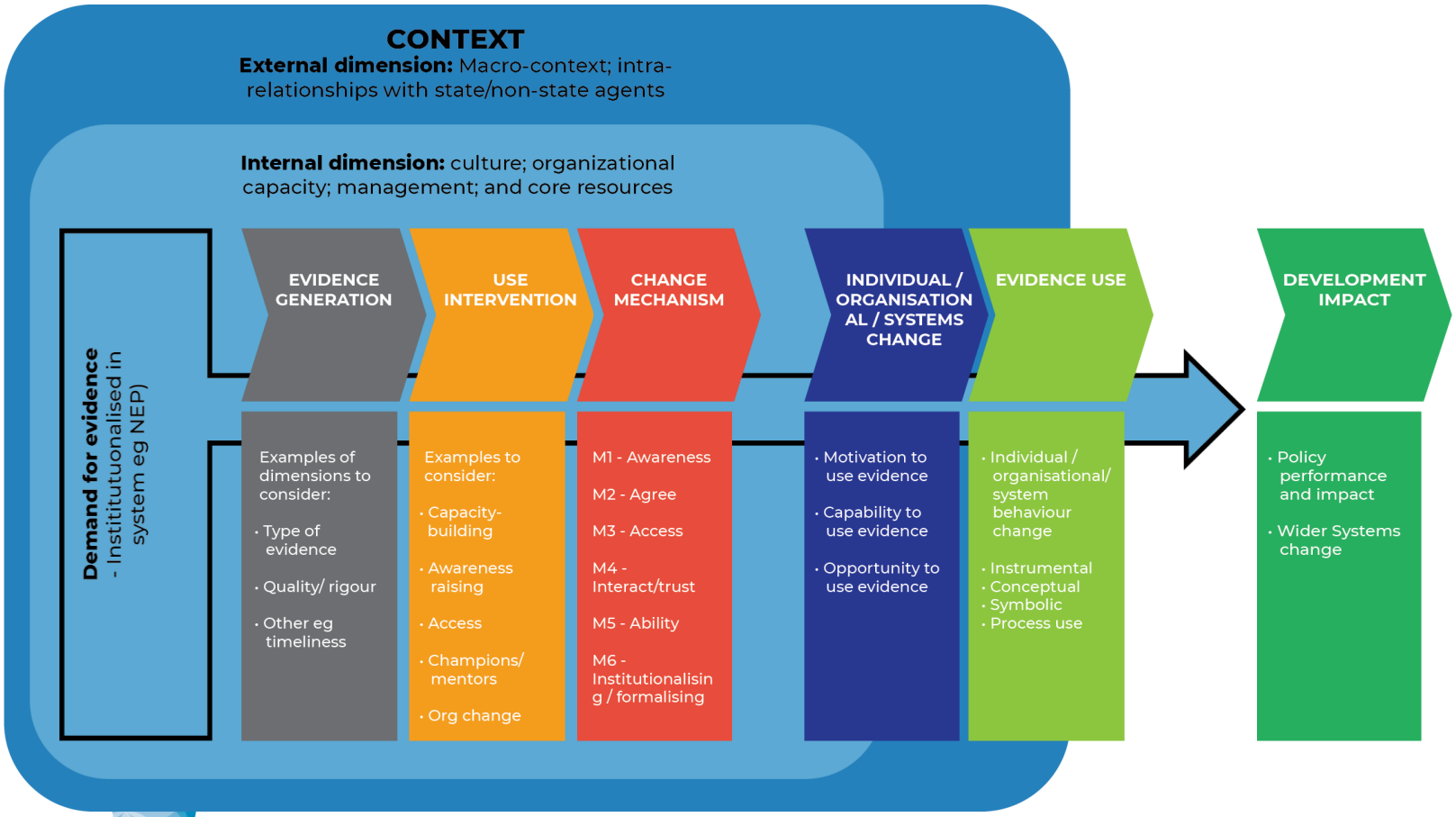
Professor Ian Goldman

17 August 2020

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Analytical framework/TOC



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CONTEXT

External dimension: Macro-context; intra-relationships with state/non-state agents

Internal dimension: culture; organizational capacity; management; and core resources

Contextual factors which facilitated use

- Crisis and need for answers
- Need for contextually relevant responses eg quarantine, testing
- International agreements/relationships – WHO
- Strong civil society with established relationships
- Skills, experience and expertise to take advantage of the opportunity
- Some effective knowledge brokers
- Science-based leadership



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CONTEXT

External dimension: Macro-context; intra-relationships with state/non-state agents

Internal dimension: culture; organizational capacity; management; and core resources

