



SCOPING STUDY:

Evidence Translators' Role
in Evidence-Informed
Policymaking

Author

Caroline Poirrier is a Senior Program Officer at Results for Development. She is an expert in transparency, citizen engagement and accountability with over 10 years of experience leading research and collaborative learning programs, with a focus on data for development and promoting evidence-informed decisions.

Acknowledgements

This research was generously funded by the Hewlett Foundation. I am very grateful to Norma Altshuler, Ruth Levine, Sarah Lucas and Rachel Quint of the Hewlett Foundation for their support and input over the course of the project. I very much appreciate Jillian Anderson, Mario Picón and Abeba Taddese for their careful review of the report and useful feedback. I would like to thank our researchers Daniel Malik Achala and Silvana Fumega, our methods consultant Stephanie Trapnell, all the individuals we interviewed as part of our research and our colleagues Sam Polk and Preston J. Whitt, without whom this project would not have been possible. I am grateful to Nathaniel Heller and Courtney Tolmie for their guidance throughout the project.

Results for Development (R4D) is a leading non-profit global development partner. We collaborate with change agents around the world — government officials, civil society leaders and social innovators — to create strong systems that support healthy, educated people. We help our partners move from knowing their goal to knowing how to reach it. We combine global expertise in health, education and nutrition with analytic rigor, practical support for decision-making and implementation and access to peer problem-solving networks. Together with our partners, we build self-sustaining systems that serve everyone and deliver lasting results. Then we share what we learn so others can achieve results for development, too. www.R4D.org

This report was authored by Caroline Poirrier under the general direction of Nathaniel Heller and Courtney Tolmie. For more information, please contact Caroline Poirrier at cpoirrier@r4d.org.

Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations	2
Executive Summary	3
Key Findings	3
Implications for Researchers and Intermediaries	4
Implications for Policymakers	4
Implications for Development Partners	5
Study Background, Research Questions and Methodology	6
Study Background and Objectives	6
Definitional Framework	6
Research Questions	9
Methodology	10
Findings	13
Overall Findings from Seven Cases	13
Findings from the Primary Research	14
Validation of Findings in Secondary Case Studies	16
Individual Case Findings: Primary Research	24
National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) review, Ghana	24
Right to Information (RTI) Regime Review, Buenos Aires	29
Individual Case Findings: Validation Exercise	33
Collaborative Analysis on Labor Intervention Effectiveness	33
Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty	35
Progresa – Oportunidades	38
Teacher Community Assistance Initiative	41
Graduation of the Ultra Poor	44
Conclusion	47
Findings	47
Implications for Researchers and Intermediaries	47
Implications for Policymakers	48
Implications for Development Partners	49
Contributions to the Field and Next Steps	50
Annex I: Qualitative Coding and Protocols	51
Annex II: Building Responsible Government: Benin’s National Evaluation System, 2007-2015	54

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AfHEA	Africa Health Economics and Policy Association	LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
ATI	Access to information	MoGCS	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
BEPP	Bureau for Evaluation of Public Policy	NDC	National Democratic Congress
CALIE	Collaborative Analysis on Labor Intervention Effectiveness	NHIA	National Health Insurance Authority
CGAP	Consultative Group to Assist the Poor	NHIS	National Health Insurance scheme
CHAG	Christian Health Association of Ghana	NPC	National Planning Commission of South Africa
CIFF	Children’s Investment Fund Foundation	NPP	New Patriotic Party
CONAPO	National Council of Population	NYEP	National Youth Employment Program
CONEVAL	National Council of Evaluation	PAN	National Action Party
DFID	UK Department for International Development	PAS	Presbyterian Agricultural Services
DoL	Department of Labor	PIs	Principal investigators
EIP	Evidence-informed policymaking	Progresa	Progresa – Oportunidades
GES	Ghana Education System	RCT	Randomized Control Trial
GUP	Graduation of the Ultra Poor	RTI	Right to Information
Hewlett	William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	R4D	Results for Development
IPA	Innovations for Poverty Action	TaRL	Teaching at the Right Level
ISS	Innovations for Successful Societies	TCAAs	Teacher community assistants
ISSER	Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research	TCAI	Teacher Community Assistance Initiative
J-PAL	Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
		3ie	International Initiative for Impact Evaluation

Executive Summary

Policymaking is a complex process, running from agenda setting to policy formulation, decision-making, implementation and evaluation. There is a growing consensus that policymaking should be informed by evidence and efforts are multiplying to support evidence-informed policymaking around the world. Understanding the actors and processes that bridge the gap between evidence and policymaking is key to enhancing their effectiveness. While a universe of ill-defined terms exists to describe the process by which evidence and ideas move into policy, our study focuses on *translation* – an active process through which different actors identify, filter, interpret, adapt, contextualize and communicate evidence for the purposes of policymaking, rather than passively transferring evidence. *Translators* can be evidence producers, policymakers, or intermediaries such as journalists, advocates, and expert advisors. Those who support evidence-informed policymaking need a better understanding of who translators are and how different factors influence their ability to promote the use of evidence in policymaking.

This study's objective was to explore factors that enable and constrain translators' ability to effectively support evidence-informed policymaking (EIP). We carried out our research in three main stages. We first developed a definitional and theoretical framework based on a review of the literature which includes definitions of *policymaking*, *evidence* and *translation* as well as a set of research questions about key enabling and constraining factors that might affect evidence translators' influence. In a second phase, we conducted primary research around two unfolding translation cases to test our framework in those cases. The first case focuses on Ghana's blue-ribbon commission tasked with reviewing Ghana's national health insurance scheme by the country's president in 2015 and the second case looks at Buenos Aires' 2016 government-led review and revision of the city's right to information (RTI) regime. Finally, we performed a limited validation exercise of findings by reviewing five secondary case studies developed by Yale's School of Management and the Transfer Project.

Key Findings

- Our research confirmed our hypothesis that **translation is an essential function** and that, absent individuals or organizations taking up the translator role, evidence translation and evidence-informed policymaking do not take place. Our research validated our definition of translation as an active process in which agency is essential at every step. Rather than relying on the passive transfer of information, **translators identify, filter, interpret, adapt, contextualize and communicate evidence for the purposes of policymaking.**
- As we hypothesized, **translators can hold a range of formal roles**; they can be research or policy staff at research and evaluation organizations, academic researchers, technical staff within ministries and government agencies, ministers and other government officials and independent experts.
- **Translator credibility** was consistently depicted as crucial to translators' ability to gain access to policymakers and to promote the uptake of evidence. Policymakers' **prior interactions** with translators, translators' **relevant training and expertise**, demonstrated **ability to co-create productively** and an **alignment between policymakers' and translators' objectives** were most important in building translators' credibility.
- The translator skills described as most important were **political savvy** and **stakeholder engagement**, two skills that are closely connected. We define political savvy as the ability to identify obstacles to translation and evidence uptake and to develop strategies to overcome them. Stakeholder engagement is a key strategy and skill to overcome some of the most common obstacles to evidence uptake, including political contestation and lack of buy-in.
- The validation exercise did not identify **analytical skills** and the **ability to adapt, transform and communicate evidence** as key stand-alone translator skills. Our interpretation is not that

analytical skills are unimportant, but rather, that being a credible translator implies a certain level of analytical competency and technical expertise, particularly when the translator is a research organization or unit within the government. *Translation*, which was at the core of all but one of our cases, can best be defined by the terms *adaptation*, *transformation* and *communication*. The lack of consistent mention of these essential translator skills can best be explained by the fact that the secondary research cases were not written with a focus on translators, the intricacies of translation and the skills it requires.

- While conducive **policymaking systems** undoubtedly facilitate evidence generation and translation, our research found that effective translators can operate successfully in less-than-ideal systems by managing and mitigating systemic challenges.
- **Issue politics and other political factors matter.** Translators are more likely to be effective in cases where the focus issue is politically salient but there is no consensus around how to address it. Elections may have an effect on translation, but we were unable to detect a consistent effect. Finally, **translation is most effective when initiated by those in power or when translators place those in power at the center of their efforts.**
- While not unsurmountable, **resource constraints** should be considered and managed carefully by translators, as they can jeopardize otherwise promising cases of evidence translation and uptake.
- While policymakers tend to be most receptive to **impact evidence**, the gold standard of evidence, **other types of rigorous evidence, as well as less rigorous evidence, including direct experience and observation** (or experiential evidence) often play an important complementary role, contextualizing the evidence, providing insight into potential issues that need further investigation and convincing individuals to whom quantitative evidence does not speak.

Implications for Researchers and Intermediaries

- Researchers can enhance the likelihood that their research will inform policymaking by **focusing their research on politically salient issues and policy-relevant questions.**
- Researchers need to proactively plan for evidence translation by **taking on some or all aspects of the translator role or by working with intermediaries** well placed to play that role.
- Researchers and intermediaries planning to play a translation role must **develop key characteristics and skills including political savvy and credibility.**
- Researchers or the intermediaries they work with need to plan for and **dedicate significant time and effort to policymaker engagement, relationship building and co-creation** as these activities are crucial to laying the groundwork for research to inform policy.
- Throughout any project, researchers and their partners should **adapt and communicate existing and new research so that it is accessible and convincing to policymakers.**
- Researchers and their partners should be open to **generating or leveraging different types of evidence, including less rigorous evidence, to complement impact evidence.**

Implications for Policymakers

As the ultimate users of evidence in the evidence-informed policymaking ecosystem, policymakers have an important role to play in fostering evidence generation, translation and uptake. They can promote evidence-informed policymaking by championing EIP generally, as well as by championing individual evidence-informed policies.

- Policymakers can **initiate and support the development and institutionalization of evaluation and EIP systems within government.**
- Policymakers can also promote EIP by **empowering government officials and offices to conduct policy-relevant research and reviews.**

- Policymakers should also **engage with researchers and intermediaries interested in co-designing politically salient, policy-relevant research**. Ideal partners are individuals and organizations that are credible across the political spectrum, politically savvy about policymaking constraints, and committed to co-creating the research project. In such cases, policymakers and their staff should participate actively, providing input to ensure that the research project is relevant, tailored to the context and potentially scalable.

Implications for Development Partners

Our findings have a number of implications for development partners interested in supporting translators and evidence-informed policymaking.

- Development partners have an opportunity to support translation and the uptake of evidence by **calling attention to the translation function, producing further evidence about when and how translators and translation can be effective and documenting and sharing best practices**.
- Development partners can provide **support to individuals and organizations** — within and outside of the government — **that have the potential to play a translation role**. Support may take the shape of brokering connections with policymakers and potential partners, training and mentoring for the translator skills that need to be developed and resources to carry out this function. In particular, development partners may want to **consider flexible funding that non-governmental grantees can use to invest in skills development and in building relationships with policymakers and other partners**.
- Development partners should prioritize **working with individuals and organizations known for their credibility and political savvy**. Political savvy requires a practical understanding of the political economy context, an awareness of key stakeholders' incentives and a sense of when, where and how to intervene. Typically, such actors are deeply embedded in the context; while they are often domestic actors, external actors with a deep understanding of the context and strong relationships with key stakeholders can also be effective translators.
- Development partners can help **develop translators' credibility by advising partners on how to build credibility and the skills essential to credibility**, including political savvy and stakeholder engagement skills.
- While our research did not explicitly validate the importance of some of the skills that are typically considered key to evidence translation, development partners should **continue to support the development of essential translation skills, particularly analytical skills and the ability to adapt, transform and communicate evidence**.
- Development partners should **support EIP efforts across contexts, including where such efforts are not the norm, since this is often where they are most needed**. In challenging policymaking contexts, development partners should focus on supporting translators' political savvy and stakeholder engagement skills as translators' ability to mitigate challenges will be key to their success.
- Development partners can **enable translators to overcome resource constraints** by supporting the development of translators' skills and by helping secure funding for the scale-up of proven initiatives where financial constraints are the most important obstacle to evidence uptake.
- Development partners should **support translators in their complementary use of non-impact evidence and less rigorous evidence**, including direct experience and observation, to enable policymakers and other key stakeholders to "observe" the evidence first hand.
- Development partners should also **encourage translators to initiate and participate in evidence-informed participatory processes** that enable a wide range of evidence and perspectives to be shared and considered.
- Development partners also have an important role in **supporting reformist government officials interested in developing evidence-informed evaluation and evidence-informed policymaking system**. Development partners can provide support, including financial resources and technical assistance, promote knowledge-sharing and learning and help ensure that evidence from evaluations is actually used to inform policies. While this longer-term strategy does not provide immediate support to translators, it promotes the development and institutionalization of evidence generation and translation systems within the government — EIP advocates' ultimate goal.

Study Background, Research Questions and Methodology

Study Background and Objectives

The study on evidence translation and translators in the evidence-informed policy (EIP) ecosystem was commissioned by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (Hewlett) through its Global Development and Population Program to inform its evidence-informed policymaking strategy. That strategy focuses on improving Hewlett's work to help governments systematically use key data, evaluation results and other research to improve policymaking from agenda-setting to policy design, implementation and reform.

While a functioning EIP ecosystem requires a number of elements including appropriate government systems and the alignment of stakeholder incentives (both of which are examined in other Hewlett-funded EIP projects), **this study's objective was to explore factors that enable and constrain translators' ability to effectively support evidence-informed policymaking.** For the purposes of our study, translators are actors who identify, filter, interpret, adapt, contextualize and communicate evidence for the purposes of policymaking (rather than passively transferring evidence).

In the first phase of our research, through desk research and in consultation with Hewlett, as well as experts in the qualitative research and evidence-informed policymaking fields, our team developed a definitional and theoretical framework for the project. This framework includes key definitions of *policymaking*, *evidence* and *translation* and a set of research questions about key enabling and constraining factors that might affect evidence translators' influence.

Definitional Framework

Policymaking

For the sake of our study, we defined *policymaking* in the following way:

A full cycle of action through which government actors set a policy agenda, formulate policy options, choose a particular policy, implement the policy and evaluate its effectiveness. *Policymaking* can therefore involve public statements, rulemaking and regulation, lawmaking and more. It can involve decisions by executives, legislators and bureaucrats, as well as actors who are not in formal decision-making positions, but who are in a position to influence policy.

Our definition also reflects the fact that multiple actors have a role in policymaking. We defined policymakers as individuals and institutions within the government who have an obvious and primary role in the ecosystem to make policy through public statements, rulemaking and regulation, lawmaking and more. Individuals on innovation teams, professional staff, local government officials and others are in a position to influence policy but do not have formal decision-making positions. In such instances in which there are formal roles for actors who nevertheless are not empowered to make final policy decisions, the line between *translation* and *policymaking* is blurry. For the purposes of this study, however, we regard such individuals as translators.

Finally, it is worth underscoring that we focused on how evidence informs policy, and not on the related but different problem of evidence-informed practice. There is a rich literature and important set of challenges around service provision at the facility level in clinics and schools, for instance. Similarly, there is robust evidence about how to influence behavior change, such as with hand washing and other health-

seeking behaviors. While this literature can produce valuable insights about the barriers to using evidence, it is out of scope for the present study.

Evidence

In the context of evidence-informed policy, *evidence* is the available body of facts and information that can inform and guide policymaking.

The literature on evidence-informed policy offers few explicit definitions of the word evidence. Most authors instead provide examples of the type of information and data that can be considered evidence. One review notes a wide spectrum from “randomized control trials to ‘natural experiments’ which look at the impacts of policies elsewhere for transferable lessons, and can be synthesized to inform decision-making, ‘learning from the mistakes of others’, to newly emerging ‘qualitative’ feedback from citizens which open the way both to change policy and ‘collaborative co-design’ of services.”¹ Another definition offered by the UK government adds to this list specific types of evidence — such as costing of policy options and statistical modeling — as well as an array of more qualitative, “softer” forms of information less traditionally thought to be evidence, including “tacit forms of knowledge, practice-based wisdom and [...] the voices of ordinary citizens.”²

These two lists make clear that a whole range of information and data can be (and is) considered evidence in the context of policymaking. Our review suggests that most of these can be categorized within five main types of information: *research data*; *evaluation data*; *expert knowledge*; *qualitative feedback and consultation data*; and *administrative, performance and statistical management data*.

Translation and Translators

For the purposes of this work, we define *translation* in the following way:

Evidence *translation* is an active process in which agency is essential at every step; people, organizations and networks drive the translation process.³ Rather than relying on the passive transfer of information, actors identify, filter, interpret, adapt, contextualize and communicate evidence for the purposes of policymaking, in a number of different contexts and operating under various types of constraints. Translators can be evidence producers, decision makers and intermediaries; they can operate alone or collectively to achieve specific goals.

Translation exists among a mélange of other seemingly ill-defined terms hinting at the process of how evidence and ideas move into policy and practice. In fact, one review looking at both clinical and policy settings in the Canadian health system found 90 different terms describing this process, including *dissemination*, *diffusion*, and *exchange*.⁴ Among these, however, *translation* appears to connote something unique: rather than simply conveying information, it suggests an act of interpretation and repackaging, and potentially synthesizing and adding insights relevant to a specific decision context. “Simply providing the findings is not enough,” finds one study of translation. “Adaptation can take multiple forms, including tailoring research results to a target group; enabling debate about their implications; ‘tinkering’ with research in practice; or developing research-based programmes or tools.”⁵

Our need to define *translation* stemmed less from a concern with semantics than a desire to understand how evidence does or does not get used in the policymaking process. In the end, core components

¹ J. Rutter, “Evidence and Evaluation in Policy Making: A Problem of Supply and Demand?”, *Institute for Government*, (2012): <http://bit.ly/2ioiZmr>

² S. Sutcliffe and J. Court, “Evidence-Based Policymaking: What is it? How does it work? What relevance for developing countries?”, *ODI*, (November 2005): <http://bit.ly/2uscO5V>

³ K. Bissell, K. Lee, and R. Freeman, “Analysing policy transfer: perspectives for operational research”, *Operational Research State of the Art Series*, 9, (2011): <http://bit.ly/2turMv5>; J. Ingold and M. Monaghan, “Evidence Translation: an exploration of policy makers’ use of evidence”, *Policy & Politics*, 44, 2, (April 2016): <http://bit.ly/2usjbq0>

⁴ S. Strauss, J. Tetroe, and I. Graham, *Knowledge Translation in Health Care: Moving from Evidence to Practice*, Blackwell: 2009.

⁵ I. Walter, S. Nutley, and H. Davies, “What works to promote evidence-based practice? A cross-sector review”, *Evidence and Policy*, 1, 3, (2005).

of the definition that helped us examine this question include the following:

- **Translation involves choice.** Translators make conscious changes to the knowledge they are using; they choose between alternatives, they determine what the right information is and for whom it is right.⁶
- **Translation involves policymakers seeing the relevance of certain knowledge to their agenda.** As an outcome of the translation process, policymakers understand how evidence relates to their agenda, what the evidence says and how it should inform policymaking.⁷
- **Translation can involve policy transfer and adaptation.** We can define it as “The process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and ideas in another political system.”⁸
- **Translation can be iterative.** Rather than a linear process, translation often involves repeated interactions among researchers, decision-makers, evidence and translators.⁹
- **Translators can have a variety of formal roles.** These include think tank analysts, trusted advisors, bureaucrats, journalists and policymakers and researchers themselves, among others.
- **Credibility is more important than formal title.** Wherever translators come from, their success depends on their degree of credibility with policymakers.¹⁰
- **Translation is not always an intermediary function.** Though translation is often conceived of as a function performed by intermediaries, it can take place through direct interaction between researchers (or research) and decision-makers without the aid of an intermediary.¹¹

We defined *translators* as those individuals and organizations whose role it is to share and translate evidence so that it informs policy. Translators can be evidence producers, those individuals and organizations whose primary role in the evidence-informed policymaking ecosystem is to carry out research, evaluation and other forms of investigation to produce evidence. Translators can be policymakers themselves. Finally, translators can serve as intermediaries between the two. Where translators sit does not always relate directly to the role they serve in the EIP ecosystem; they may formally be journalists, staff at non-governmental organizations (NGOs), advocates, independent consultants, or researchers at academic institutions, think tanks, or government units. Often, the organizations where translators sit serve as boundary organizations, mentioned in the EIP literature, which are institutions that work at the interface of the research and policy communities to facilitate communication and collaboration between them.¹² Boundary organizations are not translators per se, but rather, spaces that facilitate interactions between different communities and therefore also facilitate evidence translation.

