

Monitoring & Evaluation

Strategy for Evaluating Evidence-Informed Policy Making Training Courses in Ghana and Zimbabwe



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Background

The VakaYiko consortium led by the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (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.

Working towards the first objective (equipping policy makers with the relevant skills to access, evaluate and use research evidence), a number of capacity building activities are conducted in Zimbabwe and Ghana.

In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network (ZeipNET) and INASP work with the Ministry for Industry and Commerce, the Ministry of Youth and the Parliament of Zimbabwe to improve the use of research evidence in response to departmental priorities. Additionally, a mentoring programme for Zimbabwean policy-makers is part of the plan.

In Ghana, the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS) and INASP work with the Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC). To ensure sustainability, an evidence-informed policy making (EIPM) course will be embedded into CSTC's training curricula. The course will also be adapted and run in different departments of the Parliament of Ghana.

This strategy seeks to define the scope and approach of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of VakaYiko EIPM training courses in Ghana and Zimbabwe.

Scope and approach of M&E

As outlined above, EIPM capacity building forms the core part of VakaYiko activities. It is thus crucial to thoroughly evaluate EIPM trainings for learning and accountability purposes.

For learning, the two main aims are:

1. To constantly improve EIPM content, facilitation and methodology in order to provide participants with high-quality training courses (Objective 1).
2. To communicate lessons learnt to other relevant stakeholders (Objective 2).

For accountability, the aim is:

3. To estimate the extent to which VakaYiko capacity-building activities equip the right people (e.g. policy makers) with the relevant skills, i.e. to access, evaluate and use research evidence (Objective 3).¹

This document will now describe each objective in more detail.

Objective 1

Constantly improve EIPM content, facilitation and methodology in order to provide participants with high-quality training

Different measures will be used to ensure internal learning (Formative Evaluation).

The training content is developed by INASP experts on EIPM using a learner-centred approach. Ongoing feedback on the materials with ZeipNET and GINKS ensure the relevance and applicability of the content for the different institutions in Zimbabwe and Ghana. Through a community of practice, future facilitators familiarize themselves with the content and ensure that they have sufficient expertise of the training topics. Ongoing self-reflection, through discussion rounds and facilitator feedback, will further complement internal learning.

Objective 2

Communicate lessons learnt to relevant stakeholders

Throughout the VakaYiko programme, INASP and partner organizations will gather data on what worked well, what did not work well and what could be improved. These lessons learnt can prove valuable for other stakeholders (partners, donors, media, NGOs) and the potential upscaling of EIPM capacity-building activities in other institutions or countries. VakaYiko seeks to communicate its lessons learnt on an ongoing-basis.

Objective 3

Equip policy makers with the skills to access, evaluate and use research evidence

This objective is vital as it attempts to answer the following important questions:

- a) Are we training the right people, i.e. policy makers?
- b) Are we providing relevant training for the targeted audience?
- c) How effective is our training?

The following describes each of these questions in turn:

¹ Reporting of the EIPM training courses will concentrate mainly on objective 1 and objective 3, whereas for the latter training effectiveness is of main concern.

a) Are we training the right people, i.e. policy makers who need more skills?

Participant selection is done on the basis of needs assessments in the different governmental institutions. The needs assessments target potential participants by identifying their job roles and job function, as well as their skills and knowledge gaps regarding EIPM. On the basis of the needs assessment, the future participants' motivation and a recommendation by the employing institution, a final participant selection is made. Ultimately the results from the pre/post self-assessments as well as participants' feedback will provide valuable insights as to whether the right participants have been selected.

b) Are we providing relevant training for the targeted audience?

The EIPM training courses consist of six different modules:

1. Introduction to EIPM
2. Steps to get to an informed decision
3. Different sources of evidence
4. Assessment of evidence
5. Research methods
6. Usage/communication of evidence.

The general training concept, and, as such, each training module, is prepared in a learner-centred manner (see below) and adapted to the needs of the participants and particularities of the different governmental institutions in Ghana and Zimbabwe. Adaptation is done via prior needs assessments and the explorative pilot module 'Introduction to EIPM'. An EIPM toolkit was developed to inform participants about the core concepts.

A learner-centred approach

For the VakaYiko capacity building activities a learner-centred approach was chosen due to the high expertise that is to be expected from the audience on the topic. A learner-centred approach focuses on skills development, e.g. critically evaluating evidence and solving problems. It engages learners in their learning processes and supports adults to construct their own knowledge, encouraging them to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning (e.g. assignment in which adults reflect, analyse and critique what they are learning and how they are learning it). Further, it encourages collaboration (e.g. research confirms that learners can learn from and with each other) and motivates adults by giving them more control over learning processes.²

c) How effective is our training?

The M&E framework for the EIPM trainings is based on the widely used Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation.³ This model consists of the four different levels (Reactions, Learning, Behaviour Change/Transfer and Impact) with each level being considered a necessary prerequisite in order to reach the next one.

