



# USING EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT LEGISLATIVE, OVERSIGHT FUNCTIONS AND POLICYMAKING:

Lessons from three cases in Africa



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# Acronyms

<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>INGOs</b>	International Non-governmental Organizations
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MPs</b>	Members of Parliament
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-governmental Organizations
<b>PICOT</b>	Partners in Conflict Transformation
<b>TSUE</b>	Tools to Strengthen the Use of Evidence
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAIDS</b>	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>USDA</b>	United States Department of Agriculture

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# I. Introduction

**There is growing recognition of the importance of evidence, particularly evidence from evaluations, in national decision-making and the crucial role of parliamentarians and their support staff in ensuring that evidence-based approaches are used for strengthening oversight, budgeting resource appropriation, legislation, and policy making across all sectors.**

Parliamentarians and their staff need data and evidence to make decisions that effectively, equitably, and justly allocate resources and meet people's social and economic needs. However, they face major technical and political challenges related to the generation and the use of evidence to inform policies. This challenge is acute in Africa given the dearth of information and analysis about the conditions, problems, and solutions of social and economic development. Parliaments in Africa lack the capacity to compile and use evidence in the design, oversight, and evaluation of legislation and policies on the critical economic and social issues facing various countries on the continent. Better use of evidence by Parliamentarians, and associated research and policy making bodies will facilitate better development outcomes, and more transparent and efficient governance.

In view of this, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and its implementing partners (University of Rhode Island, USA and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana), under the "Assessment, Analysis and Development of Tools to Strengthen the use of Evidence in Policies and Legislation" project conducted desk research and a survey to assess the current use of evidence by the parliamentarians as well as their capacity to generate, access, and use evidence in their work.

The case studies presented in the report were prepared to underscore specific cases where data has been used to inform policies and laws. The case studies were from Ghana, Uganda and Sierra Leone. In addition to these three cases, two other sources were drawn from literature to enrich the discussion on the use of evidence to inform and improve policies and legislations in Africa. The two books are summarized under Section V, in support of the cases.

## Methodology

A selective review of literature was conducted to inform this case study section. The review's focus was to gain a better understanding of cases where data was used to inform policies and laws. Diverse sources of evidence literature were used across the different cases, and a wide range of evidence interventions at the national level were examined. In undertaking this case review, the writers examined and articulated the various aspects of relevant peer-reviewed literature in an integrated and critical way. They made central connections to the subject matter and asked the kinds of questions that will shed new light on “what” evidence led to a bill (a draft of a proposed law presented to Parliament for discussion), and “how” that bill was later voted into law and its aftermath.

Of the many qualitative research methodologies that exist, the writers have chosen the case study approach: it is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the richness and complexity of a bounded social phenomenon (or numerous phenomena)—be it a social unit or system (Lichtman, 2014; Stake, 1995, 2005; Yin, 2018). The aim is to generate understanding and deep insights on cases where data was used to inform policies and laws and advance understanding of the use of evidence in African Parliaments.

As the reader would realize, the cases presented here are descriptive (Yin, *ibid.*): case study describes experiences and cases of how data was used to inform policies and laws and the real-life (national) context in which they occurred.

The writers are aware that some, if not all, of these cases align with interpretive constructivist philosophy (Schwandt and Gates, 2018), where the goal of describing and explaining how the struggle for national evidence use in Parliament is connected to larger structures and processes.

Three case studies are drawn from three countries of Sub-Saharan Africa that meet the criteria set above (evidence leading to a bill and later voted into law). The three cases cover a range of sectors—from health and overcoming gender inequality to local government processes.

# II. The Impact Of Data And Evidence Use In The Legislative And Oversight Functions Of Parliaments

The cases below – from Uganda, Ghana, and Sierra Leone – demonstrate that data and evidence use can inform and strengthen development policy, programs, and practice in Sub-Saharan Africa. The contextual drivers and the demand for evidence influenced how these data and evidence journeys played out in each country. A look at each case reveals changes in behavior at the individual, organizational and systems levels, resulting in changes in policy or practice.

In these cases, strengthening the capability to use data and evidence emerged as a key change component. Sometimes the ability was to generate and use evidence, but we also see examples of capacity to advocate for the evidence itself. Motivation to use evidence is the opposite of complacency. We clearly see examples of increase in motivation of local Ghanaian civil society organizations (CSOs) to push forward the Domestic Violence Policy in Ghana, or the impact of evidence generation in supporting Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) culture in improving performance in the public health sector in Uganda.