These labels can be confusing as stakeholders often have more than one role; these role types are stylized and far from mutually exclusive. While in rare cases evidence translation involves three distinct actors — (1) a researcher who produces evidence that is translated by (2) an intermediary to inform (3) a policymaker — more often than not, the lines are blurred. A research organization may perform translator duties such as repackaging evidence and sharing it with a policymaker audience through briefs and meetings. Similarly, policymakers and their staff may access, filter and translate existing evidence to directly inform policy. In practice, translation is an iterative process carried out by many actors along the way — these translators are evidence producers, policymakers and intermediaries. The figure below provides a visual representation of how these different roles might intersect and overlap.

⁶ R. Freeman, “What is translation?”, *Evidence and Policy*, 5, 4, (2009): <http://bit.ly/2usmUUw>

⁷ G. Bennett and N. Jessani (Ed.), *The Knowledge Translation Toolkit*, IDRC: 2011.

⁸ T. Legrand, “Overseas and over here: policy transfer and evidence-based policy-making”, *Policy Studies*, 33, 4, (July 2012).

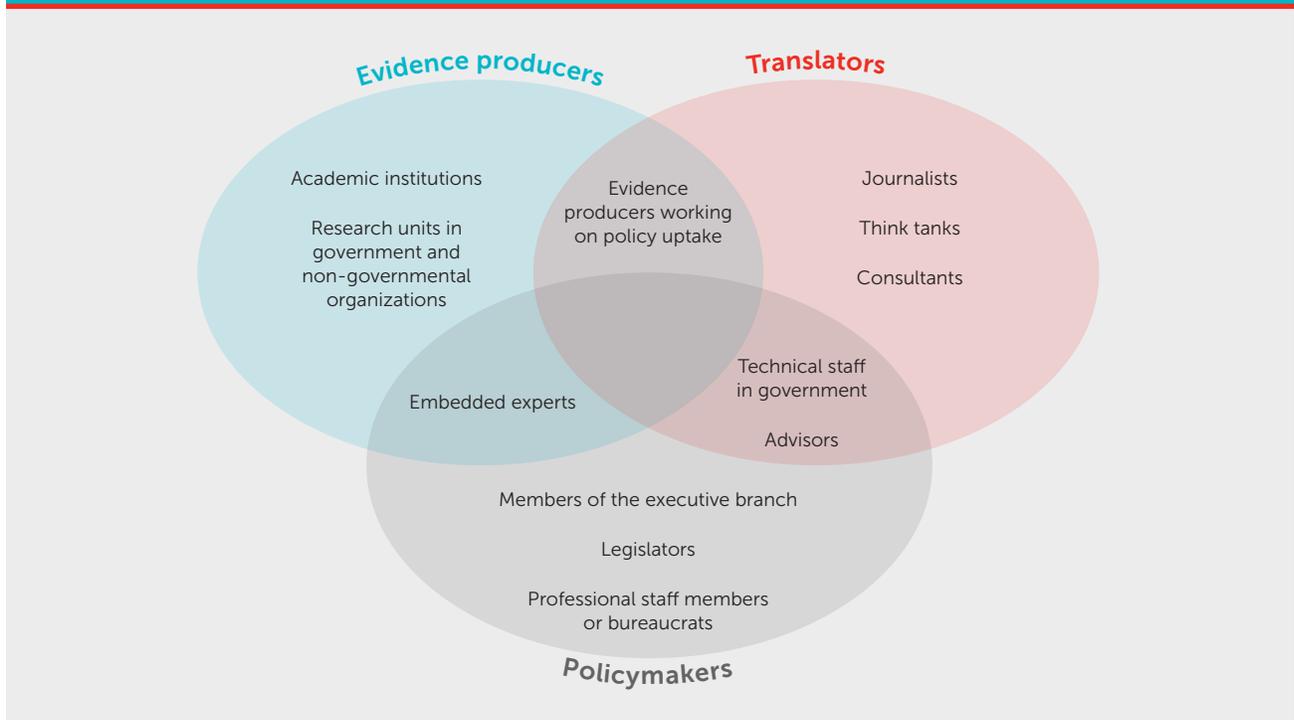
⁹ DfID, “Impact of research on international development”; Lavis et al., “Research Organizations...Research Knowledge”.

¹⁰ J. Shonkoff, “Science, Policy, and Practice: Three Cultures in Search of a Shared Mission”, *Child Development*, 71, 1, (January/February 2000): <http://bit.ly/2tygJBP>

¹¹ C. Cvitanovic et al., “Improving knowledge exchange among scientists and decision-makers to facilitate the adaptive governance of marine resources: A review of knowledge and research needs”, *Ocean and Coastal Management*, 112, (August 2015): <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0964569115001167>

¹² D. Guston, “Boundary organizations in environmental policy and science: An introduction”, *Science Technology, & Human Values*, 26; J. Parker and B. Crona, “On being all things to all people: Boundary organizations and the contemporary research university”, *Social Studies of Science*, (February 2012): <http://bit.ly/2usCcZ4>

Figure 1: Key Stakeholders in a Stylized Evidence-Informed Policy Ecosystem. Authors, 2017.



It is important to note that this is just one stylized example and that the translator role may be taken on by different stakeholders in different contexts. Legislators might be translators in certain cases, some research units in NGOs also serve as translators and in practice, technical staff in government do not always have influence on policymaking. For the purposes of our study, we considered any individual fulfilling a translation role to be a translator, regardless of his or her official title.

Research Questions

Agency

Agency refers to translator characteristics – their ability to understand the evidence, their relationship to policymakers and their credibility. We investigated whether the following agency variables help describe and classify different types of translators in ways that have a bearing on their likelihood of influencing the use of evidence in the policymaking process.

Relationship to policymakers. Do translators' access to and relationship with policymakers influence their ability to effectively funnel evidence

into policymaking processes? Are translators more effective when they have access to policymakers?

Translator credibility. Policymakers' perception of translators' credibility should influence whether translators succeed in having evidence inform the policymaking process. But how is this credibility generated? Is it more the product of personal relationships, successful professional collaboration in the past, translator professional training and reputation, or ideological and political alignment?

Translator skills. What are the skills that affect translators' understanding of and ability to adapt primary evidence for policy audiences?

Constraints

Constraints are the exogenous factors (beyond translator characteristics) that facilitate or obstruct evidence translation and uptake. We investigated whether and how the following constraints affect translators' ability to successfully inform policymaking.

Policymaking system. Are the policymaking system's nature and functioning key determinants of whether and how evidence is used to inform policy? In

systems with strong knowledge regimes and a culture of consultation and strategic planning, is evidence used more routinely than in places without those characteristics? How do other specific systemic characteristics influence evidence use? What influence do timeline and resource restrictions play?

Policymaker background and position. Policymakers are the final consumers of whatever information is being translated. Which policymaker characteristics are most important as determinants of whether evidence is used in policymaking? Do elected or appointed policymakers differ? Does technical (rather than political) training and experience make policymakers more likely to participate in evidence translation and use?

Issue politics and other political factors. The use of evidence in policymaking differs by issue even within the same geography. How does the level of political contestation around a specific issue, for example, influence the use of evidence in policymaking? Where a policy is unpopular or divisive, is evidence more or less likely to inform policy design? How much does the relative organization and power of supporters of an evidence-informed approach relative to its opponents directly shape that evidence's ultimate use?

Nature of the evidence. Evidence users often have an implicit or explicit hierarchy of different types of evidence (quantitative evidence vs. qualitative evidence, systematic reviews vs. single cases, for example). Even among evidence generated through similar methodologies, not all evidence is created equal, or viewed equally by evidence users. Policymakers and translators are constantly evaluating whether evidence provides them information that is credible and relevant to their purposes. How do the perceptions of different aspects of evidence affect this likelihood?

- **Directionality:** does the clarity with which the evidence suggests one course of action over another affect its use?
- **Accessibility:** Though the work of evidence translation is often focused on distilling raw evidence into more digestible formats, some evidence simply requires a higher degree of technical competency to understand than others. Is evidence that is easier for policymakers to understand, particularly for non-experts, more likely to be used?

- **Rigor:** does the level of rigor (actual or perceived) with which evidence was generated, and the robustness of its results, affect its use?
- **Source:** Does the origin of the evidence matter for its use? Is domestically produced evidence seen as more relevant or credible? Do policymakers prioritize evidence from journalists, think tanks, universities, or global institutions?

Methodology

We sought to answer these research questions in three main stages: 1) developing a conceptual framework; 2) collecting and analyzing primary data in two cases; and 3) establishing generalizability of findings by reviewing a limited number of existing case studies.

Our team first developed a **definitional and theoretical framework** to guide the project that includes definitions of policymaking, evidence and translation, as well as a set of research questions about the key enabling and constraining factors that might affect evidence translators' influence. This framework was developed through a review of the literature and in consultation with Hewlett and experts in the qualitative research and evidence-informed policymaking fields. The findings from this stage are presented in the background section above.

In the next phase, our research team conducted **primary research around two unfolding translation cases** to test our framework in those cases. Because policymakers proactively commissioned the policy reviews in these cases, our findings are most applicable to formal policy reviews initiated by policymakers. Selecting such cases enabled us to examine cases that had not been previously studied as they were unfolding, rather than conducting retroactive research.

We narrowed the scope of our primary research both geographically and by focusing on priority policy domains.

- **NHIS review, Ghana (national):** Our first case focused on the blue-ribbon commission tasked with reviewing Ghana's national health insurance scheme. Specifically, we investigated translators' role in the review of the scheme, and in the development and uptake of the review committee's

recommendations. We selected Ghana because of Hewlett's priority focus on West Africa and R4D's relationship to individuals involved in the commission.¹³

- **RTI regime review, Buenos Aires, Argentina:** Our second case focused on the role of translators in the revision of the city's right to information (RTI) regime and the passage of a new law. We investigated whether and how evidence informed the law's development and passage, and translators' role in the process. We selected Buenos Aires because of Hewlett's interest in open government reforms, as well as professional connections between R4D staff and key individuals supporting the government of Buenos Aires during this reform process.

We hired researchers familiar with the context and specific processes in each location to assist in the research.¹⁴ Each country researcher mapped actors involved in the policy review and carried out 10 to 15 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Interviewees provided informed consent, and each interview was recorded and transcribed and, in the case of Argentina, translated.¹⁵ We carried out qualitative analysis to identify themes in our interviews, and to generate an analytical understanding that extended beyond each individual case. We identified themes through iterative coding of the text, and then organized and analyzed it for interpretation.

The project's third phase involved **reviewing five cases studies about the use of evidence to inform policymaking**; four of these case studies were developed by Yale's School of Management as part of its own Hewlett-funded EIP project, and one case was developed as part of the *Transfer Project*, a multi-country research initiative to provide rigorous evidence on the impact of large-scale national cash transfer programs in sub-Saharan Africa. Our review looked specifically at the role of translators, and key characteristics and factors that influenced their ability to perform their role effectively, as a provisional approach to validating our initial framework and to lend support to the generalizability of the findings from our primary research. We sought to identify factors from our framework — both those that were found to be important in our primary research

findings, as well as ones that were not captured in our initial findings. In addition, we reviewed a case developed by Innovations for Successful Societies (ISS), a program of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs at Princeton University, about a government effort to develop a national policy evaluation system in Benin. This case, presented in Annex II, provides useful insights about how development partners can support government-led efforts to institutionalize evidence translation and evidence-informed policymaking.

We selected cases that centered on the use of impact evidence and that spoke to the translation function. It should not be surprising that some of the Yale and Transfer Project cases did not have robust mentions of the translation function, since the cases were focused on the role of evidence in policymaking, rather than the role of translators as agents in that process. Similarly, the selected secondary cases did not use our theoretical lens, so they do not always speak to all the factors in our initial framework. The failure to address our factors on translation does not mean that those factors were not at play, but rather, that they were not central to the authors' research focus and questions.

Why a qualitative research approach?

Because the goal of this study was to identify and understand the previously undertheorized concept of translation in evidence-informed policymaking, a qualitative research approach was adopted. Qualitative research aims to uncover important themes and patterns in areas with limited evidence bases and to identify variables for larger, broader studies of a quantitative nature, such as regression analysis or impact evaluation. In the primary research phase of this project, a qualitative approach allowed the researchers to use *a priori* assumptions about translation to build an initial research framework, and to adopt an intensive primary data collection strategy that involved in-depth interviews with key actors. Through an intensive coding process with standard reliability tests, researchers were then able to report on whether those assumptions appeared in the data collected, and to identify meaningful, unanticipated factors, that were later incorporated into their findings and recommendations.

¹³ Chris Atim, a senior program director at R4D, had a leading role in the commission.

¹⁴ The authors would very much like to thank Silvana Fumega and Daniel Malik Achala for their invaluable assistance.

¹⁵ Quotes, when used in the "Findings" section of this report, were translated by the authors from the original Spanish transcription.

Unlike quantitative studies, which can only hypothesize on causal mechanisms, qualitative approaches yield robust information on the actors, contexts and processes that propel these factors into importance. This qualitative approach was also used in the validation stage, particularly the analysis of factors that appeared in this secondary research.

Internal validity

The internal validity of the primary research phase of the study was established with rigorous methods for data collection and analysis that removed as much researcher and subject bias as possible. Researchers applied clear research protocols for data collection, which involved interviews and document review. Protocols were also followed for established data analysis methods that involved coding data, intercoder reliability, synthesis of themes and categories and interpretation. These protocols were applied to both the primary research and analysis of the secondary research (case studies). Qualitative data underwent an iterative and inductive process of ongoing re-coding through the constant comparative analysis method, whereby data was repeatedly compared to other data during coding, with the aim of ensuring that the emerging codes accounted for all the data being reviewed. This reduced the data so that core categories could emerge.¹⁶ Relevant text was then extracted and simplified, capturing the content rather than the phrasing or framing of the information, allowing it to be cross-tabulated and compared. These methods are the basis for an inductive methodology called *grounded theory*.

Grounded theory involves coding for saturation, where no new properties or dimensions are emerging from continued coding and comparison when additional data is added to the sample. This is considered theoretical saturation and forms the basis for theory-making.¹⁷

Generalizability

The ability to generalize the findings was intentionally limited, since wide-ranging generalizations are not the goal of qualitative research. In the primary research phase, based on the extensive data and adherence to well-established research protocols, generalizability was accomplished with analytical generalizations and thick descriptions of context, which are standard methods in qualitative research. In the validation stage of the project, researchers used case-by-case transfer (or *transferability*) to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings. This is a form of *replication of studies*, whereby additional research confirms that the initial findings are applicable to other contexts, situations, times and populations. It is important to note that generalizability of the initial findings through case-by-case transfer is not meant to provide proof or evidence of the phenomenon in question. It is a process whereby researchers thoroughly describe the context of the research to assist the reader in being able to generalize the findings and apply them appropriately.

External validity (or generalizability) is not the first concern in qualitative research but can be accomplished through a variety of methods. The most common method is *analytical generalization*, which is accomplished by rigorously applying the methods mentioned above. In the course of their analysis in this study, researchers distinguished between information that was relevant to across-the-study phenomena, and aspects that were unique to particular instances.¹⁸ This allows for generalizability to similar cases. Other methods for establishing generalizability include the comparison of findings to established research literature or theory. Both of these methods can be conducted as part of the primary research effort. Other approaches ordinarily require additional funding and effort beyond the original cases. In this study, case-by-case transfer was conducted using case studies developed by the Yale School of Management's EIP research program and the Transfer Project. Stronger forms of generalizability include replication in sampling, which would expand the scope of data collection, and integration of evidence, which requires multiple qualitative studies for comparison.

¹⁶ K. Charmaz, "Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis," in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, J. Gubrium and J. Holstein (Eds), SAGE Publications, Inc.: 2001; S. Fram, "The Constant Comparative Analysis Method Outside of Grounded Theory," *Qualitative Report*, 18, 1 (January 2013); B. Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*, The Sociology Press: 1978; B. Glaser and A. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Aldine Transaction: 1967; Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge University Press: 1987.

¹⁷ J. Holton, "The Coding Process and Its Challenges," *Grounded Theory Review*, 9, 1, (September 2014): <http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2010/04/02/the-coding-process-and-its-challenges/>

¹⁸ L. Leung, "Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 4, 3, (2015); D. Polit and C. Tatano Beck, "Generalization in Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Myths and Strategies," *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 47, 11, (2010).

Findings

Overall Findings from Seven Cases

The main findings from this multi-stage research are as follows:

- Our research confirmed our hypothesis that **translation is an essential function** and that, absent individuals or organizations taking up the translator role, evidence translation and evidence-informed policymaking do not take place. Our research validated our definition of *translation* as an active process in which agency is essential at every step. Rather than relying on the passive transfer of information, **translators identify, filter, interpret, adapt, contextualize and communicate evidence for the purposes of policymaking.**
- As we hypothesized, **translators can hold a range of formal roles:** they can be research or policy staff at research and evaluation organizations, academic researchers, technical staff within ministries and government agencies, ministers and other government officials and independent experts.
- **Translator credibility** was consistently depicted as crucial to translators' ability to gain access to policymakers and to promote the uptake of evidence. Translators' **prior interactions** with policymakers, their **relevant training and expertise**, demonstrated **ability to co-create productively** and a demonstrated **alignment between policymakers' and translators' objectives** were most important in building translators' credibility.
- The translator skills described as most important were **political savvy** and **stakeholder engagement**, two skills that are closely connected. Political savvy is the ability to identify obstacles to evidence translation and uptake and develop strategies to overcome them; it requires a practical understanding of the political economy context, an awareness of key stakeholders' incentives and a sense of when, where and how to intervene. Stakeholder engagement is a key strategy and skill to overcome some of the most common obstacles to evidence uptake, including political contestation and lack of policymaker buy-in.
- The research, particularly the secondary research, did not explicitly identify **analytical skills** and the **ability to adapt, transform and communicate evidence** as essential translator skills. This finding is surprising; our interpretation is not that these skills are unimportant, but rather, that they are not the focus in case studies developed outside of the translation framework and which may imply a more straightforward connection between research and evidence uptake.
- Context factors such as **policymakers' background** and the **nature and functioning of the policymaking system** were not found to have a consistent effect on translators' success. While conducive policymaking systems undoubtedly facilitate evidence generation and translation, it appears that effective translators can operate successfully in less-than-ideal systems by managing and mitigating systemic challenges.
- **Issue politics and other political factors matter.** Translators are more likely to be effective in cases where the focus issue is politically salient but there is no consensus around how to address it. **Translation is most effective when initiated by those in power or when translators place those in power at the center of their efforts.**
- While not insurmountable, **resource constraints** should be considered and managed carefully by translators as they can jeopardize otherwise promising cases of evidence translation and uptake.
- While rigorous **impact evidence** is the gold standard for evidence-informed policymaking, **other types of rigorous and less rigorous evidence often play an important complementary role**, contextualizing the evidence, providing insight into potential issues that need further investigation and convincing individuals to whom quantitative evidence does not speak.

Findings from the Primary Research

Our project involved three phases of research. In the first phase, our team developed a definitional and theoretical framework that includes definitions of *policymaking*, *evidence* and *translation*, as well as a set of research questions about key factors that might affect evidence translators' influence. This framework was based on a review of the literature and consultations with experts. In the second phase of the project, our team carried out primary research around two unfolding translation cases: the review of Ghana's national health insurance scheme and the review of Buenos Aires' access to information regime. The findings from this phase of research, designed to test our framework, are summarized in the section that follows. More detailed information about each of these primary cases can be found in the report section entitled "Individual Case Findings: Primary Research."

