

Mentorship Programme

A Strategy for Evidence-Informed Policy Making in Zimbabwe



INASP & ZeipNET

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Overview

During the third year of the Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) programme, the VakaYiko consortium will implement a mentorship programme for beneficiary institutions in Zimbabwe: the Parliament of Zimbabwe; Ministry of Industry and Commerce; and Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment.

The main purpose of this initiative is to sustain and build on the momentum gained during the Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM) course, which comes to an end in September 2015. Six participants from the courses, drawn from across from the three institutions, will be selected to take part in the mentorship programme.

The programme aims to build a small core of individuals with more in-depth experience of using evidence to inform policy decisions and to act as focal points and advocates for EIPM within their institutions.

Background

While the EIPM course speaks to the first strand of the VakaYiko capacity building approach, which focuses on building individuals' skills, the mentorship programme will tackle the second strand. This is concerned with processes for handling research evidence in policy making departments. The third strand, which focuses on building a wider enabling environment, is being addressed in Zimbabwe through a series of public policy dialogues and knowledge cafés.

Mentees will be selected from among participants in the EIPM course. After completing all four modules of the course, mentees will be familiar with the concept of EIPM and will have practised searching for, accessing, assessing, and communicating research evidence effectively. They will also have reflected extensively on the use of evidence in their own workplace.

It is anticipated that participants will, however, face a number of attitudinal and institutional barriers as they attempt to implement lessons learned during the course in their own workplaces. These include dealing with limited IT infrastructure and other resource constraints, lack of knowledge and appreciation about EIPM, as well as

The VakaYiko capacity building approach



resistance to change.¹ The mentorship programme aims to support participants in addressing and thinking of alternatives to overcome these issues.

Objectives

This mentorship programme is concerned with processes for handling research evidence in policy making departments and wants to support practical application of the EIPM course content of the mentees. In this way, the capacity building programme will be sustained and expanded.

The key objectives are as follows:

- Further strengthen the skills and knowledge of the mentees and support knowledge transfer to the workplace through the Action Plan (Objective 1)
- Address some of the attitudinal and procedural barriers limiting the implementation of EIPM in specific government institutions (*troubleshooting*) with the Action Plan (Objective 2)
- Strengthen sustainability and knowledge sharing across the research-into-policy system by expanding professional networks (Objective 3)

Although these objectives target mentees and their institutions in particular, the relationship is envisaged to be two-way and equal. The mentors (ZeipNET) will also have the opportunity to enhance their own communication and leadership skills by supporting institutional change.

Programme structure and guiding principles

i. Selection of mentees

Six participants in the capacity building programme (two from each institution), who demonstrate interest and commitment to expand and embed the use of evidence in their institutions, will be selected. At least three of the mentees will be female.

Besides other criteria that may be proposed by beneficiary institutions, criteria for selection will be assessed through a written application based on the following:

- Commitment to develop their skills and those of others
- Collaborative working style with a commitment to expanding networks and to sharing learning with others as well as receiving feedback
- Description of how he/she will benefit from this programme
- An Action Plan outlining specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely measures they intend to take to put into practice learnings from the training and to address attitudinal and institutional barriers
- Mentees should have attended at least 80% of the skills for EIPM workshops.

¹ Please see VakaYiko Needs Assessments for more specific information on institutional barriers to using EIPM in the institutions [here](#).

ii. Establishing a mutual relationship

The first step of a mentoring relationship is a meeting between the mentor and mentee to initiate a mutual relationship and to agree upon goals and expectations. These will be outlined in a mentorship agreement which will set out key information including frequency and type of communication, schedules and timescales, roles and responsibilities.

Mentees will also prepare and discuss individual Action Plans with their mentors at this stage, resulting in a final Action Plan signed by both the mentor and mentee (Objective 1 + 2).

iii. Regular mentoring meetings and support in Zimbabwe

Continuous engagement of partners by ZeipNET will focus on areas for learning and improvement. This will involve meetings and on-the-job familiarization visits, and will operate at two levels.

The lower-level engagement will address areas where mentees (operative staff) require further capacity building in both knowledge and skills, as identified in the Action Plans. The higher-level engagement will target management and will further aid the implementation of recommendations, principles and lessons learned in the pilot including identification of areas to improve processes and systems. The higher-level engagement will also serve to reinforce the lower-level engagement (Objectives 1 + 2 + 3).

iv. Learning exchange visit to the UK

The mentees will embark on a brief (one to two week) exchange visit to the UK. The aim will be to build on the mentees' skills, knowledge and networks with relation to EIPM, and to enable them to share their experience and insights of policy processes in Zimbabwe with a wider audience. Activities will include site visits, roundtables, and workshops with the UK parliament and other government institutions as well as relevant research centres. These will be split between general/group activities, and specific meetings targeted at individuals based on their areas of interest (Objectives 1 + 3).

Follow-up and ongoing support

A key part of the mentorship programme will focus on ensuring that mentees strengthen their existing networks to provide ongoing support for the embedding of EIPM within institutions. After the mentorship programme ends, the VakaYiko Consortium will also be available to provide further technical support through ZeipNET and consortium partners (Objective 3).

Monitoring and evaluation

After the mentoring relationship formally comes to an end, outcome evaluation takes place. For this, post-mentorship questionnaires will be sent out to mentors and mentees and information gathered throughout the implementation phase will be analysed.

According to the objectives of the mentorship programme, guiding questions may be:

- How was the mentorship relationship, as well as the overall programme, perceived by participants? What was positive? What was not relevant? What could be improved next time?
- How far has the Action Plan been implemented? What was successful and what was not? What role did the mentor and other parts of the programme play in that process? (Objective 1 + 2)
- Which institutional and attitudinal barriers have been addressed and solved? Where is further support needed? (Objective 2)
- In how far has transfer of EIPM skills to the workplace been taken place? (Objective 1)
- In which other ways did the mentor/mentee benefit from their relationship and the programme in general?
- How is the mentee using his EIPM network and has it increased due to the mentorship programme? (Objective 3)