The most significant impact remains the changes in policy and practice. The three cases selected here are impactful in changing the status quo, as we sought to understand how and why that impact occurred. The broader outcomes from the different processes resulted mainly from instrumental use of data and evidence.

Outcomes included policy change in each of the three countries, and changes in procedures and processes. The outcomes also concern accepting change in policies using evidence through public dialogue and changes in the capacity to do so. All three cases show changes in policies or legislation. They also show changes at the process or procedure level, such as guidelines, criteria, thresholds for sanction, etc. Direct evidence of the policy change on HIV/AIDS helped put Uganda among the eight countries worldwide that have fully achieved the 90-90-90 targets by the end of 2020. In Ghana, civil society generated evidence led to policy and increased women's voice and agency on domestic violence. The evidence brought from several community-based reports in chiefdoms of Sierra Leone, which included complaints on the exclusion of the population from decision making, financial exploitation, tax collection issues, jurisprudence for money making, and issues on communal labor, led to a historic policy on local governance. While all this evidence,



each time, led to complaint or resistance from an opposing group, the complaints did not deter examination of the evidence by Parliament. None of the cases involved recommendations contradicting policymakers' beliefs and values.

The reader will also find inadvertent outcomes, sometimes arising where there has been public outcry or civil society protest. These associated results can have significant long-term impacts. For example, in 2004, evidence and data led to a pictorial campaign projecting the voices and faces of real victims, attracting media attention and the attention of parliamentarians. This helped lobby MPs. Other secondary outcomes included:

- ❖ The evidence being used to strengthen national M&E institutions, or inspire learning
- ❖ The evidence being used to inform other areas of work, for example in the HIV/AIDS case we see a movement from community participation in one sector to the development of datasets in global development measurements, serving as a lesson in global health intervention
- ❖ Strengthening the capacity of stakeholders: government, INGOs, NGOs, national research institutions, and the media, to mention a few to use evidence in decision making would increase their likelihood of using the evidence.

- ❖ The use of evidence to support a policy position of government can to the building of trust between government and the population
- ❖ Attracting funding for evidence-based work
- ❖ Engaging structures and systems in higher institutions of learning to generate, disseminate and build capacity of users for such data. (in Uganda, for example, health data is managed from the Makerere University)
- ❖ Promoting further research in the area, or in another related area of social interest.

*Sometimes, partisan political considerations in some countries in Africa may compel governments to look away from existing evidence in making policy, no matter how compelling. A case in point is the Uganda HIV AIDs Prevention and Control Bill which created a huge uproar among sections of the population in the country because the government overlooked evidence that could have informed a better policy. Some CSOs for instance cited the bill as being discriminatory.*

# III. Case Studies

## Case I: Uganda's HIV/AIDS Prevention And Control Bill

### The Background

The population of Uganda is estimated at 42 million as of 2018 (World Bank, 2019), with the majority residing in rural areas. Uganda is a low-income country with an estimated GDP growth of 5.3% in 2018 (African Development Bank, 2019). Health care funding is inadequate, with total health expenditure estimated at 7.2% of GDP. The sector is characterised by a household out-of-pocket health care expenditure estimated at 41% (WHO, 2017).

The first reported case of HIV/AIDS was identified on the shores of Lake Victoria in the early 1980's (Serwadda et al., 1985 cited in Broadbent, 2014). HIV transmissions in the country were mainly through sexual intercourse, resulting in about 76% of new infections. By the end of 1996, there were 51,344 reported cases of AIDS and this number increased to 55,861 by the end of 1991. These numbers were considered huge underestimates since most cases were not reported in the country (Pathfinder International, 2000). Also, the number of HIV infected persons by the end of 1999 was estimated at 1,438,000.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has been considered the country's most significant development challenge. But the challenge has been met with development success—thanks to the government's efforts, through its M&E culture, in improving performance in the public sector (Goldman and Pabari, 2021). Therefore, Uganda has been heralded by the international community as the archetypal African “success story” in tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

### From Evidence to Policy

Uganda established mechanisms within government to improve the quality of policies through evidence. Since 2005, the Office of the Prime Minister has led efforts to strengthen the national M&E system. To date, over 30 evaluations have been conducted with various inputs into policies using this system. The health sector is one area where these evaluations have been critical in generating evidence (Goldman and Pabari, *ibid*).