Relationship to policymakers

In both cases, "chief" translators were appointed by executive leaders who became champions for the policy reviews. These policymakers empowered translators to design and carry out a participatory and evidence-informed policy review process. Beyond these existing relationships, translators invested heavily in cultivating relationships with other policymakers, including key legislators and government bureaucrats, through consultations and participatory processes. These **preexisting and strengthened relationships with policymakers were key to translators' success.**

Translator credibility

Our research confirmed that credibility is a key factor in translators' success. Indeed, the translators who were invited to lead the review processes were consistently described as respected, trusted and credible. Rather than being the product of personal relationships, professional collaboration, or ideological and political alignment, as we had hypothesized, this credibility appears to have been linked to a number of translator characteristics, including **relevant academic training, extensive and practical knowledge of the focus topic, a commitment to evidence and being objective and unbiased.**

Translator skills

We hypothesized that translators' understanding of primary evidence and their ability to adapt it for policy audiences have a bearing on their ability to effectively access, translate and funnel information and data into policymaking processes. While analytical skills were described as essential in the Ghana case, they were not mentioned explicitly in the Buenos Aires case, suggesting that these **analytical skills may be assumed as part of the research function.**

The **ability to adapt and communicate evidence**, also described as very important to translators' success in the primary research, was defined in a few different ways. At its most basic, the function was described as the ability to synthesize and communicate research products that are often long and complex, to make them understandable to policymakers. Beyond this, adapting evidence was also described as making evidence useful for a particular policy context and transforming it into policy recommendations.

A number of interviewees insisted that **political savvy**, a skill that does not appear in our original definition of translation, should feature at its center. At its most basic, *political savvy* is a practical understanding of the political economy context; in our cases, the skill was described as the ability to understand stakeholders' interests and potential obstacles to the desired reform, as well as the ability to design approaches to navigate and overcome these obstacles. Specifically, interviewees pointed to the participatory design of the review processes as essential to uncovering a whole range of stakeholders' priorities and concerns, addressing those concerns as they emerged and building buy-in for the review process and its findings. In both cases, leaders of the review deliberately invited individuals from across interest groups and the political spectrum to participate in the review processes to ensure stakeholders' ownership of the process and to build consensus policy recommendations with broad buy-in. Furthermore, both the review teams and stakeholders who participated in the consultation processes described them as productive, indicating that translators in both cases had the necessary **convening and facilitation skills** to bring diverse stakeholders together, elicit their input and foster buy-in.

Policymaking system

The two formal review processes we studied did not take place in contexts where consultation, strategic planning and such review processes were reported as being the norm. Rather, the review processes were described as exceptional in their particular policymaking system in terms of their use of evidence and participation. This should not be interpreted as meaning that policymaking systems with strong knowledge regimes and a culture of consultation and strategic planning do not promote the use of evidence. Rather, we interpret these findings as an indication that **it is possible for evidence-informed policymaking processes to take place even in contexts where such processes are not the norm.**

Limited time came up as a constraint in both cases, albeit an occasionally inevitable one in the context of policymaking. In Ghana, financial resources were described as key to the process. Development partner funding for the generation of evidence helped the committee better understand the challenges faced by the national health insurance scheme (NHIS). Even in this case, which benefited from significant development partner support, interviewees reported that further funding would have been useful for the generation and translation of additional evidence. In Buenos Aires, scarce financial resources did not appear to have been a significant challenge.

Policymaker background and position

We defined *policymaking* (in part) as “A cycle of action [that] can involve decisions by executives, legislators and bureaucrats [...]” Policymakers can therefore be bureaucrats, members of the executive branch or legislators. In the Ghana case, the key policymakers were (and are) the minister of Health and the president; members of Parliament will eventually play a role if and when guidance is given by the executive. In Buenos Aires, the target policymakers were the chief of government, who supported the review, bureaucrats who initially resisted the reform and legislators who were essential to getting the bill passed.

Our research did not find a link between policymakers’ training and their use of evidence, or between their position (appointed or elected) and their use of evidence. It appears that other factors were more influential in affecting translators’ ability to perform their role effectively.

Issue politics and other political factors

Issue politics, specifically consensus about the need to improve the focus policy issue and a lack of consensus about how to do so, appear to matter. Elections and political incentives seem to shape whether and when evidence is translated and taken up.

Political salience of focus issues

In both cases, the relative **lack of political contestation around the need to improve the policy** helped bring about the evidence-informed policy reviews. In Ghana, the inadequacies of the existing NHIS were seen as threatening the survival of the widely popular scheme, and therefore as urgent to address. In Argentina, similarly, there was broad agreement that the existing access to information (ATI) regime in Buenos Aires was not working. In both cases, international issue politics and norms (around universal health coverage and access to information) supported the emergence of these reviews.

Contestation around content of the reform

While there was agreement about the importance of improving policies, there was **less consensus about the specific changes needed** to do so. There was also initial opposition to the review recommendations in both cases. Review leads navigated these politics skillfully, designing both processes to be extremely inclusive and participatory. Individuals across the political and ideological spectrum were engaged, consulted and kept informed of the review team’s progress and findings. This approach ensured widespread buy-in into the process and findings.

Relative power and shifts in power, political incentives

One of our research questions was about the extent to which the organization and power of supporters of an evidence-informed approach relative to its opponents shapes the evidence’s ultimate use. In both cases, while there were no opponents to an evidence-informed approach (likely based on the widely accepted importance of such approaches), the evidence-informed reviews were initiated by heads of government. In other words, **those actively promoting an evidence-informed approach were in positions of formal power.**

Elections and changes in government supported or constrained the review and policymaking process. In the case of Buenos Aires, the 2015 election of a new reformist government, after an election during

which both leading candidates promised expansions of existing transparency systems, seems to have enabled the policy review to take place. In Ghana, on the contrary, national elections delayed the adoption and implementation of recommendations perceived as the product of the previous administration. As time passes since the election and political incentives shift, however, developments indicate that the new government is moving in the direction of accepting and rolling out key recommendations. These include providing a guaranteed universal primary health care basket for all residents in Ghana. This suggests that individuals across party lines likely recognized the value of the evidence-informed recommendations but felt constrained in a politicized moment.

Nature of the evidence

Directionality and accessibility

Interviewees did not bring up directionality or accessibility in either case, so little can be said about their importance to translators' success. This may suggest that **translators' ability to access and translate the evidence has more impact on their success than the evidence's inherent accessibility and directionality.**

Rigor

For the purposes of this study, we define *rigorous evidence* as thorough, exhaustive and accurate evidence, the product of systematic inquiry. It should be noted, however, that an absolute understanding of rigor does not exist in the evidence translation context. *Rigor* functions as a fuzzy concept that serves as an abstract standard, but in practice, evidence is judged in very relative terms, on a spectrum of quality.

Findings from our cases suggest that **evidence's relative level of rigor affects its use.** In Ghana, while all evidence (including stakeholder input) was considered, its rigor largely determined the importance it was given. In cases where evidence came in the shape of widespread concerns and complaints, field visits were carried out and additional research was commissioned to fill the gaps and validate or refute the reported issue. In Buenos Aires, interviewees described rigor as an ideal characteristic they would *like* to filter evidence by, when such

evidence is available. In both cases, rigorous evidence was prioritized; only in cases where it was not available was less rigorous evidence utilized.

Source

Translators across cases selected and used both domestically and internationally produced evidence. While interviewees did not describe policymakers prioritizing evidence from particular groups, the evidence that was most used in the reviews was produced by **regional and global institutions, government agencies and researchers** (domestic and international). International evidence (including international standards and evidence about other countries' experience) enabled the identification of best practices and policy options. At the same time, data and research about the countries in which the reviews took place were essential to understanding the specific local context and challenges and to design policy options that were appropriate and feasible for that context.

Validation of Findings in Secondary Case Studies

Translation and translators' formal roles

Our research validated our original definition of translation:

Evidence translation is an active process in which *agency* is essential at every step; people, organizations and networks drive the translation process. Rather than relying on the passive transfer of information, actors identify, filter, interpret, adapt, contextualize and communicate evidence for the purposes of policymaking, in a number of different contexts and operating under various types of constraints.

In particular, **our research confirmed that translators can hold a range of formal roles**, as made clear in Table 1.

Table 1: Translator types

Case	Translator type	Translators
RTI regime review, Buenos Aires	Government official, appointed by Buenos Aires' head of government	Sub-Secretary of Political Reform and Legislative Affairs for the City of Buenos Aires Hernán Charosky
NHIS review, Ghana	Government-appointed experts from within and outside of government	NHIS Independent Technical Review Committee, led by Chris Atim, executive director of the African Health Economics and Policy Association and senior program director at Results for Development
Collaborative Analysis on Labor Intervention Effectiveness (CALIE), South Africa	Research and intermediary organization (The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)) and academic researchers	J-PAL's research team and study principal investigators
Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP), Ghana	Policymaker and ministerial staff	The Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection Nana Oye Lithur and her technical team
Progres-a-Oportunidades (Progres-a), Mexico	Government technical staff and trusted advisors	Deputy Minister of Finance Dr. Santiago Levy; Dr. José Gómez de León, chair of the National Council of Population (CONAPO), then National Coordination of Progres-a
Teacher Community Assistant Initiative (TCAI), Ghana	Evidence producer and implementing organizations	Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) and Pratham
Graduation of the Ultra-Poor (GUP), Ghana	No one took on the role of translator; it could have been a research and intermediary organization	No one took on the role of translator; it could have been Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)

Relationship to policymakers

In our primary research cases, which examined government-led EIP initiatives, the translators-in-chief were appointed and empowered by the head of the executive branch to design and carry out participatory evidence-informed review processes. Translators thus had access to and support from policymakers, who became champions for the processes and findings. Translators also invested heavily in cultivating relationships with these and other policymakers, including key legislators and government bureaucrats through consultations and participatory processes.

Our secondary research validates the finding that relationships with policymakers are key to translators' success. In each of the cases but one (GUP), translators were appointed by a policymaker, had other existing professional ties and/or prioritized relationship building with policymakers. In the two secondary case studies where the evidence generation/translation originated within the government (LEAP and Progres-a),

the translators were appointed by the president, and in one case (Progres-a), the president specifically tasked them with developing a policy. In both cases, translators proactively engaged with these and other policymakers and were successful in their translation efforts. In cases where evidence generation/translation efforts were initiated by non-governmental research and intermediary organizations (CALIE, TCAI and GUP), engaging and building relationships with policymakers was a necessary but not sufficient condition for translators' success. Translators in the CALIE case, who were successful, had existing relationships with policymakers and invested in these relationships. In the case of TCAI, translators cultivated existing relationship with policymakers, but a lack of resources constrained their success. Finally, in the case of GUP, the failure of would-be translators to engage with policymakers is described as the main reason that evidence uptake did not take place. **Our research thus finds that translators' existing relationships with policymakers and their efforts to build these relationships are essential to successful EIP efforts.**

Table 2: Translators’ relationships with policymakers

Case	Translators appointed by policymaker	Mention of other existing professional relationship with policymaker	Translator relationship with policymaker
RTI regime review, Buenos Aires	✓		✓
NHIS review, Ghana	✓		✓
CALIE, South Africa		✓	✓
LEAP, Ghana	✓		✓
Progresa, Mexico	✓	✓	✓
TCAI, Ghana		✓	✓
GUP, Ghana	No one took on the translator role	N/A	N/A

Translator credibility

Our primary research found that credibility is a key factor in translators’ success. The translators who were invited to lead or participate in each of the review processes were consistently described as respected, trusted and credible. This credibility appears to have been linked to a number of translator characteristics including relevant training and expertise and a commitment to evidence.

The importance of translators’ credibility to their success is validated by our secondary research findings. In policymaker-initiated EIP efforts, translators were selected in large part because of their credibility. In cases where translators (either inside or outside of government) initiated the EIP effort, credibility was crucial to getting access to policymakers. Translator credibility appears to have been linked to a few factors, including:

- *Prior collaboration with the target policymaker* (all secondary cases except GUP). While prior collaborations between translators and policymakers were not explicitly mentioned in our primary cases, the fact that translators were appointed by policymakers suggests some level of prior interaction around the focus topic;

- *Translator efforts to build productive, collaborative relationships with policymakers* (three secondary cases);
- *Relevant translator training and expertise* (mentioned explicitly in three secondary research cases);
- *Alignment and shared vision*, typically around a shared commitment to evidence and and/or a shared commitment to the project objective (four of the secondary cases). In the case of non-governmental translators, this shared commitment and vision were typically demonstrated as the project and relationships developed.

Our secondary research thus validates our earlier finding that translator credibility is key to translators’ success. More specifically, it confirms that relevant academic and/or professional experience are key to developing this credibility. Alignment between translators and policymakers about the importance of evidence and/or about the project’s objective was found to be crucial. Finally, prior professional relationships and translator efforts to build constructive relationships with policymakers play a role in translators’ credibility.

Table 3: Importance and drivers of translator credibility

Case	Translator credibility mentioned or suggested	Translator prior professional relationship with policymaker	Translator invested in relationship building with policymaker	Translator training and experience mentioned	Alignment of vision or objectives
RTI regime review, Buenos Aires	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NHIS review, Ghana	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CALIE, South Africa	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LEAP, Ghana	✓	✓	✓		✓
Progresa, Mexico	✓	✓		✓	✓
TCAI, Ghana	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GUP, Ghana	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Translator skills

The ability to adapt, transform and communicate evidence, political savvy and stakeholder engagement and convening skills were the three translator skills that came out as most important in our primary research. Analytical skills were explicitly described as important in only one of the two cases.

The five secondary research cases validated the importance of most of these skills. The skills that came up most consistently in the secondary research cases were political savvy and stakeholder engagement and convening.

Political savvy was described as an essential translator skill in all of the cases except one (GUP, where translation was not attempted).

Stakeholder engagement and convening were mentioned in three of the secondary research cases, and in all the secondary research cases led by a non-governmental entity. A subset of these cases specified these skills with terms such as *co-creation*, *ability to compromise* and *negotiation*. In cases initiated by non-governmental actors, these skills, as well as the ability to build government *ownership*, were particularly important.

It is worth noting that the first two groups of skills are closely linked. We define *political savvy* as the ability to understand potential obstacles to the desired reform and to design approaches to navigate and overcome these obstacles. In many cases, particularly those initiated by actors outside of government, a key obstacle to evidence translation and uptake is inadequate government engagement, buy-in and ownership. Overcoming this obstacle requires deliberate and effective stakeholder engagement and convening.

While many of the cases describe or imply analytical work (by researchers and/or translators), *analytical skills* were explicitly described as key to translation in only one of the secondary research cases (Progresa) and one of the primary research cases (NHIS Ghana). This is surprising, since analyzing and understanding evidence seems like a prerequisite to translating it. In three of the four cases that do not mention research and analytical skills explicitly (CALIE, TCAI and GUP), the translators (or would-be translators) are IPA and J-PAL, organizations whose reputations are largely based on their research and analytical competencies. Our interpretation is that analytical skills are important, but not necessarily identified as such where translation is not a recognized function or where the translator role is taken on by an organization widely known for its analytical skills.

Table 4: Translator skills mentioned

Case	Translator skills			
	Political savvy	Stakeholder engagement and relationship building	Analysis	Adapting the evidence
RTI regime review, Buenos Aires	✓	✓		✓
NHIS review, Ghana	✓	✓	✓	✓
CALIE, South Africa	✓	✓		
LEAP, Ghana	✓	✓		✓
Progresa, Mexico	✓		✓	
TCAI, Ghana	✓	✓		
GUP, Ghana	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

The ability to adapt and communicate evidence, which was described as important in our two primary research cases, did not come out as clearly in the five secondary research cases (only one of the cases mentions it explicitly). This is surprising, since the term translation can perhaps best be approximated by the terms *adaptation*, *transformation* and *communication* — and defined as the ability to synthesize and communicate research products to policymakers, making evidence useful for a particular policy context and transforming it into policy recommendations. Evidence adaptation or translation was at the core of each of the cases, except the case where translation did not take place (GUP). Here as well, our interpretation is that these skills, essential to translation, did not come up because the secondary research cases were not written with a focus on translators, translation and the skills they require, and their authors did not focus on the importance and intricacies of the translation process and associated skills.

Our research conclusively finds that political savvy, stakeholder engagement and convening are essential translator skills. Analytical skills and the ability to adapt and communicate evidence, which we see as core to the translation function, were not consistently mentioned; we suspect this is because the cases were not focused on translation and do not describe key elements of the translation function.

Policymaking system

The EIP processes in both primary cases were described as exceptional in their particular policymaking system in terms of their use of evidence and participation. Similarly, the policymaking systems in the five cases were typically not described as particularly conducive. While strong evidence-informed policymaking systems undoubtedly facilitate evidence generation and translation, our review of the five case studies validates our primary research finding that effective translators can operate successfully in less-than-ideal systems by managing and mitigating systemic challenges. **Our research thus finds that successful evidence translation can take place even in contexts where such processes are not the norm.**

Limited time came up as a constraint in both primary research cases, albeit an inevitable one in the context of policymaking. In one case, financial resources were described as key to the process, while in Buenos Aires, scarce financial resources did not appear to have been a challenge. This suggests that the importance of financial resource constraints in government-led EIP processes depends on the context and the particular funding available.

While the five case studies did not all focus explicitly on time and resource constraints, a number of them

suggest the importance of resource constraints. In some cases, particularly government-led efforts, additional funding for a program or policy was the desired policy outcome. In cases initiated by non-governmental actors, ensuring that funding is available or that the proposed policy/program will not require additional funding from the government is a consistent priority. In the case of TCAI, where most conducive translation factors were in place, the uptake of the evidence fell through in large part due to a loss of a committed subsidy source. Cases led by non-governmental translators emphasized the importance of translator activities including relationship building, stakeholder management and partner advising. These activities, which require flexibility and responsiveness, are typically quite time-intensive and, in some cases, take place outside of the research period. Typical project funding may not be well-suited to cover this type of long-term activities and organizations that have flexible or unrestricted funding may be better placed to carry them out. Thus, **our research finds that resource constraints may be an important factor for translators and their supporters to consider and manage, and one that can undo otherwise promising EIP efforts.**

Policymaker background and position

Our primary research did not find a link between whether policymakers were appointed or elected and their use of evidence. Similarly, little information was provided about policymakers' educational and professional training; the effect of their background on their receptiveness to evidence therefore cannot be determined. While two of the five case studies mention policymakers' academic background, suggesting that academic training may predispose policymakers to support EIP, our secondary research generally failed to find a clear link between whether a policymaker is elected or appointed and his or her use of evidence. **Our research thus does not find a clear link between policymakers' background and position and his or her use of evidence.**

Issue politics and other political factors

Our primary research found that issue politics, politics and power influenced whether and when evidence was used to inform policymaking.

One element in particular, was the political salience of the focus issues or policies. In our primary research, a widespread consensus existed on the importance of dealing with the issues in question, which supported EIP. The five case studies we reviewed validate the intuitive finding that issues that are the focus of translation need to be politically salient for them to gain traction with policymakers. Agreement on the importance of political issues does not, however, imply consensus solutions. In both primary cases, there was initially a high level of contestation about how to improve focus policies, and the participatory and evidence-informed processes were designed as such specifically to overcome this lack of consensus. All of the secondary research cases mentioned some level of disagreement about how to resolve the focus issues. In a couple of cases (including Progres and LEAP) where disagreement about how to resolve the focus issue was particularly divisive, the authors make clear that evidence supporting a particular policy was especially sought out by policymakers and translators to overcome political opposition. **Our research thus finds that translators are most effective when working on an issue that is politically salient but where consensus on how to address that issue is lacking.**

Finally, in our primary research, elections and changes in government either supported or constrained the review and policymaking process. Our secondary research similarly does not demonstrate a clear link between elections and successful translation. While in some cases changes in government support the uptake of evidence, in others it constrains or delays it, and yet in others it does not affect it at all. However, every successful case was either initiated by those in government or by outsiders who worked closely with those in power. This confirms the intuitive fact that for translator efforts to get evidence taken up by those in power to be successful, they must be initiated by those in power, or place those in power at the center of their efforts.