Barriers to use

- Too slow to respond (eg allowing international flights) and reactive
- Sometimes following too much models from the West (eg on application of model of lockdowns)
- Contradictory policies – gatherings allowed of up to 50 people but not at your home?
- Desire for political power in politicians
- Quality of evidence weak – eg data on vulnerable people at local government level
- State capacity
- Lack of will eg to prosecute corruption around COVID resources
- Coercion

Types of evidence

Research eg from WHO, on food issues, on hot spots

Evaluations eg rapid evaluations

Rapid research synthesis eg COVID-END

Evidence from citizens eg on police behaviour

Data from border points, hospitals, mortality statistics…but how accurate eg dying with COVID or from COVID

EVIDENCE GENERATION

How is evidence vetted

Examples of dimensions to consider:

- Type of evidence
- Quality/ rigour
- Other eg timeliness

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Use interventions

USE INTERVENTION

Interaction/ trust	• Regular interaction, forums through advisory committees, with universities
Agreement	• Negotiations through forums eg NEDLAC, National Task Force
Abilities	• Strengthening policy makers understanding of health and economic realities
Access	• Enabling convenient access to evidence – eg COVID-END • Preaching the message on social distancing etc (but more focused on urban areas)
Institutio-nalisation	

Examples to consider:

- Capacity-building
- Awareness raising
- Access
- Champions/ mentors
- Org change

CHANGE MECHANISM

M1 - Awareness

M2 - Agree

M3 - Access

M4 - Interact/trust

M5 - Ability

M6 - Institutionalising / formalising

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FACILITATION & KNOWLEDGE BROKERING

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)

- Building joint capability eg with CSOs
- Departments assembling evidence
- Also to share in international platforms

Changes in *motivation* to use evidence

- Needed answers now
- Motivation also for
- Changes in some countries as crisis strengthened to address health/economic issues

Stimulating/taking advantage of *opportunities* to use evidence

- government looking at what to do
- Learning from African and wider experience



Type of use

- **Instrumental**
  - Use of masks, lockdowns, focus on borders
  - Food parcels
  - School closure Kenya (but backwards and forwards in SA)
- **Conceptual use**
  - understanding how virus moves, and who it affects – still many gaps
- **Process use**
  - Deploy police here
  - Holding government to account
- **Symbolic use**
  - Negative – policy based evidence – abusing evidence
  - Positive – raising profile of evidence
- **Some *unintended uses* included :**
  -



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What have we learned about promoting the use of evidence?

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

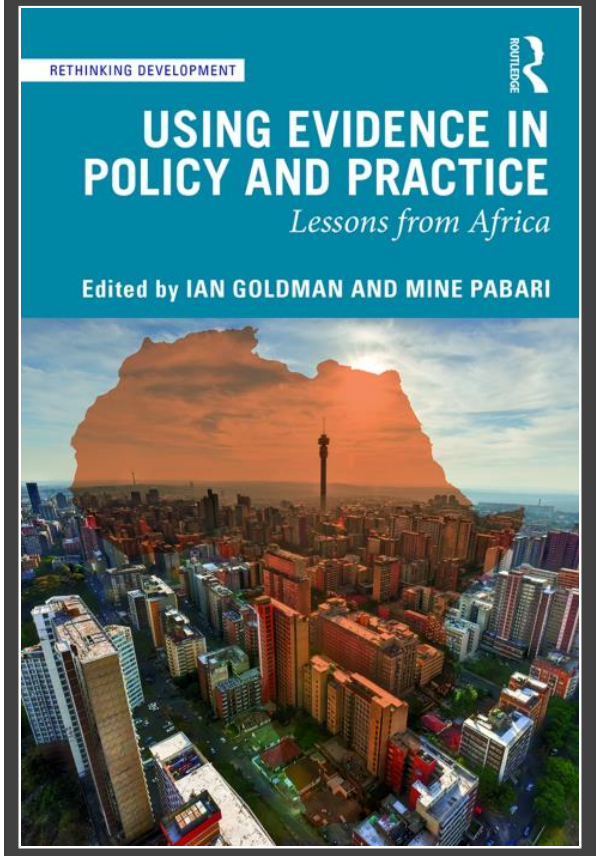
  '*Evaluation is a rational enterprise that takes place in a political context*' (Weiss, 1993 p94)

- **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 (eg NES)** makes some of the elements automatic.



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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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Jan 2021 Chapter 4 ‘Mere compliance and Learning – performance M&E culture in Benin, Uganda dn South Africa’

Feb Overall lessons from the book and application since launch

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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