Until 2010, Uganda did not have a comprehensive national HIV/AIDS Policy, though some efforts were made in 2004 to draft one. However, provisions for an HIV Prevention Strategy were contained in the Health Sector Strategic Plan 2006-2010, the National Health Policy 2010/11-14/15 and the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2007/08-11/12.

With the help of evidence from the national M&E system, the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Bill was subsequently put forward in 2010 to provide a legal framework for preventing and controlling HIV and reducing its transmission.

The Bill was presented after research undertaken by the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) on the virus's transmission modes. The study revealed three principal factors: complacency, commercial sex workers, and transmission within couples. The commission coordinates the Global Fund to Fight AIDS,

Tuberculosis, and Malaria and is responsible for HIV/AIDS response. It leads the design, implementation, and monitoring of the national HIV/AIDS strategy.

The Bill was largely described as flawed and discriminatory. The opposition from CSOs and NGOs to the Bill is built on human rights, whereas there has been mention of politics influencing HIV/AIDS statistics to secure funds from international donors. Over 30 organisations were aligned in opposition to the Bill led by the Ugandan Network on Law Ethics and HIV/AIDS, with other players being the National Coalition of Women Living with HIV/AIDS and Action Aid, among others.

The Bill was tabled in Parliament by the head of the HIV/AIDS and Related Matters Committee and was referred to the Social Services Committee for scrutiny. The committee proposed amendments with consultations from the relevant ministry and civil society groups. The Bill could not go to the plenary for a Parliamentary vote, and to enable the committee of the entire Parliament to pass it into law, because of the 2010 election and the commencement of a new Parliament in the country.

However, President Yoweri Museveni signed the Bill into law in August 2014, against calls by some CSOs that the bill was discriminatory. This is an instance where despite evidence against a policy, it was still made law; an instance where political power got the upper hand over evidence.

### **Implementation of the Bill**

Statistics from the Ministry of Health of Uganda, part of the national M&E system (Goldman and Pabari, *ibid*), state that the country is among the

eight countries worldwide that have fully achieved the 90-90-90 targets by the end of 2020. The 90-90-90 target is an ambitious target by UNAIDS to help end the AIDS pandemic. The target is aimed at ensuring that: (1) by 2020, 90% of all people living with HIV will know their status; (2) by 2020, 90% of all people diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy; and (3) by 2020, 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression (UNAIDS, 2014).

Also, data from the AIDS Information Centre indicate a decline in HIV/AIDS prevalence and infection rates in Uganda since 1992 (Pathfinder International, 2000).

Some other factors seem to have taken precedence – such as the extreme level of donor funding and technical assistance. While the Bill was extremely flawed and discriminatory, having any legal framework at all enabled donors to provide a huge amount of support and resources. Perhaps it was these resources that made the difference and not the quality of the Bill.

### **Partners**

Uganda connected with the international community in its quest to control and prevent HIV/AIDS. Taking the lead was the World Health Organisation in 1986 and subsequently the World Bank Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Program for Africa, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, United Nations agencies, such as UNAIDS, among others. The involvement of donor agencies in the country's fight against HIV/AIDS contributed to the proliferation of CSOs and NGOs in the area.



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## Case II: Passing Of The Domestic Violence Law In Ghana

### Background

Domestic violence, as defined by the United Nations, is a pattern of physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner (UN, 2022).

Ghana has recorded several cases of domestic violence, especially toward women. Morris (2012), wrote in Human Rights Watch (2003) that 1 in 3 women had experienced physical abuse while 1 in 5 women had experienced psychological abuse. The Ghana Domestic Violence Act is the 732nd Act passed by the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana, officially described as: “An Act to provide protection from domestic violence particularly for women and children and for connected purposes” (ILO, 2007).

### Evidence to Policy

The cultural norms in the country placed women and children at a disadvantage. Women were especially experiencing violence from men. Several women had been reported as abused in their marital homes and there was no law to protect these vulnerable women and children from these acts of violence. In Using evidence in the policy and practice: lessons from Africa (Goldman and Pabari, 2021), Ghana was highlighted as an example of a country where civil society generated evidence has led to policy. Ghana's first legislation efforts were prompted by years of advocacy from key CSOs, women's rights organisations and international bodies.