In sum, our research finds that issue politics and other political factors matter. Translators are more likely to be effective in cases where the focus issue is politically salient and there is contestation about how to address the issue. Elections may have an effect on successful translation, but we were unable to detect a consistent effect. Finally, translation is most effective when initiated by those in power or when translators place those in power at the center of their efforts.

Table 5: Issue politics and other political factors

Case	Political salience or consensus about importance of policy issue	Contestation around content of policy	Election	Other factors
RTI regime review, Buenos Aires	✓ (improving the RTI regime)	✓	Supported reform	The evidence generation, translation and uptake were initiated by the executive head of Buenos Aires, Argentina
NHIS review, Ghana	✓ (reforming the NHIS)	✓	Delayed reform	The evidence generation, translation and uptake were initiated by the president
CALIE, South Africa	✓ (youth unemployment)			
LEAP, Ghana	✓ (social protection)	✓		The financial, fuel and food crisis and decision to remove fuel subsidies accelerated the expansion of LEAP
Progresa, Mexico	✓ (poverty reduction)	✓	The new social program survived presidential election of an opposition party	The evidence generation, translation and uptake were initiated by the president
TCAI, Ghana	✓ (need for remedial education)	✓		Government's preferred intervention had the lowest impact
GUP, Ghana	✓ (poverty reduction)			

Nature and source of the evidence

Directionality and accessibility

While most of the case studies we reviewed do not address directionality and accessibility explicitly, they do suggest more clearly than the primary research that the directionality of evidence is important to translation efforts. Indeed, each of the five translation cases relied on randomized control trial (RCT) results that distinctly demonstrated the relative effectiveness of different policies. **The cases' lack of focus on accessibility confirms our early finding that translators' ability to access and translate the evidence has more impact on his or her success than the evidence's inherent accessibility.**

Rigor

Our primary research suggests that evidence's relative level of rigor affects its use. Because we selected the five translation case studies we reviewed (in part) based on their use of impact evidence,

rigorous evidence was available in each of the cases. In a number of cases, authors highlight that the evidence's rigor and quality were essential to its credibility and uptake by policymakers. In the GUP and TCAI projects, the existence of rigorous evidence was not enough to stimulate the uptake of evidence, suggesting that **rigorous impact evidence is instrumental but not sufficient for translators' EIP efforts to be successful.** Other factors, such as the failure to develop relationships and co-create with key stakeholders and inadequate resources, can block even rigorous evidence from informing policy.

Furthermore, our primary cases made clear that evidence of different quality has a role in translation. Two of the five secondary research cases similarly emphasized that while impact evidence is important, **other types of less rigorous evidence, such as experiential evidence** (including director experience or observation) **often play an important complementary role in translation** by convincing

individuals at a more visceral level than research or quantitative evaluation results. Some examples include policymakers' belief in the evidence being strengthened by meeting with individuals with direct experience of the successful model or by observing that intervention in action either in their country or abroad.

Source

The evidence that was most used in the primary research reviews was produced by global and regional institutions, domestic government agencies and scholarly researchers. In the secondary cases, the evidence used included results from RCTs of similar programs and policies, data collected by government agencies, research produced by global institutions and scholars and the results from the impact evaluation.

Our primary research found that international evidence (including international standards and

evidence about other countries' experience) was important in determining good practice and policy options. Research and evidence in and about the focus countries, however, were essential to building an understanding of the specific local context and to designing policy options that were appropriate and feasible for that context. These findings were validated by our secondary research. As mentioned in our discussion of existing evidence's role in shaping the development of new evidence generation and EIP efforts, both national and international evidence played an important role. **While international evidence about comparable programs or policies abroad was instrumental in spurring the generation of domestic evidence, domestic evidence was needed to demonstrate that the focus interventions could be implemented and effective in the particular context. Our research thus finds that both international and domestic evidence have a role in effective translation.**

Table 6: Nature and source of the evidence

Case	Evidence from impact evaluation	Other evidence	Direct experience and observation (experiential evidence)	National and international sources
RTI regime review, Buenos Aires		International model law, research about other countries' experience, domestic data	Direct experience	✓
NHIS review, Ghana		International evidence, research about other countries' experience — rigorous evidence was privileged	Direct experience	✓
CALIE, South Africa	✓	Existing research reviewed (literature on unemployment and on interventions designed to reduce the gap between intention and behavior in the health sector)		✓
LEAP, Ghana	✓	Qualitative research of the economic impacts of LEAP; operational evidence	Peer learning and direct observation	✓
Progresa, Mexico	✓	Body of academic literature demonstrating the ineffectiveness of general, untargeted, in-kind food subsidies, body of literature about different types of social policy, new quantitative household-level data collected by the government		✓
TCAI, Ghana	✓		Peer learning and direct observation	✓
GUP, Ghana	✓	Events and products developed by development partners (but not targeted to Ghanaian policymakers)		✓

Individual Case Findings: Primary Research

In our second phase of work, we conducted primary research around two unfolding translation cases to test our framework in those cases. The first case focuses on Ghana's blue-ribbon commission tasked with reviewing Ghana's national health insurance scheme by the country's president in 2015. The second case looks at Buenos Aires' 2016 government-led review and revision of the city's right to information (RTI) regime. The following section provides detailed findings for each of these cases.

National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) review, Ghana

Ghana's national health insurance scheme was launched in 2004 with the goal of extending social health protection to disadvantaged populations by reducing out-of-pocket costs. The scheme was successful in drastically expanding coverage, particularly for poor and other disadvantaged populations. However, the scheme also faced a number of challenges, particularly around equity, efficiency and sustainability. The increasing cost of providing health care to NHIS members (primarily due to expanding membership and escalation of medicine costs) was not matched by commensurate increases in the resources allocated to the scheme. These financial pressures caused delays in payments to health care providers, leading some providers to charge illegal copays or deny services to NHIS members, undermining members' experiences and confidence in the scheme.

In light of these issues and what some saw as the impending financial failure of the scheme, calls for a review of the NHIS multiplied, including from the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA), the overseer of the scheme. In response, in September 2015, President Mahama set up an independent technical review committee to develop options for reforming the NHIS. According to the NHIS website,

"The purpose of the reform proposed to be carried out [was] as follows:

- Establishing a sustainable, pro-poor and a more efficient NHIS, by redesigning, reorganizing and reengineering the scheme
- Creating a solid ground for improved service delivery across the scheme, in order to facilitate better provision of services to residents
- Creating a smart scheme based on knowledge and information."¹⁹

The president asked Dr. Chris Atim, a health economist and the executive director of the Africa Health Economics and Policy Association (AfHEA), to chair the review. Other members of the Technical Committee, jointly chosen by the NHIA, the president and the minister of Health to ensure credibility of the process and recommendations, included:

- Deputy Minister of Health Dr. Victor Bampoe;
- Acting Chief Executive of the National Health Insurance Authority Nathaniel Otoo;
- World Bank economist Dr. Huihui Wang;
- School of Public Health at the University of Ghana Professor Irene Agyepong;
- Former CEO of the Ridge Hospital Dr. Obeng Apori; and
- Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG) Executive Director Peter Yeboah.

¹⁹ More information is available at <http://www.nhis.gov.gh/nhisreview.aspx>

The review process, designed by the committee to be evidence-informed and consultative, involved a number of steps to review existing data and research, collect additional evidence where needed and to consult with a range of stakeholders to elicit their input and feedback throughout the process.

The committee hired a consultant to carry out a desk review and synthesis of laws, regulations, reports, articles and other documents relevant to the NHIS. Important topics included equity, effectiveness, financial protection, health care access and utilization, provider-payment mechanisms and financial sustainability. To support its efforts, the Review Committee set up seven technical sub-committees (including the Epidemiology and Benefit Package Sub-Committee) to carry out in-depth reviews of key technical areas. Each of these sub-committees was tasked with developing recommendations for the Technical Review Committee based on analyses of the evidence and consultations in their specific technical areas.

To complement the information and research gathered during the initial review, the Technical Committee commissioned a number of empirical research studies on issues of importance that were not yet supported by reliable evidence. These studies, carried out by researchers and policy organizations, sought to answer a range of questions, including regulations' influence on the implementation of NHIS, beneficiaries' main concerns with NHIS, quality of care issues across different types of facilities, NHIS clients' access to quality medicine and the length of reimbursement delays. One of the studies was an actuarial analysis of the proposed reconfiguration and redesign of the NHIS.

The committee's and sub-committees' efforts to offer opportunities for stakeholders to share their input were designed to ensure that all voices were heard and that issues of concern were uncovered and examined. Technical Committee members held meetings with a range of NHIS stakeholders and other key informants at the national and regional levels, including associations of health care providers, relevant officials at the Ghana Revenue Authority and Ghana Health Service, development partners, non-governmental organizations and others to elicit inputs on focus areas. The Review Committee also organized public fora to engage the broader public and beneficiaries and to gather their input on how to improve the NHIS. In addition to in-person

consultations, the Review Committee called for and received written inputs from stakeholders.

The Technical Committee met regularly to discuss documents, inputs and findings and to determine their implications for the review. These discussions informed the recommendations that the Committee eventually developed.

An Advisory Committee was set up to support the review process and to provide feedback on the Technical Committee's findings and recommendations. The Advisory Committee included several members of Parliament, a former health minister, a former director of Ghana Health Service and other national and international academic, civil society and provider experts. Finally, a National Stakeholder Meeting was organized in June 2016 to share and validate the committee's and sub-committees' findings and recommendations with key stakeholders, including representatives from government departments and agencies, NHIS members and service providers, civil society organizations, trade unions, traditional and religious leaders, development partners and the media. All participants were invited to share ideas and feedback on what was presented.

President Mahama and the minister of Health accepted the review's findings and recommendations but postponed their implementation until after the December 2016 presidential election, in part because they were confident that the governing party at the time (National Democratic Congress or NDC) would win the election. However, the opposition party (New Patriotic Party or NPP) won the election. Having strongly criticized the previous government during the campaign, the new government was reluctant to support initiatives like the NHIS review and recommendations, which were developed under the previous administration. Additionally, two core pieces of the recommendations — scaling NHIS capitation and keeping the scheme largely publicly funded — went against promises the new president had made during the campaign.

After months of the government showing little interest in implementing NHIS reforms as recommended by the Review Committee, more recent developments suggest that the government is preparing to adopt some of the committee's key recommendations. The opening began in the summer of 2017, with meetings that brought together key players in the health sector from across the political spectrum, including members

of the Review Committee. More recently, the NHIA board approved an actuarial study on the exact primary health care package that the scheme can afford to provide, as recommended by the committee. Significantly, the board also unanimously approved the re-introduction of capitation (potentially under a different name), which would greatly facilitate the implementation of a guaranteed universal primary health care basket for all residents in Ghana, the review's central recommendation. The government is increasingly communicating that it accepts the idea that every Ghanaian should be entitled to a free basic primary health care package. It appears that political obstacles are gradually being overcome and that the recommendations' main components may soon be adopted.

The main translators in this case were Dr. Chris Atim, the chair of the Technical Review Committee, and members of the Technical Committee and sub-committees.

Relationship to policymakers

In this case, President Mahama, the policymaker-in-chief, handpicked Chris Atim, a well-known health economist, to head the independent Technical Review Committee. Together, the president, the minister of Health and the leadership of the NHIA selected individuals to sit on the Review Committee. Members of the committee all had extensive experience in Ghana's health sector, as well as a track record of basing their work on research. The choice of committee members implicitly set up the process as evidence-informed and the terms of reference for the Technical Committee and the thematic sub-committees made clear that the committee's work would be technical and based on research. The translators in this case were thus appointed and empowered by key policymakers, including the president, to lead an evidence-informed review.

Their selection to sit on the committee gave them access to the president, who initiated and became a champion for the evidence-informed process.

Translator credibility

The credibility of those chosen to chair and sit on the Review Committee seems to have been key to their selection. This credibility was based on a number of characteristics, including translators' **training and experience**. NHIS committee members were

described as "accomplished scholars," with extensive and practical knowledge of the focus topic. As one interviewee put it:

"These Technical Committee members [had] years of experience. They had worked in and around the NHIS for a lot of time. They are respected people. They have high integrity in society. They are people who everybody looks up to."

Translators' credibility was also linked to their **objectivity, independence and commitment to evidence**. Atim was selected to chair the committee in part because of his leadership of the African Health Economics and Policy Association (AfHEA), an organization that "promotes and strengthens the use of health economics and health policy analysis in achieving equitable and efficient health systems and improved health outcomes in Africa." Similarly, members of the Technical Committee were described as "People who believed in evidence for action," who "forced each decision [...] to be based on evidence."

Translator skills

Interviewees repeatedly mentioned **strong analytical and interpretation skills** as essential, enabling translators to discriminate among different types of evidence, knowing "which evidence to take and which not to take," as well as "being able to draw the conclusions from the evidence that's before you." Similarly, translators reportedly need the **skills to interact with and adapt the evidence** to make it useful for a particular policy context. Beyond simplifying evidence, translators often need to transform it into workable solutions or policy recommendations for policymakers to adopt, extracting and adapting research's policy implications. As interviewees put it, successful translators must be "able to bring all the information together," "contextualize it and move it and make it fit for purpose," "propose solutions" and "help the policymaker understand the impact that particular evidence will have on the target population and what savings, if any, the government is likely to [achieve] for implementing those new interventions."

Translators' and their executive branch supporters' **political savvy** was implicit in the review's emphasis on selecting credible committee members from across the political spectrum and on making the process

extremely participatory at all stages. The objective was to ensure that all voices were heard and that the Review Committee was made aware of perceived and actual issues with NHIS so that it had the opportunity to build additional evidence to validate (or debunk) the existence of issues. Beyond this, the goal was to engage as many stakeholders as possible — including critics of NHIS and members of the opposition — and to develop buy-in for the process and eventual recommendations. As mentioned in the case summary, review committee members' engagement strategy involved meeting with relevant experts and stakeholders at the national and sub-national levels, organizing public fora around the country, calling for submissions of written inputs and sharing and validating findings and recommendations during a National Stakeholder Meeting.

Those who participated in the consultative processes described them positively, suggesting that those leading the review process had stakeholder **convening and facilitation skills** that enabled them to elicit input and foster buy-in.

Policymaking system

While not much information was provided about the policymaking system's nature and functioning, interviewees noted that the **lack of communication and collaboration between evidence producers and policymakers** was one of the main obstacles to EIP in Ghana. The NHIS review was described as the first of its kind by one interviewee: "I think it was the first time we saw evidence being processed like this which took a whole year to do in a very thorough fashion."

Development partner support, including **financial resources**, was essential to the review process in Ghana. In particular, development partners commissioned or financed studies that were carried out during the review process to generate additional evidence and better understand the challenges faced by the NHIS. According to one interviewee, without development partner support, "we would not have been able to pull together these sorts of evidence."

At the same time, even in this case, which benefited from significant development partner resources, additional funding would have been useful. According

to interviewees, "There were limitations in the amount of evidence we could gather and the quality sometimes because of resources," and "[s]ometimes there were things the committee wanted to do, but there was no budget for it." In addition, though the process was exceptionally long, interviewees reported that further **time** would have been useful, particularly to gather and review additional evidence.

Policymaker background and position

The key policymakers in Ghana were (and are) the minister of Health and the elected president who appointed him, as well as elected members of Parliament who will eventually play a role if and when guidance is given by the executive. This case did not reveal a link between policymakers' position (appointed or elected) and their use of evidence.

Issue politics and other political factors

There was **widespread consensus about the importance of reforming the NHIS**. The inadequacies of the existing national health insurance scheme were seen as threatening the survival of the widely popular scheme, and therefore as urgent to address. Described as "liked by all," the scheme faced a number of challenges around equity, efficiency and sustainability. Financial pressures, delays in payments to health care providers and reports of providers refusing to provide services to NHIS members undermined the scheme's objectives and members' confidence in the scheme. Given the NHIS's widespread popularity, leaders across the political spectrum were, and continue to be, committed to the scheme's financial survival.

International interest in and support for Ghana's national health insurance scheme came up often as a key reason why the scheme was being reviewed. Many in the global health community considered Ghana's scheme "A pioneer model in Africa" that held promise for adaptation in other contexts.²⁰ Many interviewees described the scheme as a key, "flagship" component of Ghana's international reputation and "branding," generating **international pressure** for the government to ensure its survival.

Despite national and international support for a functioning NHIS, there was limited consensus about

²⁰ Otoo, et al., "Universal Health Coverage for Inclusive and Sustainable Development Country Summary Report for Ghana", World Bank Group Report, (September 2014): <http://bit.ly/2useoEI>

how the program should be reformed. Indeed, the review took place in a highly **politicized pre-election atmosphere**, making it vulnerable to political obstruction and attack by members of the opposition.

In this case, **national elections delayed the adoption and implementation of the recommendations**.

While the president and health minister accepted the Review Committee's findings and recommendations, they delayed the adoption of the recommendations until after the upcoming 2016 presidential election, which the opposition party ultimately won, shifting the politics around the issue. A number of political considerations led the new government to stall implementation of the recommendations. Having criticized the former government during the campaign, the new government was not keen to support reforms that were developed under its predecessor, even reforms that were technically valid and evidence-informed. In addition, a number of the new government's campaign promises — including ending the capitation pilot in the Ashanti region and lowering taxes — went against core components of the committee's recommendations and the assumption that the NHIS would remain a publicly funded scheme.

As time since the election passes and **political incentives** shift, however, developments suggest that the new government may be moving in the direction of accepting and rolling out the most important review recommendations, including a free basic primary health care package for all Ghanaians. This indicates that individuals across party lines likely recognized the value of an evidence-informed approach and its potential to help save the scheme, but felt constrained to adopt what might look like another administration's recommendations in a highly politicized moment.

Nature of the evidence

Relevant and high-quality data were available in this case. Interviews lauded the country's data systems, saying that "clean, good, reliable data" were available from the National Health Insurance Authority and the Ghana Health Service, as well as data and evidence produced by third parties. The review of evidence, benchmarks and best practices from other countries,

such as Botswana, Canada, Chile, Estonia, Rwanda, Thailand and the United Kingdom, helped translators better understand the causes of some of the NHIS's financial issues and informed the development of recommendations to address these issues.

Input from stakeholders was another important source of data. Respondents overwhelmingly described stakeholders, from NHIA leadership and staff to NHIS members, as willing to share their data, experience and views. Members of the Technical Review Committee were reportedly given "unprecedented access" to NHIA's data, archives and personnel. Similarly, NHIS members were more than willing to share the challenges they experienced with the NHIS. This willingness appears to be connected to the high level of support the review had, as well as the scheme's widespread popularity and Ghanaians' shared desire to see it succeed.

Directionality and accessibility

The directionality and accessibility of evidence was not brought up by interviewees.

Rigor

The **quality of the evidence largely determined the importance the evidence was given** in the process and eventual recommendations. In cases where evidence came in the shape of widespread concerns and complaints about a particular aspect of the scheme, field visits were carried out where possible and (as discussed below) additional research was commissioned to fill the gaps and validate or refute the existence of the reported issue. Less rigorous evidence was only used in cases where higher-quality data were not available and could not be collected.

Source

The evidence that was most used in the reviews was produced by **global institutions, domestic government agencies and scholarly researchers**. It appears that **international evidence** about other countries' experience was important in determining good practice and policy options, while **data and research about Ghana** were essential to understanding the specific issues with NHIS and to designing policy options tailored to the particular issues at play and the resources available.