² Doyle, T. (2011) *Learner Centered Teaching: Putting the Research on Learning into Practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing

Weimar, M. (2013) *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

³ Kirkpatrick (1979) Techniques for evaluating training programs. *Training and development journal*: 178-192

1. **Reaction:** what learners thought and felt about the training and about their learning (e.g. learner was keen to acquire new research writing skills and liked the training)
2. **Learning:** the increase in knowledge or capacity as a result of the training (e.g. learner knows how to structure a scientific paper)
3. **Transfer / Behaviour Change:** the degree or extent of improvement in behaviour and capability and implementation (e.g. learner uses his new skills in daily practice)
4. **Impact:** the effects on the larger community resulting from the actions of the learner (e.g. policies are informed by evidence)

Kirkpatrick (1979) established that evaluation becomes more time-consuming, complicated and expensive the higher the level, i.e. evaluation is easiest for Reaction level and hardest for Impact level. Due to these and further feasibility constraints, INASP decided to internally evaluate its capacity-building programme up to the Learning level and, if resources allow, up to the Transfer/Behaviour Change level. It is acknowledged that the final external evaluation by *itad* may look into Transfer/Behaviour Change too, and perhaps even Impact level.⁴

Evaluating EIPM training effectiveness

This section details the methodology used to assess the Reaction, Learning and Behaviour/Transfer levels.

Reaction Level

In order to assess participants' reactions towards the training they will be asked to rate different statements, such as '*I enjoyed the workshop*', '*The workshop was relevant for my work*' and '*I learned a lot*', on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from '*Completely disagree*' to '*Completely agree*'. Answers are quantified and can then be used as a general indicator for participants' Reaction level and a screening instrument to identify problems and outliers.

Quantification is defined as follows:

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Score</i>
Completely agree	5 Points
Agree	4 Points
Neither agree nor disagree	3 Points
Disagree	2 Points
Completely disagree	1 Point

Learning level will be evaluated once Reaction level is considered positive and sufficient for subsequent learning with an average of at least four points across all statements. Reactions may be triangulated with in-training feedback sessions and impressions by the facilitators.

⁴ Please see: <http://www.itad.com/projects/evaluation-of-approaches-to-build-capacity-for-use-of-research-evidence-bcure/> (Link accessed 09.02.2015) for more information about BCURE external evaluation

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Learning Level

In order to assess if learning has taken place participants will be asked to fill out a pre/post self-assessments. The pre/post self-assessments consist of two parallel versions⁵ of open- and closed-ended knowledge-based questions, i.e. scenarios, definition questions, multiple choice and yes/no questions. Thereby, the questions of the pre/post self-assessment represent the core training concepts and are also intended to trigger the participants' own learning. Scoring of the questions will be done by the EIPM training facilitators using pre-defined scoring criteria. Results will be cross-checked by an INASP M&E Officer.

Pre self-assessment may be integrated into needs assessment surveys and post self-assessment will usually be conducted at the end of the whole training course, i.e. after all modules have been completed. A major difference between the EIPM training conducted in Ghana and in Zimbabwe is that in Zimbabwe each module has a separate training session, whereas in Ghana training will be conducted in one complete session. However, core concepts of the trainings are the same for Ghana and Zimbabwe, which is why the pre/post self-assessments are very similar.

Transfer/Behaviour Change Level

Participants will receive assignments in-between (Zimbabwe) and after the training sessions (Ghana and Zimbabwe) in order to further practice what has been learned. Currently, the assignments are still in the planning stages but they may be subjected to M&E processes to draw information around the Transfer/Behaviour change level. This additional information should then be triangulated, e.g. semi-structured interviews with colleagues and line managers, follow-up focus group discussions with participants, and/or a survey three to six months after the end of the EIPM trainings. It will be left to available resources within INASP if more in depth analysis of Transfer/Behaviour Change Level will be conducted.

Limitations and risks

This M&E strategy implies gathering a lot of data, especially regarding internal learning and evaluating EIPM training effectiveness (Objective 1 and Objective 3). The latter of these in particular necessitates advanced M&E capacities within the partner organizations (GINKS and ZeipNET). The partner organizations would have to implement and organize the training in country in order to prepare and apply the different assessment tools, before analysing and integrating the data into an evaluation report. In order to mitigate the risk of partners having insufficient M&E skills, INASP conducted M&E training for partner organizations at the beginning of 2015. Further M&E support will be provided to partner organizations by INASP's M&E Officer throughout the programme.

Furthermore, it is out of our control how many participants will take part in the different M&E assessments, which could reduce the generalizability of outcomes and internal learning.

⁵ We use parallel rather than the same questions in order to decrease testing effects, i.e. learning just because of taking the pre self-assessment.