The nationwide study conducted by the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre in 1999 showcased the prevalence of

intimate partner violence in Ghana. In the year 2000, several cases of women murdered in the country led to pressure from women groups on the government. In 2002 the Law Reform Commission report was sent to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice office. In 2002, the draft Bill was considered by the Office of the Attorney General and the first draft of the Bill was put together. In 2003 under a new Attorney General, the second draft of the Bill was drafted. The government then subjected the draft bill to national consultations to seek its passage. Between 2003 and 2004, the National Domestic Violence Coalition started consultations on the Bill with influential persons in government, Parliament and other entities. The group started a pictorial campaign which involved a collection of pictures of abused women, projecting voices and faces of real victims to the press, during meetings with parliamentarians, lobbying MPs. These public expressions presented themselves as strong evidence in support of the claims on domestic violence.

In 2006, Cabinet decided to send the Bill to Parliament for a debate, and in May 2006, the Bill had its first introduction before the House and was later referred to two Committees (the Joint Committee on Gender and Children, and the Committee on Constitutional, Parliamentary and Legal Affairs). There were different reactions towards the Bill from several quarters including from some Members of Parliament, who either accepted the contents, were against, or were indifferent about the bill. In 2007 however, after a long period of debate on the contents of the Bill in the media and Parliament, the Bill was finally passed into law (Ampofo, 2008).

The Act has garnered overwhelming support over the years. Several women are now reporting acts of violence. Some neighbours also report these acts of violence on their neighbouring victims which previously was unthinkable. Although the acts of violence have not been totally eradicated, there has been much progress after the Act was passed.

## Implementation

The Domestic Violence Act Fund was instituted towards funding the law by the Ministry of Finance of Ghana. The Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit was set up and gained recognition in investigating domestic violence issues. The Legislative Instrument (LI2237) was passed in Parliament in 2016 to allow the regulation of the Act.

## Results

After it was passed, the Domestic Violence Act 2007 remained a mere law because the legislative instrument to provide its framework for implementation was not ready until 2016. The Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit only has investigative powers and not enforcement powers. The Domestic Violence Fund had not been released even after a court order of 2017.

## Partners

The Domestic Violence Act 2007 had support from several CSOs and NGOs that provided evidence and led advocacy initiatives. The National Domestic Violence Coalition included Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment; Gender Violence Survivors Support Network; Action Aid-Ghana, the UN Gender Systems Programme for Promoting Gender Equality in Ghana, the ARK foundation, the Network for Women Rights, Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa, and International Federation of Women Lawyers. The Government of Ghana has offered immense support through its Ministries.

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## Case III: Chieftaincy Reform In Sierra Leone

### Background

Sierra Leone has a population of about 7,813,215 as of 2019. The country is composed of 5 regions, and these have been divided into 16 provincial districts and are fully represented in a unicameral Parliament. The provincial districts have been then divided into chiefdoms led by paramount chiefs. There are 16 parliamentary seats filled by paramount chiefs from the districts. A weak governance and corruption were among the main reasons for its 11 years of civil war that brought enormous destruction in the nation.

The chieftaincy system in Sierra Leone has not been without bereft of challenges. Several complaints have led to the request of reforms to properly streamline their duties. There were reports of discontent from rural folks emanating from abuses including huge taxation, unfair land allocations, forced communal labor, and absurd punishment of non-partakers in the voluntary labor, as well as exclusion of the masses including the youth and women and the poor from decision-making processes (Fanthorpe, 2004).

### Evidence Leading to the Policy

The evidence brought included several reports from several community-based discussions in chiefdoms where there were complaints, including the exclusion of the populace from decision making, financial exploitation, tax collection issues, jurisprudence for money making, and issues on communal labor (Fanthorpe, 2004). The Chiefdom Governance Reform Program (CGRP) facilitated public consultations in 75 chiefdoms between 1999 and 2001.

Research organized and sponsored by the international community including Campaign Good Governance (CGG) and other groups also included interviews that involved 31 individuals in total by 28 semi-structured interviews and 3 detailed email correspondences in a structured interview format.

The chiefs believed the evidence presented were only testimonies to discredit traditional leadership and sometimes invoke traditional rulers' experiential evidence against those who support reform. CSOs and NGOs received the evidence as true. The central government is however often indifferent on the evidence generated, for political reasons. To them the chiefs remain an integral part of the decentralization process.

The country has not been able to involve evidence in fully influencing policy. Bills were usually passed based on central government decisions—for example, the Local Government Act of 2004 and the Chieftaincy Act of 2009, both attempts to properly integrate chieftaincy into national governance. The Chiefdom and Tribal Administration Policy draft published in June 2011, and again in September 2011, was one policy on which both government and various stakeholders collaborated, supported by research. Evidence provided was used as the basis to pass the Bill.