Right to Information (RTI) Regime Review, Buenos Aires

In Argentina's 2015 elections, transparency and access to information featured prominently as a point of debate. From the national level,²¹ to the local level,²² candidates competed and criticized one another on a range of transparency and accountability issues. In the local contest to become Buenos Aires' head of government, both leading candidates promised expansions of existing transparency systems, as well as ideas for innovations to further propel the city in the vanguard of open local government.²³

It thus came as little surprise to the keenly watching global open government community when, shortly after taking office in early 2016, the new head of government of Buenos Aires launched a deliberate, structured, evidence-informed reform process for its 17-year-old access to information (ATI) regime. Hernán Charosky, the sub-secretary of political reform and legislative affairs took advantage of the pro-transparency and accountability climate and promoted the idea of the reform and process to new Chief of Government Horacio Rodríguez Larreta. Larreta bought in with enthusiasm, and Charosky assembled an experienced team. The main translators in this case therefore were Sub-Secretary of Political Reform and Legislative Affairs Charosky, and the team he assembled to conduct the review.

The team began by reviewing the regulation they were seeking to reform. Specifically, they looked at the functioning of the existing system and channels for requesting information. This included collecting statistical information about the number and types of requests, response lags and other information "to detect priorities and also detect blockages." Next, they conducted a "comparative analysis" of international and model regulations, including case studies with experiences and recommendations from other countries. Interviewees most frequently cited the Organization of American States' "Model Inter-

American Law on Access to Information" or "Model Law" as it is more commonly called.²⁴

In the next stage, Charosky's team discussed the planned reform with government staff working on related topics in other departments. These discussions, coupled with the basis provided by the first two stages above, served as a preliminary diagnostic tool that helped inform the team about the positive aspects of the existing regulation that any reform should maintain, and the weak points of the existing law from civil servants' perspectives. Based on this existing evidence, the team formed their vision of an ideally reformed access to information regulation. However, the reform team considered this insufficient for convincing the wider policy apparatus of the need for reform. Therefore, they launched an innovative process of facilitated stakeholder roundtables called *Dialogando*.

As one interviewee explained, the point of *Dialogando* was to "open the space to hear the perspectives, not just of our small community, but many people [...]." Individuals from across the political spectrum and with diverse views on ATI were invited to a total of five official *Dialogando* roundtables about the access to information reform.²⁵ Interviewee reflections suggest that earlier roundtables were more open and free discussions that were "more to discuss and sensitize civil servants." Later sessions were more narrowly focused on soliciting stakeholder input on specific questions, following prepared, pre-determined thematic guides. After each *Dialogando* meeting, the team in the sub-secretariat generated working documents of the main conclusions that emerged and published them online for additional feedback.²⁶ One key evidence translator referred to this process as "elaborating" on the information to "transform it into evidence."

Using the consensus and evidence gathered from the above processes, the sub-secretariat prepared a draft law. They compared their initial recommendation document (a product of the desk research and initial internal conversations) to the input gathered during

²¹ "Transcripción completa del debate presidencial entre Macri y Scioli", *La Nación*, (16 November 2015): <http://bit.ly/1Mxd5qe>

²² "Al filo del cierre de campaña, Lousteau quiere volver a debatir con Larreta", *Clarín*, (1 July 2015): <http://clar.in/2rQP2SY>

²³ S. Guilera, "Buenos Aires inteligente", *Bastión Digital*, (16 July 2015): <http://bit.ly/2u7uynC>; C. Bonina, "Cocreación, innovación y datos abiertos en ciudades de América Latina: lecciones de Buenos Aires, Ciudad de México y Montevideo", *Iniciativa Latinoamericana por los Datos Abiertos*, (2015): <http://bit.ly/2qTxytk>

²⁴ More information on the Model Law is available at http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/access_to_information_model_law.asp

²⁵ More information on the specific roundtables is available at <http://www.dialogandoba.com/cronograma>

²⁶ The minutes, presentations and synthesis documents are available at <http://www.dialogandoba.com/bibliografia>

the Dialogando roundtables. During the drafting, the team continuously submitted their progress for political validation by the head of government, the cabinet, legislators and ministers from across the public administration.

Finally, in November 2016, the sub-secretariat presented the draft law to the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires. The month following the introduction of the bill to the Legislature involved “an extensive and interesting debate.”²⁷ However, thanks at least in part to the extensive prior efforts to build a consensus law based on evidence, communicate that evidence to convince possible resistors and incorporate a wide diversity of political and stakeholder input, the bill’s debate was not fractious, but rather, enjoyed wide, multi-party support. At the December 15, 2016 session to approve the final law, deputies from seven parties made speeches in support of the law, and many explicitly recognized the quality of the law’s crafting.²⁸ In the end, the bill received 54 positive votes, with three abstentions and no votes against.²⁹

The final approved law closely matched the draft bill, with the addition of some specifications for the responsibility and independence of the head of the oversight body. The law entered into effect on January 19, 2017, and as of writing this report, the reform team was continuing its efforts to collect evidence and stakeholder input on the law’s actual implementation.³⁰

Relationship to policymakers

The main translator in this case, Hernán Charosky, was appointed as sub-secretary of political reform and legislative affairs by Horacio Rodríguez Larreta, Buenos Aires’ new chief of government, in 2016. Larreta enthusiastically bought into Charosky’s idea of a deliberate, structured, evidence-informed reform process to review the city’s 17-year-old ATI regime, and empowered Charosky to assemble an experienced, dedicated team to launch the reform

process. Multiple interviewees recognized that Larreta’s executive leadership provided the “opening from above” and “political will” for the review to take place. Thus, the **relationship between policymaker and translator** and support from a **government champion** at the highest political level were key drivers that empowered the Political Reform Office to carry out a review process informed by evidence. Other important policymakers were members of Congress who were needed to get the proposal into law. While interviewees provided no information about the existing relationship between members of Congress and the translator team, they made clear that Charosky and his team prioritized meeting and collaborating with these individuals regularly to understand and address their concerns, and build their support for the law ahead of its passage.

Translator credibility

Translator credibility appears to have been essential to the success of the ATI regime review and reform process. This credibility seems to be the product of **relevant academic training, a deep knowledge of access to information issues and a commitment to evidence and objectivity.**

Interviews reported that translators’ success depends on their “prestige and trajectory” and their ability to earn “a position in certain areas or themes that one does not question.” Charosky and the team working on the ATI reform had achieved that position. They were described as “academically trained people” with extensive knowledge of ATI. According to one interviewee, Charosky is exceptionally knowledgeable: “If Hernán [Charosky] had wanted, he could have sat down and written the same access to information law in four days. When it came out, everyone would have said, ‘oh, that’s a good law.’” In addition, Charosky and his team were said to be non-partisan, objective and unbiased, basing their thinking on evidence throughout their work.

²⁷ “La Ciudad tiene nueva ley de Acceso a la Información Pública”, (23 January 2017): <http://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/noticias/la-ciudad-tiene-nueva-ley-de-acceso-la-informacion-publica>

²⁸ “Aprobaron reforma de Acceso a la Información”, *Revista Qué*, (15 December 2016): <http://bit.ly/2rMBqWX>

²⁹ “Dictan una nueva Ley de Acceso a la Información Pública”, *Legislatura de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires*, (15 December 2016): https://www.legislatura.gov.ar/noti_ver.php?ver=6101

³⁰ “Dialogando BA, implementación de la Ley 104”, *Buenos Aires Ciudad*, (19 May 2017): <http://bit.ly/2tu3y3V>

Translator skills

Translators were described as needing the **skills to synthesize, adapt and communicate research** products that are often long and complex. For example, translators may need the ability to translate complex evidence into graphics or colloquial language that the target policymakers can more easily understand.

A number of interviewees in this case insisted that **political savvy**, a skill that does not appear in our definition of translation, should feature at its center. One respondent defined *political savvy* as a mental “map” of the particular policy process, understanding the different actors, their motivations to support or inhibit the process and where and how translators should intervene. Interviewees pointed to the participatory design of the ATI review process, and the review team’s navigation and use of that participation, as an example of the importance of this skill. Charosky and the Office of Political Reform applied its “political savvy” by consulting with people who might not agree with what they wanted to do, in order to understand — and to some extent address — the concerns of all parties and to obtain their buy-in into the process. These consultations took place as part of Dialogando, as well as in political validation meetings with the head of government, the cabinet, legislators and ministers from across the public administration. The team made strategic decisions about what to include in the draft law to ensure it would be accepted by policymakers and adopted by Congress. The team’s draft law was as faithful as possible to international models and best practices, while ensuring that it would be acceptable to policymakers. As one interviewee put it, the team worked to develop a draft law that was “politically feasible” based on “an understanding of the political motivations of the decision-makers to support or to not support this.” This approach demonstrates political savvy and the **ability to compromise**.

Thus, Charosky and his team identified potential obstacles to their reform and developed strategies to overcome them. In particular, the translators’ design of a participatory review process was essential to uncovering a whole range of stakeholders’ priorities and concerns, addressing those concerns as they emerged and in building buy-in for the review process and the eventual law.

Both the review teams and stakeholders who participated in the consultative processes described

them as productive, suggesting that those leading the processes had the skills required to successfully convene relevant stakeholders, extract input from participants and foster buy-in. These **convening and facilitating skills**, connected to but distinct from political savvy, are also essential to effective translation.

Policymaking system

While interviewees provided very limited information about the nature and functioning of the policymaking system in Buenos Aires, they did mention that collecting evidence to support policymaking is an “unusual and not enacted practice” in Argentina. Similarly, the participatory consultations were described as quite unusual: “You don’t have such a process established in Argentina.” Thus, **the policymaking system in Buenos Aires does not seem to have been particularly conducive** to an evidence-informed policy review process; rather, the ATI process was exceptional. While time was mentioned as an unavoidable constraint, resource limitations do not appear to have been a significant challenge.

Policymaker background and position

The main policymakers in this case were elected officials: Chief of Government Larreta and the legislators who eventually passed the law. Very little information is provided about their backgrounds, and a clear link could not be established between the fact that they were elected and their use of evidence.

Issue politics and other political factors

There was a broad agreement that the status quo ATI regime was not working. More important than the inadequacies of the current policy were other factors, including the national and municipal contexts. Most catalytic was the **election of a new administration** to the government of Buenos Aires after a campaign focused on transparency and access to information. A parallel ATI reform was ongoing at the national level and created a mood favorable to ATI.

It appears that the **global movement for greater government openness** did, at least indirectly, help spur the review of Buenos Aires’ ATI policy. At the April 2016 launch of the new government’s agenda for transparency and institutional innovation, which

included a commitment to access to information reform, the head of government affirmed that part of their motivation was "to give continuity to our transparency policies to raise the city to the highest international open government standards."³¹

While there was agreement about the importance of improving the policy, there was **less consensus about the specific changes** needed to do so. In particular, individuals within the government were resistant to a reform of the ATI regime that would subject their work to greater public scrutiny. As described above, this obstacle was mitigated through the use of evidence and a strategy designed to create consensus and build buy-in.

Nature of the evidence

International legislation and international case studies appear to have been the single most important types of evidence, as they were used to shape the themes that were discussed during the fora. The Office for Political Reform relied most heavily on the Organization of American States' "Model Inter-American Law on Access to Information," or "Model Law" as it is more commonly referred to.³² International cases were also reviewed, including access to information laws and regulations in Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay and others. Other sources of evidence included comparative analyses of access to public information and international rankings.

Existing **national statistical information** about the number and types of requests and response lags was used to identify consequences of the policy's weaknesses, particularly the fact that it was not leading to citizens using it as frequently as hoped.

Directionality and accessibility

Interviewees did not bring up the directionality or accessibility of evidence.

Rigor

One interviewed translator described *rigor* as an **ideal characteristic** of evidence that policymakers and translators would *like* to use to filter evidence when rigorous evidence is available. In this case, translators used evidence despite its lack of rigor, by necessity, including information the translators described as "very heterogeneous."

Source

The sources of the information used were varied and included **regional and global institutions**,³³ **scholarly researchers (domestic and international)** and **administrative data**. While data about the use and effectiveness of Buenos Aires' ATI regime were crucial to diagnosing the issues with the current policy, international country experiences and best practices were instrumental in shaping the proposed reforms.

Stakeholders' input was another essential source of information that helped leaders of the reviews to understand the inadequacies of the current policies and in developing political buy-in for the process and recommendations. As one interviewee put it in Buenos Aires:

"The idea of Dialogando was to be able to present as part of the evidence the experience of each individual. [This] was a very important input in that sense, because not only were inputs taken for the reform, but also [it allowed us] to really understand [...] the point of view of each side, to see how one 'lived' the law in the city."

³¹ "Presentación de la Agenda de Transparencia e Innovación Institucional", *Buenos Aires Ciudad*, (15 April 2016): <http://bit.ly/1SPF9aP>

³² More information on the Model Law is available at http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/access_to_information_model_law.asp

³³ The Organization of American States' "Model Inter-American Law on Access to Public Information."

Individual Case Findings: Validation Exercise

Our research involved three stages: 1) the development of a definitional and theoretical framework based on a review of the literature, 2) primary research around two unfolding translation cases to test our framework in those cases, 3) the review of five case studies about the use of evidence to inform policymaking. In this section, we present detailed findings for the review of each of these five cases; four of these case studies were developed by Yale's School of Management as part of its own Hewlett-funded EIP project, and one case was developed as part of the Transfer Project, a multi-country research initiative to provide rigorous evidence on the impact of large-scale national cash transfer programs in sub-Saharan Africa.

Collaborative Analysis on Labor Intervention Effectiveness

Yale School of Management,
South Africa

In 2011, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) and the National Planning Commission of South Africa (NPC) formed a partnership called the Collaborative Analysis of Labor Intervention Effectiveness (CALIE). This joint research program focused on rigorously evaluating youth employment policy interventions (one of NPC's key mandates) to identify effective future interventions, help inform policymaking and reduce unemployment. In preparation, researchers at J-PAL reviewed the literature on unemployment and found that qualified applicants with weak social networks are at a disadvantage in their job searches. They also reviewed interventions designed to reduce the gap between intention and behavior in the health sector with the objective of testing their potential effectiveness in the labor market.

J-PAL raised funds and sought proposals for research projects related to labor policy. One of these was a pilot led by two South African academics to examine whether disadvantaged job seekers (without a university degree or the right social network)

could overcome a lack of credibility and increase their chances of finding jobs by sending reference letters along with their applications. J-PAL provided the research team with funding and feedback, and helped coordinate partnerships with relevant government actors at the Department of Labor (DoL), the government unit tasked with reducing unemployment. The results from the pilot, carried out in a single regional labor center, were positive. They showed that the intervention involved no added cost to labor centers and that job-seekers who sent out reference letters with their CVs had higher call-back rates than job-seekers who did not.

Building on this success, the South African academic principal investigators (PIs), J-PAL and the DoL designed and raised funds for a study to evaluate the intervention on a larger scale (four labor centers). Based on the DoL's request, the team increased the scope of the study to examine the impact of two interventions: 1) the reference letters, and 2) action plans — templates that job-seekers and counselors would use to map out next steps for the job search. The evaluation results were again positive; the reference letter produced a 60% increase in call backs (89% for women), and using an action plan template with counselors increased the number of job applications submitted by 15% and the number of job offers by 30%. The DoL team was excited about the results and is currently discussing how to roll out policies based on the evaluation's findings with J-PAL and the PIs.

In this case, J-PAL's research team — described as “the glue” between the researchers, the government and other stakeholders — and the study's PIs were the key evidence translators. J-PAL connected and built relationships between organizations, and both J-PAL and the PIs ensured that information and evidence flowed between organizations, and promoted co-creation and ownership. Once the study was completed, PIs also played an important role in disseminating the results of their work. Unlike most cases where translation for evidence uptake is carried out by J-PAL's policy team, in this case, J-PAL's research team led the translation for evidence-uptake efforts. J-PAL's policy team will reportedly take on this translation role in the next phase to assist DoL in the roll-out of the interventions.

Relationship to policymakers

Translators' existing relationships with policymakers and their diligent efforts to develop these relationships were key determinants of their ability to effectively funnel evidence into the policymaking process. According to the case study, J-PAL had “longstanding relationships” with government entities in South Africa and leveraged its flexible funding to develop “strong relationships” with the South African government through knowledge-sharing and networking events. The head of South Africa's NPC, for example, knew one of J-PAL's co-founders from a previous collaboration; cultivating this relationship eventually led to the creation of the CALIE research partnership.

Throughout the project, J-PAL and the principal investigators worked closely with the government in a “collaborative design process.” This was key to their success; by co-creating with the DoL, PIs were able to design a study that fit within the DoL's resource limitations and existing incentives, and within the workflow of labor center employees responsible for carrying out the intervention. Working collaboratively with government actors did mean that J-PAL and the PIs had to adjust their research focus slightly, but these compromises were seen as critical to ensuring that the research was feasible and relevant to the DoL. This collaboration bore fruit in the DoL's willingness to scale up the pilot and to roll out policies once interventions were determined to have positive effects.

Translator credibility

Translator credibility appears to have played an important role in the government's decisions to participate in the research pilot, scale up the program, and eventually roll out policies based on the evidence.

J-PAL's credibility was initially based on its global reputation and existing relationships with key individuals in the government, both of which facilitated J-PAL's access to government officials. Throughout the project, J-PAL enhanced this credibility by showing that it shared government's goal of reducing youth unemployment and by demonstrating its commitment to designing a project with the government's input. Interviewed participants reported that there was open communication, trust and compromise between partners.

Translator skills

The skills that were most important to translators' success were political savvy and their ability to build strong and collaborative working relationships with partners.

J-PAL and the PIs demonstrated their political savvy in their understanding of common obstacles to evidence-informed policymaking and in their strategies to overcome those obstacles. For example, J-PAL chose to focus its research on youth unemployment, a topic that was highly relevant to the South African government, and J-PAL and the PIs worked to elicit and incorporate government feedback into the project design. Specifically, input from the DoL led to the pilot's focus on reference letters and to the inclusion of an action plan arm in the scale-up — interventions that did not require additional investment from the government. J-PAL made these changes to ensure that it would be feasible for the government to scale up the intervention. J-PAL and PIs consistently described the study as a DoL project to ensure the government's continued ownership and buy-in, two things that would be necessary for the program to be implemented and expanded by the government if results were positive. According to the case study, “This buy-in was created through a lot of hard work by the researchers to be good working partners and through the strategic design of the research project.”

This political strategy rested on an underlying set of skills that J-PAL also exemplified. In particular, the organization demonstrated strong partner

engagement and relationship-building skills. They successfully facilitated a co-creation process and fostered trust, compromise, buy-in and ownership by all stakeholders.

Policymaking system

The case study does not provide much detail on the general nature and functioning of the policymaking system. It does note, however, that one of the criteria by which professors are evaluated in South African academic institutions is “social responsiveness.” The university system in South Africa thus encourages academics to focus their research on socially and politically relevant issues, which helps promote the generation of relevant research and its use in policymaking.

Resource availability and constraints played an important role in this case. As the case study emphasizes, the fact that J-PAL had unrestricted funding from a number of development partners enabled the organization to invest time and resources into building relationships with government stakeholders, and gave it the freedom to give the government most of the credibility for the project. Further, J-PAL’s receptiveness to an intervention that did not require additional investments from the government was crucial to the government’s interest in scaling the program up.

Policymaker background and position

The case study provides very little information about the policymakers involved in the project.

Issue politics and other political factors

Unemployment is a “critical political issue” in South Africa, given the extremely high unemployment rate (26% for the whole population and 37% for youth). The fact that J-PAL chose to focus its research on unemployment was key to its success. All actors — academics, the government and J-PAL — were aligned in their goals; as the case study puts it, “Public officials, politicians and organizations working to improve the economic and social environment in South Africa are eager to identify cost-effective ways to address unemployment, particularly among black women and youths.” This created incentives for participation, collaboration and eventual success.

Nature of the evidence

Two main categories of evidence were used in this case. The first was research that J-PAL reviewed ahead of the pilot, including research on unemployment both in South Africa and beyond, as well as academic papers on interventions designed to bridge the gap between intention and behavior in health. The second category was rigorous impact evidence produced as part of the CALIE pilot and scale-up randomized control trial. The evidence from the evaluations suggested a particular course of action — scaling up the reference letter and action-plan interventions.

The case does not speak to the accessibility of the evidence itself, but the fact that relevant policymakers were consistently engaged by J-PAL and the PIs suggests that they developed a strong understanding of the study and its findings. Finally, the sources of the evidence were both domestic and international; as in other cases, the preliminary research J-PAL conducted to inform the design of the program was both domestic and international, while the evidence that will inform actual policymaking was collected in South Africa.

Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty

Transfer Project, Ghana

The Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) program is a cash transfer program launched in March 2008 to help Ghana’s poorest populations exit poverty. It was introduced in the context of new, robust international evidence on the impact of social protection and an increasing global and domestic focus on social protection as a way to combat poverty, reduce inequality and stimulate development. LEAP’s specific objective is to increase the human capital development of Ghana’s extreme poor and vulnerable by increasing consumption through a cash transfer and by promoting access to services, including health care, basic education, welfare and livelihood services.

A number of research studies and evaluations were carried out to assess LEAP between 2010 and 2013. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) implemented a quantitative impact

evaluation, and Oxford Policy Management carried out a qualitative study of LEAP's economic impacts. Finally, the Food and Agricultural Organization performed a Local Economy-Wide Impact Evaluation of LEAP. These studies found that while implementation of the program was uneven, LEAP was effectively reaching the poorest households, and having significant impacts on beneficiaries and their communities. Among other outcomes, LEAP reduced food insecurity, drastically increased enrollment of LEAP households in the NHIS and reduced their out-of-pocket health spending and increased school enrollment and attendance.

By demonstrating that LEAP had significant impact on beneficiaries' lives and communities, the evidence helped create a new and positive narrative for LEAP. Perceptions of the program improved, eventually leading the Ministry of Finance and the presidency to allocate additional resources for the program's expansion. However, the studies and evidence alone did not produce these shifts; rather, "[i]t was *the way in which they were used* that created the change." Indeed, translation was instrumental to evidence successfully informing policymaking — in this case, in the form of greater resource allocation and program expansion. The case study makes clear that other forces, particularly politics, also played an important role in the narrative shift and program expansion.

The main translators in this case were individuals within government, specifically the technical team in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCS) and the minister herself. Development partners, particularly UNICEF, the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) supported these translators, encouraging the government to develop social protection programs, providing technical expertise and financial support and supporting the translation and uptake of evidence by sponsoring experiential learning through overseas trainings, exchange trips and international workshops.

Relationship to policymakers

In this case, the Ministry of Finance and the presidency were the target policymakers, because their support was necessary to secure additional resources and expand the program. The relationship between the translators (Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection Nana Oye Lithur and her team) and the target policymakers is not examined in detail in the case. However, it is safe to assume that the

minister had a professional relationship with the minister of Finance and the president, who appointed her. The minister's access to target policymakers appears to have been key to her success in funneling evidence from LEAP into policymaking. As described in sections below, the minister also prioritized cultivating relationships with relevant stakeholders, including key policymakers, and involving them in discussions about LEAP.

Translator credibility

The case does not speak to translators' credibility explicitly, but the president's appointment of the minister to her post suggests some level of trust. This credibility was likely based on prior successful professional interactions, translators' decisions to support studies that were completed "through a variety of different partnerships" and their willingness to be transparent and share both positive and less positive findings from the studies, as described below.

Translator skills

The case highlights a number of skills that equipped the main translators to successfully translate evidence from LEAP into political buy-in and funding for the program. One of these skills is the ability to adapt and communicate the evidence so that it is accessible to a non-technical audience. The team is described as transforming findings into "easy-to-digest briefing papers and fact sheets on specific impacts" and "clear and digestible messages for a variety of stakeholders."

Another essential skill is political savvy — which encompasses the strategic use of evidence, advocacy and efforts to engage key stakeholders to encourage participation and buy-in. The ministry engaged a range of actors, from civil society actors and the media, to other social protection programs and relevant policymakers. This engagement built consensus and encouraged actors to support and promote social protection generally and LEAP specifically. Events included workshops to present research findings, media briefings, interviews and ongoing informal meetings with a range of stakeholders. According to the case study, "The accompanying strategy to actually use the evidence, communicate it, translate it into advocacy and integrate it directly into national dialogue has been instrumental."

The minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection is described as leveraging her “dynamism, resourcefulness and networking,” as well as her “personal drive and commitment” to effectively support LEAP. Her personal outreach and advocacy efforts to the minister of Finance and the president are described as “crucial in building support [for LEAP] at the highest level.”

Policymaking system

The case study includes limited information about Ghana’s policymaking system. It does, however, mention that limited resources delayed LEAP’s rigorous evaluation and roll-out, and that development partners’ financial support made possible the various learning country visits for key individuals within the government.

Policymaker background and position

Both of the main target policymakers were receptive to evidence-informed policymaking. One is elected and the other is appointed, but there is no information about their training and experience or any effect their appointment or election might have on their receptiveness to EIP.

Issue politics and other political factors

The LEAP program appears to have been relatively divisive for some time. Evidence and evidence-informed advocacy were needed to overcome these perceptions and increase support for the program. Specifically, the case study refers to a “neutral or even negative perception” of LEAP as “a small-scale, charitable handout creating dependency in poor households,” reportedly influenced by anecdotal evidence and uninformed media coverage. Indeed, even though early LEAP design documents called for the generation of evidence on the program’s impact, LEAP expanded (and was rigorously evaluated) much more slowly than originally planned, in part due to “low political traction and the subsequent lack of resources.” While support for LEAP was mixed domestically, international norms favored social protection. There was an increasing regional and global focus on social protection and new robust evidence about its impact in other countries.

Other political factors played a role in the timing and pace of the program’s expansion. Political elections and the financial, fuel and food crisis clearly played a key role in the initially slow roll-out of the program. Later, after the government’s 2013 decision to remove fuel subsidies and extensive advocacy and evidence predicted that this move would push an additional 400,000 people into poverty, the government decided to increase LEAP’s budget and coverage significantly.

Nature of the evidence

The evidence that informed LEAP’s expansion and related increases in resource allocation for the program varied. International evidence produced prior to 2010 was key to producing interest and buy-in from individuals within the government who eventually became evidence translators and champions for the LEAP program. This evidence included impact evaluations of social protection programs in Brazil and Mexico, as well as “peer and experiential” learning, and evidence gained by government stakeholders sponsored by development partners to go observe and learn from practitioners about similar programs in other countries. In particular, senior representatives from several ministries visited Brazil and Colombia, where they observed and learned what cash transfer schemes can achieve in terms of poverty reduction, equity and growth.

Evidence about the LEAP program itself, produced between 2010 and 2013, included both quantitative impact evaluations and qualitative research of the economic impacts of LEAP. These studies were carried out by reputable organizations and are presented as high quality. The 2013 quantitative impact evaluation, which demonstrated the program’s significant and positive impact on beneficiaries and their communities, was likely the most influential in decisions to expand the program.

Operational evidence about LEAP showed that the program’s impact was limited by a number of issues, including the low value of the cash transfer, inadequate communication about the program and payment and targeting issues. Somewhat counterintuitively, evidence of these issues supported evidence translation and uptake. The government used the evidence to identify and address priority issues and improve the program, and sharing the evidence with stakeholders transparently built trust in

the evidence more broadly. This demonstrated that the program, though imperfect, was having important impacts on beneficiaries' life and improving.

It appears that the evidence was overall high quality and its implications were clear. The case study does not speak to the accessibility of the evidence itself, but emphasizes that the minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection's and her team's efforts to translate the evidence — in this case packaging and disseminating the evidence to make it more accessible to a broad audience — were crucial to people being aware of it, understanding it and being compelled by it.

The evidence, produced by organizations with strong reputations, came from different sources. Early evidence from other countries experimenting with social protection programs demonstrated that social protection can have positive impacts in some contexts. This evidence convinced development organizations and key individuals in the government of the potential of cash transfers. Domestic evidence about LEAP was needed to convince a broader audience that such programs were effective — and desirable — in Ghana.

Progresa – Oportunidades

Yale School of Management, Mexico

The Progresa program (later renamed Oportunidades) was launched by Mexican President Dr. Ernesto Zedillo in the second half of 1997, following a serious economic crisis (starting in December 1994) that crippled the Mexican economy and drastically increased the extreme poverty rate. At that time, poverty alleviation programs in Mexico predominantly consisted of untargeted, generalized and in-kind food subsidies. However, a body of academic literature generated before 1995 demonstrated that this type of subsidy was "grossly ineffective" due to issues that included high costs, failure to reach the poor and proneness to political manipulation. Progresa's design, informed by this evidence, as well as by a rich body of literature about different types of social policy, was dramatically different from previous programs. It was a conditional cash transfer program intended to break the cycle of poverty and alleviate current poverty by supporting investment in children's health, nutrition

and education. Specifically, Progresa provided eligible families a cash transfer based on the number, gender and age of children, in exchange for regular school attendance, health clinic visits and nutrition support. It was also the first social program to carefully and transparently define rules of operations to protect the program from political interferences.

In addition to rigorous evidence about the ineffectiveness of existing generalized food subsidies and alternative approaches to poverty alleviation, the design of Progresa was informed by new quantitative data collected by the government on household-level poverty, health, education and consumption habits. This data was used to more effectively target program recipients, to estimate the opportunity cost of keeping children in school and to better understand the local supply of education and health services.

A pilot of the program demonstrated that a targeted cash transfer was much more efficient and effective than traditional untargeted subsidies, and that providing the cash transfer to women while incorporating conditions was essential. Convinced by the evidence that the program was viable and effective, the president authorized an expansion of the pilot. The roll-out of Progresa was designed as a randomized control trial to create rigorous evidence to inform future program refinements and growth. The evaluation found that Progresa had positive impacts on a majority of intermediary targets and that conditions had a significant effect on households' behaviors around nutrition and child education. In light of these results, the program scaled up rapidly, reaching almost 2.5 million households by the end of 2000.

Progresa's approach to integrating evidence into policymaking was extremely influential. Beyond shaping Progresa's evolution, it also led to the creation of the National Council of Evaluation (CONEVAL), whose mandate is to evaluate all of the government's social programs with rigorous methodologies.

The two main translators in this case were Dr. Santiago Levy and Dr. José Gómez de León, whom the case study describes as President Zedillo's "trusted advisors." They were government officials whom the president tasked with designing a particular policy. Having translators embedded in the government (and in this case, specifically tasked with designing an evidence-informed program by the policymaker-in-chief) appears to be a particularly effective way of supporting EIP.

Relationship to policymakers

Levy and Gómez de León were initially appointed by President Zedillo as deputy minister of Finance and chair of the National Council of Population (CONAPO), respectively, in part due to prior professional collaborations. Later, when the National Coordination of Progresá was formed inside the Ministry of Social Development, Gómez de León and his team moved from CONAPO to the National Coordination of Progresá, where they were supported by Levy's team. In 2000, Gómez de León passed away and the president appointed Daniel Hernández to replace him.

Shortly after their appointment, these translators were asked to work together to develop a conditional cash transfer program that the president would support and champion along the way. In this case, translators' access to and relationship to the policymaker (the president) was key to their ability to effectively funnel evidence into the policymaking process.

As in other cases, this close relationship to and ongoing support of a policymaker champion was essential. President Zedillo is repeatedly described as supporting both evidence-informed policymaking and conditional cash transfers, providing "accompaniment, encouragement and ownership" of what he saw as his "flagship social policy," as well as "top-level support (and often pressure) to create political goodwill among other government stakeholders."

Translator credibility

Zedillo reportedly chose these translators based on "personal affinity and trust," or credibility. In this case, Levy and Gómez de León's credibility appears to have been the product of personal relationships, successful prior professional collaborations and similar academic training. The president and the translators all have considerable academic backgrounds: President Zedillo and Levy both have PhDs in Economics, and Gómez de León had a PhD in Demography. Both Levy and Gómez de León were public officials prior to their appointment, and Gómez de León and Zedillo were particularly close, as they had collaborated over the years (they met earlier in their careers when Gómez de León worked at the Mexican Central Bank and later served as Zedillo's chief advisor at the Ministry of Budget and Programming). Their academic training and professional experience

likely contributed to the president's relationship with the translators, his "professional respect" for both, as well as his "personal affinity and trust" in them.

The case does not discuss Gómez de León and Levy's political alignment (or not) with Zedillo's, but the three of them were explicitly aligned in their "shared vision of integrating rigorous evidence into policy and practice" and in their desire to design an evidence-informed conditional cash transfer program to reduce poverty.

Translator skills

The translators and their teams are repeatedly portrayed as having a number of skills relevant to their position as translators. Described as "public officials with considerable academic backgrounds," Levy and Gómez de León have PhDs in economics and demography, respectively, and previously served as faculty members at universities. According to the case study, Gómez de León and his team are "researchers" and Levy and his team were "capable of gathering, creating and analyzing a wide range of data."

Beyond their research and analysis skills, these translators are described as technocrats who "showed sensitivity towards political and operational constraints." The translators demonstrated this political savvy throughout the design, implementation and evaluation of the program. In the lead-up to the pilot launch, for example, Levy actively engaged key ministries and state governments to coordinate different players and to refine the operational aspects of the program. This proactive intergovernmental coordination was reportedly instrumental to the success of the program. Similarly, both translators committed to rigorously, independently and transparently evaluating the program's impact, in part to overcome the "enormous political resistance" to it (described below). To allow the space for evidence to drive the program, rather than politics, they also attempted to shield the program from political cycles or potential temptations to manipulate it for electoral purposes. They accomplished this by setting transparent operating rules and principles, and by obtaining an international loan tied to Progresá's maintenance.

Thus, translators' ability to collect and analyze data and their political savvy enabled them to effectively translate primary evidence into policy.

Policymaking system

According to the case study, “policymaking in Mexico had traditionally focused solely on political dimensions and implications.” In particular, Mexico’s social programs were not traditionally based on evidence:

“Progresa established a new standard for social programs in Mexico. Its insistence on generating and using rigorous evidence to inform its design and ongoing implementation challenged the prevailing political norms, in terms of content of social programs (previously centered on unsuccessful price subsidies) and process (where programs tended to be subject to political manipulation).”

In the context of a social policymaking system traditionally driven by political interests, President Zedillo and his translators successfully designed, implemented and adapted their program based on an existing body of evidence and the collection, analysis and interpretation of new quantitative data and an impact evaluation of the program.

While the case study points to constraints that required the roll-out of the program to be “gradual,” the translators and the president appear to have faced relatively limited timeline and resource restrictions. This is likely tied to their positions within government, the president’s commitment to the program and his willingness to delay program implementation until the design was tested and the results of the pilot project were available. This was an unusual decision, given administrations’ tradition of launching big programs shortly after their inauguration and the pressures to provide a response to the severe economic crisis.

Policymaker background and position

President Zedillo’s academic and professional background played a significant part in his decision to pursue an evidential path. His academic training, his related commitment to evidence-informed policymaking and his affinity and trust for researchers were all instrumental. These characteristics guided his decisions to appoint two researchers to key positions, to empower them to design a conditional cash transfer “based on a set of recent publications that extensively and rigorously analyzed the shortcomings of existing paradigms for poverty alleviation,” and to lead, support and champion the evidence-informed design, implementation and adaptation of

the program over time. In sum, the policymaker’s technical training and experience, rather than his political background and his position as an elected official, seem to have shaped his commitment to support an evidence-informed process.

Issue politics and other political factors

While the 1994 economic crisis created political pressures to address the increased poverty rate, there was “enormous political pressure to change or scrap” the new targeted and conditional cash transfer. This was because it went against the prevailing poverty alleviation approach of untargeted and generalized price subsidies and would curtail opportunities for political manipulation (for example, exchanging subsidies for votes). The case study is clear that the policy’s divisiveness motivated proponents of the new program to use evidence to inform the new policy:

“One of the key motivations to document and produce evidence from the very beginning was to provide powerful elements to face and overcome relentless political push back from different actors.”

The evidence generated as part of the pilot’s evaluation provided “critical political strength” that supported “the roll-out and scale-up of the program against enormous political resistance.” In this case, then, the high level of contestation around the new program supported the generation and use of evidence to inform policy.

The fact that Zedillo, a backer of an evidence-informed approach, was in power and supportive of EIP was decisive in shaping the initial use of the evidence. The president appointed EIP believers to key posts in the administration, empowered them to develop an evidence-informed conditional cash transfer program, and supported them along the way. In 2000, for the first time in 70 years, the PRI party lost the presidential election, and a new president, Vicente Fox, and party (National Action Party or PAN) were elected. Elections are typically a threat to controversial policies, particularly when the losing party is widely disparaged, including by the new administration. However, in this case, the program survived the election, largely because of the evaluations’ positive findings and rigor and translators’ advocacy efforts. The new administration decided to maintain the program with some minor adjustments, including the new name “Oportunidades,” and

eventually increased the program's coverage. In this case, the effective generation and translation of rigorous evidence allowed a successful program to survive political competition and change.

Nature of the evidence

Finally, the nature of rigorous international and domestic evidence was crucial. Zedillo's technical background and pro-evidence disposition may not have been sufficient without the "humbling wave" of evidence pointing to the inadequacy of the prevalent anti-poverty paradigm in Mexico. This literature, including a publication by the World Bank, pointed to the need for a different type of anti-poverty program and informed the design of Gómez de León and his team's initial program.

In terms of design, however, the program leaders needed supplementary data to shape the specifics of the program. Therefore, Gómez de León and his team collected additional quantitative data to help them effectively target households and determine the size of the subsidy required. At the same time, Levy and his team designed and piloted a similar program and gathered evidence that confirmed the effectiveness of conditional cash transfer programs in Mexico. Together, this information fed into the design of the unified program, which was eventually rolled out as a randomized control trial to generate rigorous evidence to confirm its effectiveness and to inform its future revisions and expansions.

In this case, both international and domestic evidence were crucial. While evidence from international organizations shaped policymaker and translators' commitment to developing a particular type of program, new demographic data collected by the government, as well as evidence from the evaluation of the pilot and actual program, were used to inform the specifics of the program design, improvements and expansion. The existence of high-quality and relevant evidence and translators' commitment to producing additional rigorous evidence were essential to the use of evidence in policymaking.

Teacher Community Assistance Initiative

Yale School of Management, Ghana

The Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach involves providing remedial education to primary school students based on their specific learning levels. The approach was first developed in India by an organization called Pratham and was rigorously tested in India and Kenya. Randomized control trials found that the approach significantly and reliably improved education quality and learning outcomes. The Teacher Community Assistant Initiative (TCAI) was a TaRL project, coupled with a randomized control trial, that was carried out in Ghana between 2010 and 2013 to test whether the TaRL approach could be successfully adapted and delivered at scale by the government.

Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) collaborated with the government of Ghana to implement and test TCAI at national scale. The project was co-designed by IPA and the government, funded by the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and implemented by government through the the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the National Youth Employment Program (NYEP), with IPA's support. IPA and the government of Ghana worked closely to design a project that would both produce rigorous and relevant evidence, and function within the Ghanaian education system. After small-scale piloting of potential treatment arms, the IPA-government team developed a project that tested four different interventions: 1) remedial classes for students below grade level taught by teacher community assistants (TCAs) during school hours, 2) remedial classes for students below grade level taught by TCAs after school hours, 3) review lessons on the normal curriculum by TCAs for students randomly pulled out from class, and 4) small group instruction by teachers targeted at pupils' actual learning levels.