### Implementation

The Acts were enacted by the Parliament of Sierra Leone and the President, and passed into law. Chiefdom administration has been incorporated into the local administration of the districts with a link to the central government.

The administration helps with the mobilization of taxes and assists with the distribution of resources in the districts.

## Results

There has been noticeable progress across the country with several policies targeted at the inclusion of local representatives to ensure the share of the “national cake” at rural levels. The National Land Policy, for example, is a result of tabled conversations among civil society, the central government, and the locals to safeguard land tenure rights.

In November 2011, national chiefdom governance and traditional administration policy was adopted. The policy reaffirms the importance of the institutions of chieftaincy and traditional administration. It aims to strengthen these institutions and their alignment with the decentralization framework.

## Partners

Many of its partners are foreign donors in the form of NGOs and CSOs championing and funding the advocacy and dialogues on the desired reforms. Notable among them are Campaign for Good Governance; Search for Common Ground; Partners in Conflict Transformation; the UK Department for International Development; civil societies organizations; Research and Policy in Development; and the United States Agency for International Development.

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## IV. Synthesis:

### A. What Does And Does Not Work In Using Evidence To Support Legislative, Oversight Functions And Policymaking?

#### The importance of the context

Across the case studies, the context within which the evidence and data experience took place significantly impacted how evidence was received by Parliament and used. The table below summarises this insight based on the three cases:

Table 1: The impact of context on how evidence was received by Parliament

Country	Contextual influence	Effect of the contextual influence in the evidence process
Uganda	Significance of the policy change	The Republic of Uganda's commitment with the international community to fight HIV/ AIDS
		Funding required to generate and use evidence
	Socio-political environment at time of evidence journey	Timing, proximity to (2010) election period
		Reluctance to discuss issues of HIV/ AIDS by the population
		Level of interest of Parliament and engagement by CSOs and other stakeholders
Ghana	Significance of the policy change	International focus on Ghana's record of gender balance with <i>Human Rights Watch</i> report on rape and psychological torture, corroborated by local data
		The rise of many CSOs at the time of the evidence journey with a focus on gender justice
	Socio-political environment at time of evidence journey	The public expression of the evidence journey, becoming widespread and used in advocacy and campaigns, lending support to lobby MPs
		The overwhelming support from the population to the CSOs bringing forth evidence



Sierra Leone	Significance of the policy change	An eagerness to turn the page on decades of civil war and injustice and attract international donors/ investors
		An entire overhaul of the community management system, in a country where paramount chiefs hitherto held all 16 Parliamentary seats
	Socio-political environment at time of evidence journey	Popular discontent about the ethics demonstrated by paramount chiefs
		Complaints brought forward by the citizens themselves, expressed not only through reports but also via organized focus group discussions

*The above table demonstrates that when there is little at stake, evidence and data might have little appeal for Parliaments even with the best of intentions.*

## How Parliament perceives the significance of the policy challenge:

How Parliament perceives the significance of a policy question is an important consideration in whether it will make an investment in the evidence and data being presented to it. In all of the case studies, countries already had high levels of awareness about the reality of the evidence being presented by CSOs or evidence producers. Also, parliamentarians do not want to attract the displeasure of international donors: except for Ghana, the other cases demonstrate a high level of engagement with donor funding.

## Political interest:

As seen from the literature review, policymaking is a political process. The political environment influenced whether politicians used evidence to support a change process. For example, how power is distributed, and decisions are made had a bearing on evidence use. In the Uganda case, the sitting president signed a Bill into law in 2014,

potentially because of the perceived political interest in driving the policy changes.

## The power of CSOs and citizens' data:

In all three cases, citizens felt strongly about the issue, were well organised, and had strong capabilities as well as agency and there was an enabling environment for participation. As demonstrated by these cases, CSOs and citizens were an important resource and citizen engagement helped to ensure evidence update by the Parliament.

## Crisis as a catalyzer:

The case study on Uganda demonstrates how the global fight against HIV/AIDS triggered the need for change, forcing the Ugandan Parliament to ensure that the evidence was taken seriously and used. However, we must recognise that crises may lead to rapid decisions being taken without using the best available evidence.

## B. How Best Can Evidence Be Used To Improve Legislative And Oversight Functions And Ways To Overcome Inherent Challenges?

As we have seen, in most cases it was the combination of increased capability, motivation, and opportunity which sustained the evidence and data use. Equally, coordinated efforts before, during and after the evidence generation process goes a long way to support evidence use in improving legislative and oversight functions of the Parliament. Examples from the case studies of how this combination works and ways to overcome inherent challenges include the following:

- ❖ Creating the space (such as focus groups) to jointly make sense of the evidence and providing the opportunity for various viewpoints around the evidence brought forward
  - ❖ Institutionalizing the use of the national M&E systems in support of data gathering, analysis, and use
  - ❖ Using forums and platforms to enable dialogue and debate between the different stakeholder groups, or between Parliaments and local populations
  - ❖ Ensuring skilled facilitation allows all parties to have an equal voice and creates safe and trusted spaces for meaningful dialogue.
- In the case studies where such facilitation took place this included ensuring that women and girls are protected to voice out their experience safely
- ❖ Awareness raising through informal and formal interactions, such as campaigns and advocacy. The more dialogue and interaction are favoured, the more trust is built between Parliamentarians and the people they represent
  - ❖ CSOs working together as a means of collaborating in the planning and managing the process – also called co-creation – helps to sustain the evidence journey and surmount challenges.

# V. For Further Reading

- I** Goldman, I. and Pabari, M. (2021) Using Evidence in Policy and Practice. Lesson from Africa. In this publication, Goldman, and Pabari focus on improving the understanding of how evidence use can help inform and strengthen development policy, programs and practice in Africa.

The book approaches evidence from the perspective of policy makers rather than researchers. It explores how governments in Africa can use evidence to improve their policies and programs, and ultimately, to achieve positive change for their citizens. Looking at different evidence sources across a range of contexts, the book brings policy makers and researchers together to uncover what does and doesn't work and why. Case studies used in the book were drawn from five countries (South Africa, Uganda, Benin, Kenya and Ghana) and the ECOWAS (west African) region. The case studies covered a range of sectors from education, wildlife, sanitation, through to government procurement processes.<sup>1</sup>

- 2** Linda S. Khumalo, Caitlin Blaser Mapitsa, Candice Morkel, Steven Masvaure and Matshidiso Kgothatso Semela (2022). African Parliaments: Systems of Evidence in Practice.

The publication provides a collection of chapters that not only covers issues of evidence within the realm of parliaments, but most importantly, has a very wide reach – touching most of the continent. It breaks the francophone/ anglophone barrier as well due to the inclusion of chapters from francophone countries. The manuscript is original in its contribution to deepening our understanding of evidence in African parliaments. Prior to this manuscript, hardly has any book contributed to our understanding of evidence in African parliaments with such a significant coverage. The chapter from Kenya, for example, is instructive in its contribution to our understanding of how sometimes there is a “clash” between evidence and politics, with the latter taking precedence in the decisions that members of parliament make, even in the face overwhelming evidence that could contribute to improving the livelihoods of the citizens that they represent. Case after case, the author(s) deploy(s) concrete examples to demonstrate the effects of politics on evidence.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Goldman and Pabari (2021). Using evidence in the policy and practice: lessons from Africa. London: Routledge. Retrieved from <https://www.routledge.com/Using-Evidence-in-Policy-and-Practice-Lessons-from-Africa/Goldman-Pabari/p/book/9780367440077>. Accessed on 14 July 2022.

<sup>2</sup>Linda S. Khumalo, Caitlin Blaser Mapitsa, Candice Morkel, Steven Masvaure and Matshidiso Kgothatso Semela (2022). African Parliaments: Systems of Evidence in Practice. Stellenbosch: Africa Sun Media. Retrieved from [\(PDF\) African Parliaments: Systems of evidence in practice \(researchgate.net\)](#). Accessed on 14 July 2022.

# VI. Conclusion

The three cases summarized focus on using evidence in policy and practice. These cases present us with examples where evidence has contributed to decision-making; they prove that it is possible to use evidence to get better policies and practices. The main aim of this case study is to explore multiple perspectives that can help us operationalize the use of evidence to improve policy and practice and facilitate socioeconomic outcomes in Africa. This comes at a time when Africa must not only ensure post-COVID-19 economic recovery but also ensure the achievement of the SDGs. We conclude that the key factors for the successful use of evidence to improve policymaking include understanding the context, building capacity, implementing national M&E, involving stakeholders across the cycle, ensuring demand for evidence meets a social need, using political advocacy, establishing buy-in at political levels, and sustaining opportunities deriving from the policy process.



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