The evaluation found that the program significantly improved children's basic skills in numeracy and literacy. The in-school and after-school remedial TCAs had the greatest impact on student achievement, though impacts varied significantly across regions, suggesting variations in how faithfully the intervention was implemented. The teacher-led intervention — the government's preferred intervention and the most affordable — had the least impact. Despite these positive results, a number of issues constrained

the planned national roll-out of effective TCAI interventions. First, a scandal and subsequent shake-up at NYEP meant that the resources previously committed by the government program were withdrawn. Second, the uneven implementation quality raised questions about whether the intervention could be scaled effectively. Finally, the government lost its focus on TCAI when the possibility of new United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funding for other education programs emerged. Thus, even though most of the factors key to successful translation were present, the lack of funding ultimately prevented the uptake of evidence.

While this outcome was disappointing, stakeholders noted that TCAI had other important impacts. The program improved the government's awareness of the importance of remedial education and of evidence-informed practice more generally, and helped spread these concepts to the education community in Ghana and beyond. It strengthened the relationship between IPA and GES, building the foundation for future collaboration, and led IPA to invest more heavily in its efforts to better understand stakeholders' priorities and to have these inform research priorities. Some hope that TCAI will inform policy in Ghana and other countries in the longer term.

A number of different actors played a translation role in this case. The IPA team was the primary translator, and champions within the government and Pratham supported these translation efforts.

Relationship to policymakers

By 2010, IPA had an established office in Ghana and relationships with the Ministry of Education and GES that enabled IPA to propose and secure a collaboration with the government. More importantly, however, IPA then invested significant time and effort to develop and deepen personal relationships with GES and repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to having TCAI be a successful government-owned project. The organization engaged the government early on in the project and made sure the government was deeply involved in decisions. During the design and implementation phase, IPA made a number of compromises on the intervention and research design to make sure that the government perceived the program to be tailored, practical and scalable. When possible, they even shared office space. These deliberate relationship-building efforts

helped build trust and were key to the successful collaboration between IPA and GES.

Director of Basic Education Service Dr. Stephen Adu was one of the key policymakers IPA engaged with, and he quickly became a champion for TCAI and supported translation in a number of ways. Among others, he made a deliberate effort to engage GES senior leadership in TCAI, including by organizing visits to TCAI sites for them, so that they would better understand the impact of the program. According to the case study, "He became a critical champion of the project during initiation and implementation, and many sources cited his support as a critical factor in getting it off the ground and through implementation."

Translator credibility

According to the case study, "The trust that developed between IPA and GES was the most cited reason for the success and impact of the TCAI project." In this case, translators' credibility was the product of prior professional collaborations, IPA's deep knowledge and experience with TaRL in India and IPA's approach to working with the government.

Ghanaian government actors considered IPA to be a credible and committed research organization based on their existing relationship. The credibility of the evidence produced in India and Kenya, and IPA leadership's knowledge of and involvement with TaRL in India bolstered the organization's credibility as champions of TaRL. IPA also strategically leveraged Pratham's credibility as the pioneer of TaRL in India to build the project and its own credibility. They arranged for Pratham to visit Accra multiple times to help build support for the project among government and development partners and later organized trips to India for GES staff to observe Pratham's implementation of TaRL first-hand.

As described in other sections, IPA's approach to working with the government, particularly its willingness to support implementation and to make compromises in the intervention and research design, signaled its commitment to "GES's success and ownership over the project" and deepened the government's trust in IPA.

Translator skills

IPA exhibited political savvy, relationship building and compromise — skills that are key to playing an effective translation role.

IPA demonstrated political savvy by anticipating typical obstacles to evidence uptake and by developing strategies to overcome them. For example, the organization intentionally chose a project that was aligned with the government's strategic priorities. Another example of political savvy was the constitution of a steering committee for the project that brought together IPA, members of the government and other key stakeholders and deliberately included skeptics, as well as supporters of the project. The idea was to gather critical input from a diverse group of stakeholders, mitigate and manage resistance, develop buy-in for the project and jointly design a project likely to be scaled by the government. IPA's political savvy was also at play in its efforts to build Ghana's ownership of the program by emphasizing government and Ghanaian leadership of the program; IPA deliberately gave GES direct control over the project's funds, hired mostly Ghanaian staff, partnered with Ghanaian organizations and encouraged GES leadership — rather than its own staff — to present TCAI at conferences.

In successfully carrying out its politically savvy strategy, IPA demonstrated a number of other important skills, such as effective relationship building and compromise. The case study describes IPA's significant and successful endeavors to engage a broad group of stakeholders and build relationships with GES across the country and levels, making efforts to work closely with their counterparts and to support them in the implementation of TCAI. IPA also demonstrated strong negotiation and compromise skills; rather than insist on designing the project to best serve their research interests, the organization proactively sought GES's input and agreed to change its original research plan in significant ways, even if these changes complicated the evaluation, to increase the likelihood that the government would scale up interventions found to be successful. As an example, IPA agreed to include treatment arms led by teachers (rather than teaching assistants) and modified the teacher-led intervention mid-course to address teachers' complaints, even though this risked lowering the rigor of the evaluation. IPA reportedly approached the design process as a "negotiation" to ensure that "the resulting program was interesting to researchers, viable for implementation in the context of the Ghanaian education system and aligned to funder priorities."

Policymaking system

While the case does not speak specifically to the policymaking system's nature or functioning, it emphasizes the importance of resource constraints. For example, IPA prioritized securing funding from development partners while engaging with the government to ensure that it would be possible to run the RCTs. Similarly, the full TCAI team prioritized interventions that limit the cost to government to enable eventual scaling. Unfortunately, the loss of NYEP's financial contribution and the government being distracted by possible funding for another education program meant that planned-for funding was no longer available. IPA unsuccessfully sought out other development partners who might fund the scale-up of intervention.

Policymaker background and position

The case study does not provide much information about the target policymakers' background and position. Dr. Stephen Adu, an appointed leader, initially a target policymaker and eventually a champion, is described as receptive to the collection and use of evidence for policymaking in part due to his PhD training in education, his research on education and his long experience working at GES.

Issue politics and other political factors

While there appears to have been consensus within the Ghanaian government about the need for remedial education among Ghana's school children, how best to deliver this education was more contentious. The evidence from India suggested that having community volunteers provide remedial education was the more effective intervention, but the Ghanaian government and the teacher unions were in favor of having teachers deliver the additional education. As a compromise, the evaluation tested an intervention led by teachers, in addition to interventions led by community volunteers. The evaluation found that the teacher-led intervention was the least effective. While the case argues that the main obstacle to scaling up the project was a lack of resources, the fact that the government's preferred intervention (and the most affordable) was not the one that would be scaled, likely did not support evidence uptake.

Nature of the evidence

Most of the relevant evidence in this case was rigorous quantitative evidence from randomized control trials. IPA's interest in launching TCAI was based on positive results from RCTs of TaRL interventions conducted in India and Kenya, and this same evidence was used to convince Ghanaian government officials to participate in the project. According to the case study, "The credibility of the evidence that had been produced in India and Kenya [was] critical for convincing the government and other actors [...] that TCAI was worth the government's time and attention."

That being said, other types of less rigorous evidence, including peer learning and direct personal experience, were also key to getting government officials on board. For example, IPA organized visits by Pratham to Accra to speak about their experience with TaRL in India; these were reportedly key to helping IPA "convince the Ghanaian government of the value of both TaRL and randomized evaluations." Similarly, IPA financed learning trips for GES leadership to observe Pratham's implementation of TaRL in India. Visiting Pratham's program was instrumental in convincing GES's senior leaders and others that the program could be effective in Ghana. Once TCAI was launched, GES's senior leadership was encouraged to visit TCAI schools, so that they could see first-hand the implementation and impact of the program. The case study describes these observations as "critical to their assessment of the project's success and continued support."

Graduation of the Ultra Poor

Yale School of Management, Ghana

The "graduation" approach to poverty reduction blends practices from the fields of social protection, livelihood development and financial services to address the needs of those in extreme poverty and help them "graduate" to sustainable livelihoods. While graduation programs tend to be costlier than other poverty reduction programs, they are seen as generating longer-term impact and therefore as cost-effective over time. Between 2010 and 2013, a group of international development partners, researchers and implementing NGOs tested the graduation approach in ten pilots and eight associated RCTs

as part of the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP)-Ford Foundation Graduation Program. The Graduation of the Ultra Poor (GUP) project, carried out in Northern Ghana between 2010 and 2013, was one of those pilots. It was designed by Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA), co-implemented by IPA and Presbyterian Agricultural Services (PAS) and funded by the Ford Foundation and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie).

The full GUP treatment involved consumption support, health and nutrition services, a one-time transfer of a productive asset, technical skills training, opening of a saving account and monitoring and coaching. The experiment had three arms: the full-treatment arm, the savings-only arm, and the assets-only arm. The evaluation found that the full-treatment arm was successful and had much greater impact than the arms that included only one component. The full treatment substantially increased consumption by the very poor, showed positive impact across ten different variables and produced a positive cost-benefit ratio. However, the rigorous evidence of success that the program and its evaluation generated did not spur the scale-up of the approach in Ghana. This is largely because IPA, the organization that might have taken on a translation role, designed the project with the explicit goal of generating scientific evidence on the effectiveness of the graduation model, rather than supporting further implementation of the program. IPA did not see translation activities, like relationship building with government and advocacy, as within its mandate. Given the graduation program's commitment to sharing, the organization held workshops to share results with policymakers, development partners and other stakeholders at the end of the program; however, it failed to actively, consistently and effectively involve policymakers. As summarized in the case study, "IPA was so focused on its specific mandate of generating scientific evidence through a rigorous RCT that it missed the opportunity to help PAS and policymakers codify GUP's evidence for scale-up within Ghana."

In fact, no individual or organization took on the role of translator in this case. Each group of stakeholders interpreted their responsibility and mandate narrowly, and the translation function fell between the cracks. The other stakeholders who had an interest in evidence translation and scaling did not have the resources, mandate, or reach to play the translation role in Ghana. Donors CGAP and the Ford

Foundation supported the scale-up of the graduation approach globally and played an “international moderator and translation” role, for example, by convening program implementers, policymakers, NGOs and development partners. However, they did not have the mandate or reach to take on a translator role within Ghana specifically. Similarly, local implementer PAS was motivated to work toward program scaling, but it did not have the decision-making power, connections, or resources to take on the translation role fully.

While IPA did not consider translation to be within its mandate in this case, it is informative to examine the ways it might have succeeded as a translator. Recognizing the lost opportunity for evidence translation and scale-up, IPA is currently conducting a modified pilot of the graduation model which will test out, among other things, the effect of more actively engaging policymakers in the design of the program.

Relationship to policymakers

The case study argues that failing to engage and develop strong relationships with policymakers was “the most critical way in which IPA, CGAP and [the] Ford Foundation missed opportunities for greater translation and integration of evidence into practice.” As seen in other cases, working closely and effectively with policymakers can enhance their understanding of the program, build trust and buy-in and allow for the program to be tailored so that it has the potential to be scaled up. IPA’s failure to cultivate relationships and co-creation with policymakers meant that the pilot lacked a necessary condition for effective evidence translation and uptake: the buy-in of policymakers and development partners — stakeholders who are in a position to operationalize and fund policies based on evidence.

Translator credibility

The case study does not explicitly address translator credibility. While IPA is widely seen as a credible organization and partner, particularly in countries such as Ghana, where it has operated for some time, it did not build its credibility as a thought partner, co-creator and translator in this particular programmatic context.

Translator skills

By choosing to focus exclusively on the generation of rigorous evidence, IPA did not take on the translator role or demonstrate the translator skills described as essential in other cases. According to one development partner “The emphasis in Ghana on policy advocacy was absent.” As mentioned above, IPA did not engage and build relationships with key policymakers, which is essential to developing government interest, ownership and support for program scale-up. The lack of government input and buy-in was apparent when results were shared and policymakers expressed concerns about the appropriateness of the project design and the cost of implementation. The organization also failed to communicate results in a time frame and way that were compelling and actionable to policymakers. Preliminary results were not shared, and at the results-sharing workshop at the end of the program, IPA missed the opportunity to present GUP’s results in a persuasive, usable way. Rather than highlighting the program’s impressive and unprecedented (for Ghana) return on investment, IPA presented that figure as compared to the even more impressive results from the other graduation programs. This made it appear as if Ghana’s objective success was a relative failure.

Policymaking system

While the case study does not examine Ghana’s poverty reduction policymaking in detail, it indicates that policymakers interviewed for this project did not mention academic papers as a type of evidence they use, confirming the need for a translation function between evidence production and policymaking. The policymaking system’s nature and functioning, however, do not seem to have been the most important factor in the lack of evidence translation. Rather, potential translators’ failure to take on that role and actively engage with policymakers and the policymaking system were the principal stumbling blocks.

Policymaker background and position

The case does not discuss policymakers in detail, primarily because they were not a focus of the first phase of the GUP pilot. Policymakers are mentioned in the context of their reactions at the results-sharing workshop, where they were reportedly impressed by the results and recognized their validity. However,

policymakers questioned whether the results were worth the perceived high costs of the programs, and whether tweaks to the program design might have generated results more similar to those achieved in other program countries. These concerns might have been preempted or addressed if policymakers had been involved in the design of the program from the onset.

Issue politics and other political factors

The brief discussion of the political context and policymakers suggests that poverty alleviation is a shared priority in Ghana and that policymakers were at least open to evidence-informed approaches to poverty-reduction policymaking. The political salience of poverty reduction and the relative power of supporters of evidence-informed policymaking seems to have been less important than the inadequate efforts to consistently and effectively engage those policymakers.

Nature of the evidence

In this case, the evidence considered was the quantitative results from the impact evaluation. This evidence was rigorous and valid, and policymakers perceived it as such. The case study submits that the graduation program's exclusive focus on RCTs meant that other evidence that was critical to creating a "robust and sustainable" program was not produced. In the second phase of GUP, IPA is testing a high-impact, lower-cost approach to graduation, which will produce evidence more likely to be used by the government. That being said, the case study recognizes that the main obstacle to uptake was IPA's failure to engage and co-create

with policymakers, rather than the type of evidence produced:

"It could be argued that GUP's results and its positive benefit-cost ratio should have motivated key stakeholders in Ghana to scale up the program. Yet, failure to engage these stakeholders from the beginning as co-designers, as important voices throughout project implementation, or at least as an explicit intended audience [...] affected their ultimate reactions to the program's results, and unnecessarily constrained GUP's impact."

The main issue in this case was not the rigor or directionality of the evidence, but rather, how it was — or in fact, was not — translated and communicated. While the evidence itself was compelling, IPA's decision to present the Ghana results in the context of other graduation programs' results — instead of on its own merits — made it look like a relative failure rather than a success.

Development partners supported translation efforts by organizing exchange visits and ongoing technical assistance for implementers, as well as gatherings of international NGOs, development partners, policymakers and academics interested in the graduation approach. They also published a number of implementation-centered guides on how to target ultra-poor communities and implement graduation programs across contexts. These efforts were largely designed to support policymakers already interested in designing a graduation program, rather than to persuade new audiences. Without corresponding sustained, tailored, in-country translation efforts, development partners' attempt to support translation failed to spur Ghanaian policymakers' interest and action.

Conclusion

Our primary research around two evidence-informed review processes initiated by the governments of Ghana and Buenos Aires allowed us to test our theoretical framework and identify the translator characteristics and other factors that influence translators' ability to perform their role effectively in those cases. Our review of five case studies developed by Yale's School of Management and the Transfer Project about evidence uptake enabled us to validate or call into question our primary research findings and to identify other characteristics and factors important to translation. Finally, our review of an Innovations for Successful Societies (ISS) case about a government effort to develop a national policy evaluation system in Benin provides useful insights about how development partners can support efforts to institutionalize evidence translation and evidence-informed policymaking.

Findings

Our research suggests that translation and efforts to build national evaluation systems can take place and be supported in many contexts, including in places where evidence-informed policymaking is the exception rather than the norm.

The study confirms our hypothesis that translation is an essential function and that, absent individuals or organizations taking up the translator role, evidence translation and evidence-informed policymaking do not take place. As we hypothesized, translators can hold a range of formal roles; they can be research or policy staff at research and evaluation organizations, academic researchers, technical staff within ministries and government agencies, ministers and other government officials and independent experts. Essential translator skills and characteristics include credibility, political savvy and stakeholder engagement skills, particularly the willingness and ability to convene, collaborate and compromise with

policymakers and other key stakeholders. Translators are most likely to be effective when the issue they focus on is politically salient and consensus is lacking about how to resolve it, and when translators ensure that those in power are at the center of their translation efforts. While impact evidence remains the gold standard, qualitative and mixed-methods research, international best practices, cross-country benchmarking and national data are important in understanding policy options and the local context and constraints. Finally, less rigorous evidence, such as direct experience and observation, can play an important complementary role, convincing individuals who may be less receptive to evidence produced from isolated, randomized control trials.

While the generation of policy-relevant impact evidence has gained momentum since the early 2000s, there are still gaps in the translation and uptake of this evidence. The successful cases we reviewed highlight effective approaches to EIP that have been developed, tested and improved by research and intermediary organizations such as IPA and J-PAL and by key individuals in government ministries and departments. However, our review also makes clear that translation remains extremely challenging and that its importance continues to be widely misunderstood. These findings have important implications for all actors in the EIP ecosystem.

Implications for Researchers and Intermediaries

Our research makes clear that evidence translation does not happen organically and that individuals or organizations need to take on the translator role for evidence to inform policymaking. Researchers and intermediary organizations are often well placed to take on this role. Our findings have implications for what researchers — inside and outside the

government — can do to generate evidence that is more likely to be translated, as well as for how they can take on the translator role or work with intermediaries assuming that role.

- Researchers and research organizations can enhance the likelihood that their research will inform policymaking *by focusing their research on politically salient issues and policy-relevant questions*. Research that fails to speak to the most relevant topics of the day or lacks clear policy implications for current challenges is unlikely to get traction with policymakers.
- Researchers hoping to have evidence inform policymaking need to proactively plan for evidence translation by *taking on some or all aspects of the translator role or by working with intermediaries well placed to play that role*. This will require building the characteristics and skills essential to effective translation internally or identifying and working closely with intermediaries who have demonstrated these qualities. The characteristics researchers should focus on include credibility, political savvy and stakeholder engagement skills.
- Researchers and intermediaries planning to play a translation role must *develop key characteristics and skills including political savvy and credibility*.
- Researchers or the intermediaries they work with need to plan for and *dedicate significant time and effort to policymaker engagement, relationship building and co-creation* as these activities are crucial to laying the groundwork for research to inform policy. Individuals and organizations taking on the translation role need to engage with policymakers early, work to co-create research projects and be willing to compromise to ensure that the project is relevant to policymakers, that policymakers feel ownership over the project and that the research is designed in a way that makes it likely to be taken up by government.
- Throughout any project, researchers and their partners should *adapt and communicate existing and new research so that it is accessible and convincing to policymakers*. This typically involves synthesizing the research, extracting policy implications and communicating findings and recommendations in a way that is clear, compelling, actionable and tailored to the particular policymaking context.

- Finally, *researchers and their partners should be open to generating or leveraging different types of evidence to complement impact evidence*. Other types of rigorous evidence and less rigorous evidence can help contextualize impact evidence and help convince policymakers of its relevance and importance.

Implications for Policymakers

As the ultimate users of evidence in the evidence-informed policymaking ecosystem, policymakers have an important role to play in fostering evidence generation, translation and uptake. They can promote evidence-informed policymaking by championing EIP generally, as well as by championing individual evidence-informed policies.

- Policymakers can *initiate and support the development and institutionalization of evaluation and EIP systems within government*. Such systems are designed to ensure that current policies are regularly reviewed and adapted and that research is carried out to inform new policies. Building effective EIP systems typically requires long time horizons and intensive staff skills development efforts.
- Policymakers can also promote EIP by *empowering government officials and offices to conduct policy-relevant research and reviews*. For these efforts to be successful, government researchers need the time, resources and political backing to conduct their mandate, especially if they are researching policy issues with strong interest groups.
- Policymakers should also *engage with researchers and intermediaries interested in co-designing politically salient, policy-relevant research*. Ideal partners are individuals and organizations that will be credible across the political spectrum, politically savvy about policymaking constraints and committed to co-creating the research project. In such cases, policymakers and their staff should participate actively, providing input to ensure that the research project is relevant, tailored to the context and potentially scalable.

Implications for Development Partners

Our findings have a number of implications for development partners interested in supporting translators and evidence-informed policymaking.

- At a strategic level, development partners have an opportunity to *support translation and the uptake of evidence by calling attention to the translation function, producing further evidence about when and how translators and translation can be effective and documenting and sharing best practices*.
 - At a more practical level, development partners can provide *support to individuals and organizations who have the potential to play a translation role*. These may be independent individuals, individuals or teams at research and intermediary organizations, or in the government. This will involve identifying individuals and organizations well-suited for translation (those with some or all of the key translator characteristics and skills identified, such as credibility, political savvy and stakeholder engagement skills) and providing them with the necessary tools and resources to be effective.
 - Development partners should *prioritize working with individuals and organizations known for their political savvy*. Political savvy requires a practical understanding of the political economy context, an awareness of key stakeholders' incentives and a sense of when, where and how to intervene. Typically, such actors are deeply embedded in the context; while they are often domestic actors, external actors with a deep understanding of the context and strong relationships with key stakeholder can also be effective translators.
 - Development partner support may take the shape of *brokering connections with policymakers and potential partners, facilitating peer learning, training and mentoring for the translator skills that need to be developed and providing resources to carry out this function*. In particular, development partners may want to consider *flexible funding that grantees can use to invest in building relationships with policymakers over the longer term*.
 - One of our findings is that translators must consider and manage resource constraints carefully because they can jeopardize otherwise promising cases of evidence translation and uptake.
- development partners can *enable translators to overcome resource constraints* in two main ways: they can support the development of fundraising skills through translator training and peer learning, and they can provide or help secure funding for the scale-up of proven initiatives where financial constraints are the most important obstacle to evidence uptake.
- To be effective, translators need important characteristics and skills, perhaps most importantly, credibility. While initial credibility is essential to gaining access to relevant stakeholders, translators can bolster their credibility in the ways they work with policymakers and partners. Development partners can help develop translators' credibility by *advising partners on how to build credibility and supporting the development of skills essential to credibility*, including political savvy and stakeholder engagement skills.
 - While our research did not explicitly validate the importance of some of the skills that are typically considered key to evidence translation, development partners should *continue to support the development of essential translation skills, particularly analytical skills and the ability to adapt, transform and communicate evidence*. Communications training should broaden to include effective stakeholder engagement, relationship building and co-creation.
 - Our research suggests that translation and evidence-informed policymaking can take place even in contexts where the nature and functioning of the policymaking system are not particularly conducive to EIP. Development partners should therefore *support EIP efforts across contexts, including in contexts where they are not the norm*, since this is often where they are needed most. In challenging policymaking contexts, development partners should focus on supporting translators' political savvy and stakeholder engagement skills.
 - While development partners should continue to fund policy-relevant impact evaluations, the evidence gold standard, they should also *promote translators' complementary use of less rigorous evidence*. Given their ability to bring rigorous evidence to life, experiential learning opportunities should be provided to enable policymakers and other key stakeholders to observe the evidence first-hand. Development partners can coordinate and fund learning events, bringing together practitioners who have successfully implemented

a program or policy and those considering it, or organize policymaker visits abroad or to domestic pilot sites for them to observe an intervention being carried out.

- Similarly, *development partners should promote and consider providing funding for evidence-informed participatory processes* that enable a wide range of evidence and perspectives to be shared and considered.
- In addition to discrete opportunities for evidence translation and evidence uptake, development partners have an important role in *supporting reformist government officials interested in developing a national evaluation system*. Specifically, they can provide financial resources and technical assistance, and promote knowledge-sharing and learning by connecting reformers with others who have successfully undertaken similar efforts. Finally, and importantly, they can help government identify and adopt policies and practices to ensure that evidence from evaluations is actually used to inform policies – which will likely involve supporting translators and the translation process. These efforts, which go beyond supporting individual translators and isolated translation moments, facilitate the development and institutionalization of EIP systems within the government.

Contributions to the Field and Next Steps

The contributions of this research to the field are considerable. In an area where little was known about evidence translators, the findings of this study have identified several factors that enable and constrain translators' ability to effectively support evidence-informed policymaking, and to guide development partners in approaches that would most effectively support these actors in their work. It has also generated a very focused analysis of what might matter for other contexts, providing researchers with

a foundation for further investigation. The research also suggests a number of areas to explore in more depth. In particular, further research is needed to answer the following research questions:

- In cases ripe for translation, where rigorous policy-relevant evidence is being generated, can external actors successfully identify and support individuals to carry out the translation role, or must such individuals take up the role organically?
- Are translators in particular formal positions (for example, inside or outside the government) more likely to be effective in particular policymaking contexts?
- Are particular characteristics and skills more important for intermediary translators than for researchers playing a translation role inside government or research institutions?
- What are the main components of political savvy and how can EIP supporters identify actors who possess this skill?
- How can government evaluation and EIP systems be designed to ensure that evidence that is generated actually informs policymaking?

As part of the validation stage, researchers were able to confirm the presence of key factors from the initial findings in separate case studies. Because these secondary case studies were not focused on the agency of translators, but rather on the role of evidence in policymaking, the absence of detailed descriptions of translators is *not* evidence of their irrelevance. To the contrary, translators are extremely important to the use of evidence in policymaking, and further, focused studies will bear this out. The current study has provided a framework for understanding how translators function. It has also identified factors that may be present across differing contexts, some of which have already been confirmed in the validation stage of the study. The implication is that translators are vital for the use of evidence in policymaking and should be supported in their work.

ANNEX I:

Qualitative Coding and Protocols

The codes the authors used in the software Atlas.ti are below.

- **Constraint_EvidCharac_Access**
Data that refers to Accessibility - how easy the evidence is for policymakers to understand, particularly non-experts.
- **Constraint_EvidCharac_Direction**
Data that refers to Directionality- how clear the evidence is in identifying an issue or course of action over another.
- **Constraint_EvidCharac_NoCrit**
Data that explicitly indicates that no criteria were used e.g. "we considered everything"
- **Constraint_EvidCharac_Other**
Data that refers to the nature of the evidence OUTSIDE OF its directionality, quality, accessibility.
"Directionality" - how clear the evidence is in suggesting one course of action over another.
"Quality" - level of rigor with which evidence was generated, and the robustness of its results.
"Accessibility" - how easy the evidence is for policymakers to understand, particularly non-experts.
- **Constraint_EvidCharac_Rigor**
Data that refers to the rigor of the evidence - level of rigor with which evidence was generated, and the robustness of its results.
- **Constraint_EvidCharac_WhoProduced**
Data that describes who produced information as an enabling or constraining factor on its use. For example, an expressed preference (or lack of preference) for local vs international evidence, or for evidence produced by certain research institutes over others.
- **Constraint_EvidNoExist**
Explicit descriptions of weaker or less effective evidence-informed policymaking because the specific type of evidence desired does not exist.
- **Constraint_EvidSource_Acad**
Evidence comes from an academic individual or dept with an explicit relationship to a university
(Also tag funder as EvidSource when mentioned. e.g. "gov't", "IO" etc.)
- **Constraint_EvidSource_domNGO**
Evidence cited came from a domestic NGO, including think tanks, civil society organizations, etc.
(Also tag funder as EvidSource when mentioned. e.g. "gov't", "IO" etc.)
- **Constraint_EvidSource_ExpExp**
Evidence cited is based on an expert's experience and observations.
- **Constraint_EvidSource_Govt**
Evidence cited was produced by a government employee or department
(Also tag funder as EvidSource when mentioned. e.g. "IO" etc.)
- **Constraint_EvidSource_IO**
Evidence comes from an international / non-domestic body or institution, such as the World Bank, an aid agency, non-domestic research institute, etc.
(Also tag funder as EvidSource when mentioned.)
- **Constraint_EvidSource_Media**
Evidence comes from some sort of journalism - newspaper article, news, radio, etc.
(Also tag funder as EvidSource when mentioned. e.g. "gov't", "IO" etc.)

- **Constraint_EvidSource_Model**
Evidence is an existing policy from a different context - that policy is replicated or adapted or otherwise informs the design of the new policy.
- **Constraint_EvidSource_NOS**
Data refers to "evidence" or "research" with no further specification of type / origin.
- **Constraint_EvidSource_Other**
Evidence source is different from those captured by other codes. Ex. Hospital reports (with data on diseases, finances, etc)
- **Constraint_EvidSource_Stakeholder**
Evidence is individual or compiled input from stakeholders (consultation, interviews, etc.)
(Also tag funder as EvidSource when mentioned. e.g. "gov't", "IO" etc.)
- **Constraint_Other**
Data that refers to a constraint not otherwise captured here, for example timing.
- **Constraint_P-maker_Discretion**
Data that refers to policymaker's discretion in whether to use evidence or what evidence to use (this includes things around policymaker's starting bias, as well as in decisions about the evidence, and what to include in a policy)
- **Constraint_P-maker_elec**
Data that refers to policymaker being appointed or elected.
- **Constraint_P-maker_tech**
Data that refers to policymaker's background (specifying whether technical or not)
- **Constraint_PolicySystem**
Data that refers to the policy system's nature and functioning, including whether the system has a strong knowledge regime, and a culture of consultation and strategic planning, for example.
- **Constraint_politics_intl**
Data that refers to international politics or pressures around the focus issue, including donor interest and pressures.
- **Constraint_politics_nl**
Data that refers to the domestic context, zeitgeist, and politics around the focus issue, including the level of political contestation around the issue as well as the relative level of organization and power of those advocating for different policies to address the issue.
- **Constraint_Trans_Discretion**
Data that refers to TRANSLATOR's discretion in whether to use evidence or what evidence to use (this includes things around translator's starting bias, as well as in decisions about the evidence, and what to include in a policy)
- **Mod_BoundCoCreate**
Boundary orgs facilitate interactions between different communities to help policymakers and researchers shape each other's agendas.
- **Mod_SupDem**
Translation that follows the supply demand model, where a researcher supplies info, policymakers demand info, and an intermediary translates to solve the market failure.
- **Translation_Process**
Data that describes the translation process and the translator's specific actions as part of its translation role.
- **Translator_Cred1_ideol**
Data that refers to people's perception of translator credibility, based on ideological alignment.
- **Translator_Cred2_skills**
Data that refers to people's perception of translator credibility, based on the translator's skills/ experience.
- **Translator_Cred3_relation**
Data that refers to people's perception of translator credibility, based on an existing relationship.
- **Translator_govt_prior relationship**
Data refers to a pre-existing relationship between translator and policymaker (the reference must be to a relationship PRIOR to the current interaction/ collaboration)
- **Translator_Position_Acad**
Translator is an academic with an explicit relationship to a university.

- **Translator_Position_domNGO**
Translator sits in a domestic NGO, including think tanks, civil society organizations, etc.
- **Translator_Position_GovtExp_constl**
Translator is someone who is brought on as a (paid or unpaid) consultant to the government (committee member, research consultant, etc.)
- **Translator_Position_GovtExp_FT**
Translator is a FT government employee.
- **Translator_Position_IO**
Translator is an official with an international body or institution, such as the World Bank, an aid agency, INGO, etc.
- **Translator_Position_Jrnlist**
Translator is a journalist associated with some sort of media, investigative, news, reporting, etc.
- **Translator_Position_Other**
Translator has a professional position not captured by existing codes
- **Translator_Skills**
Data that refers to translators' skills, including their educational qualifications, experience, and their understanding of and ability to adapt and communicate primary evidence for policy audiences.

ANNEX II:

Building Responsible Government: Benin's National Evaluation System, 2007-2015

The final case study we reviewed examines how a reformist government in Benin worked to build a national system for evaluating public policies. This case study differs from the others in that it looks at an effort to institutionalize EIP systems within the government, as opposed to a discrete instance of evidence translation and uptake. However, the case is relevant and important, since the ultimate goal of EIP supporters is not isolated and exceptional cases of EIP, but rather, systems where policy is systematically informed by evidence.

Benin's national policies and programs have long suffered from inefficiency and ineffectiveness, largely failing to achieve growth and improve living standards. The existing monitoring and evaluation system was designed by and for development partners and therefore did not enable the government to define, prioritize and coordinate policies. Thomas Boni Yayi's landslide presidential victory in 2006, after nearly three decades of rule by Mathieu Kérékou, provided an opportunity for change. In 2007, the president appointed Pascal Koupaki to be minister of State in Charge of Planning, Development, and Evaluation of Public Action and gave him the authority to assess the implementation of policies across all sectors. Koupaki, his Chief of Staff Antonin Dossou, his Technical Advisor Aristide Djidjoho, and, later, Analyst Mirianaud Oswald Agbadome worked closely together to design and build a unit for policy evaluation in Benin.

The effort to build a national policy evaluation system faced many obstacles. Many in the government saw evaluations as a threat; they resisted reform and sharing relevant information and data. In addition, given past reliance on development partner-led evaluations, the government's capacity to conduct monitoring and evaluation on its own was very limited. Finally, the government faced tight budget

constraints and limited political support as the coalition that had backed President Yayi started to fracture. The reformers managed these challenges and succeeded in setting up a National Evaluation System.

Tasked with designing a new evaluation structure, Djidjoho and Dossou sought to learn from international organizations and the experience of other countries that had gone through the process of developing formal government institutions for policy planning and evaluation, including South Africa, Uganda, Canada and France. They also consulted with development partners who were very enthusiastic about the project and eventually provided significant financial and technical resources to support it. For example, UNDP supported a diagnostic study to identify priority issues to address, provided technical assistance to build Benin's evaluation capacity and helped design the institutional framework for the evaluation unit. UNDP, UNICEF, and others covered the cost of workshops and key staff attending courses on evaluation. UNDP, the French Development Agency, DANIDA, and GIZ eventually supported Benin's National Evaluation Days to raise the profile of evaluation and the new evaluation unit.

The reformers demonstrated political savvy in their ability to identify obstacles to reform and by designing approaches to overcome these obstacles. In particular, they successfully managed widespread opposition to evaluation within the government by taking a gradual approach and by carrying out an effective communications and engagement strategy to build resisters' buy-in.

Mindful of their limited budgetary and political support, the team began by creating a small evaluation unit, which eventually became the Bureau

for Evaluation of Public Policy (BEPP), in Koupaki's ministry, with a relatively small budget and staff. Aware of the government's limited evaluation skills and intent on building the unit's and its evaluations' credibility in a politically tense moment, the team decided that the bureau would hire independent firms and consultants to carry out the studies, but be responsible for defining policy questions, overseeing the consultants and disseminating results. In 2009, the bureau oversaw its first evaluation: of Benin's agricultural policies.

This first evaluation was met with resistance from the Ministry of Agriculture. To manage this resistance, the team developed a participatory process to build buy-in for the evaluation and its results. As Djidjoho put it: "To move forward, the exercise had to be as participatory as possible. For the results to be accepted, it had to be participatory." One of their strategies was to establish a temporary steering committee composed of representatives from all stakeholder groups, including bureau staff, the ministry whose policies were being evaluated, relevant civil society groups, international development partners and directorates from the Development Ministry responsible for performance monitoring. The steering committee was responsible for defining the specific policy questions, approving the terms of reference for the evaluation, selecting the firm and reviewing reports before their submission to the president and cabinet. This approach proved fruitful and was used in all subsequent policy evaluations.

Recognizing the need to build the unit's credibility and to establish the value of policy evaluation in the minds of ministers and civil servants, the reform team organized meetings with planning and monitoring staff across ministries to explain the bureau's role and functioning, and to emphasize evaluation's potential to improve policies and results. As Agbadome put it, "We knew we had to mobilize people around their interests. If they knew how evaluation could be useful to them, then they would be ready to work with us." Over time, as ministries began to appreciate evaluations' ability to highlight and help address inefficiencies, the bureau came to be seen as more of an ally, and ministers increasingly requested evaluations for existing and proposed policies and programs.

In efforts to build the national capacity for evaluation, the team created a network of "focal points" that monitored staff within program and planning directorates of 26 ministries, and provided evaluation

training for them. These focal points became a strategically placed network of internal advocates for policy evaluation across the government.

After being reelected in 2011, President Yayi and his team worked to institutionalize the bureau and policy evaluation. They adopted a National Evaluation Policy that made clear that the government saw evaluation as a reform tool. The policy provided a minimum guaranteed budget and organizational support for policy evaluation and required each ministry to periodically evaluate its overall policies in collaboration with the BEPP. According to Djidjoho, "The adoption of a policy document by the government provided a comprehensive framework for conducting evaluations [of] national policies and helped to legitimize our role in the administration." In 2013, Yayi made the bureau a permanent directorate, which ensured the unit's continued existence. Finally, the team created the National Evaluation Council, an advisory body responsible for overseeing national policy evaluations. The council, composed of representatives from the directorate, ministries, the president's office, academia, and civil society, were in charge of reviewing and validating evaluation methodologies, findings, and reports before submission to the cabinet. The council reportedly provided a forum for open discussion and enhanced the credibility of evaluations.

Despite this progress and continued presidential support, ministries remained slow to act on evaluation results and recommendations. Evaluation reports did not always reach those who could act on them and people who did receive them often sat on them. To address this issue, the directorate began sending evaluation reports to all senior civil servants in the sector under review, as well as to civil society groups and external partners. Directorate staff developed a database to track the implementation of evaluation recommendations and began meeting with the staff of program and planning directorates to review measures taken to implement recommendations. However, in the absence of sanctions for ministers or senior managers who failed to take action, incentives to take up evaluation results remained limited.

By 2015, the evaluation unit had grown from a small ad hoc structure to a permanent directorate within the administration, with a considerably increased budget and staff. The country's national evaluation capacity had been significantly strengthened and the

bureau had conducted more than a dozen policy evaluations, some of which had influenced the design of new policies. The reformers had successfully raised awareness about the value of evaluation studies for improving the design of public policies and stimulated an increased demand for it. Finally, Yayi and his team had made important progress toward ensuring the sustainability of evaluation processes in Benin's government; in particular, the passage of a National Evaluation Policy and the creation of the National Evaluation Council make it much harder for future governments to suppress the use of evaluation. As a senior government official put it, "Evaluation has become institutionalized in Benin. It is now an accepted part of government." That being said, much work is still needed to further enhance government staff's evaluation skills, increase demand for evaluation and ensure that ministries take action in response to evaluation results.

Some of the success factors in this case are similar to those in our translation cases. In particular, President Yayi's initiating and continued championing of the effort to build a national evaluation system was essential, as well as his empowerment of a number of key staff dedicated to the cause. Political savvy was also a crucial skill as the reform team faced numerous obstacles, including resistance from

government officials, limited budgetary resources and political support, and gaps in evaluation capacity. The team managed these challenges by adopting a gradual approach, starting small and expanding and institutionalizing over time, and engaging stakeholders through participatory processes to overcome resistance to reform, build awareness of evaluations' benefits, and increase government buy-in and demand for evaluation. The team also prioritized building the national evaluation capacity through trainings. The case makes clear that development partner support for the effort to build a national evaluation system was essential. Development partners played a critical role, leading a diagnostic study and providing technical assistance, as well as resources for capacity building and outreach events.

The implications for development partners are apparent; once governments interested in developing a national evaluation system are identified, they can provide support, including financial resources and technical assistance, and promote learning by connecting reformers with others who have successfully undertaken the effort. Finally, and importantly, they can help government identify and adopt policies and practices to ensure that evaluation results are actually used to inform policies, rather than just sitting on a shelf.



1111 19th Street, N.W., Suite #700
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 470.5711 | Fax: (202) 470.5712
info@r4d.org | www.r4d.org



**RESULTS FOR
DEVELOPMENT**