AFRICAN PARLIAMENTS

*Evidence systems for governance
and development*

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

3D	Three-dimensional
4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
ACRES	Centre for Rapid Evidence Synthesis
AFIDEP	African Institute for Development Policy
AFLI	Africa Leadership Institute
AfrEA	African Evaluation Association
ALP	African Legislature Project
APNODE	African Parliamentarians' Network on Development Evaluation
BDP	Botswana Democratic Party
BEPP	Bureau of Evaluation of Public Policies
BEPPAAG	Bureau of Evaluation of Public Policies and Government Action Analysis
BVR	Biometric Voter Registration
CDFs	Constituency Development Funds
CSC	Committee Score Card
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DPME	Department of Performance (later planning) Monitoring and Evaluation
DRS	Department of Research Services (DRS)
EALA	East African Legislative Assembly
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EIDM	Evidence-Informed Decision-Making
ETWG	Evaluation Technical Working Group
EVI	Electronic Voter Identification
FES	Friedrich Ebert Foundation
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Government Evaluation Facility
GNPBO	Global Network of Parliament Budget Offices
GPFE	Global Parliamentarians' Forum on Evaluation
GTAC	Government Technical Assistance Centre
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HR	Human Resources
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDS	Institute of Development Studies

IIAG	Ibrahim Index of African Governance
INASP	International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications
IoT	Internet of Things
IPAB	Benin Parliamentary Institute
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
KEWOPA	Kenya Women Parliamentary Association
KEWOSA	Kenya Women Senators Association
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MEJN	Malawi Economic Justice Network
MPs	Members of Parliament
MPL	Members of Provincial Legislatures
NCOP	National Council of Provinces
NEDLC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NES	National Evaluation System
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NMETWG	National M&E Technical Working Group
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PARMAN	Project for Support of the Strengthening and Modernization of the National Assembly
PBOs	Parliamentary Budget Offices
PC-EIDM	Parliamentary Caucus on Evidence-Informed Oversight and Decision-Making
PCOs	Parliamentary Constituency Offices
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
POT	Parliamentary Oversight Tool
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PRS	Parliamentary Research Service
RSP	Revolutionary State Party
RTS	Results Transmission System
SADC-PF	Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum
SCOA	Standing Committee on Appropriations
SCOPA	Standing Committee on Public Accounts
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation

UNACEB	State Budget Control and Assessment Analysis Unit
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
VOPES	Voluntary Organisations of Professional Evaluators
WBI	World Bank Institute
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZEPARU	Zimbabwe Economic Policy and Analysis Research Unit

PARLIAMENTS IN NATIONAL EVALUATION SYSTEMS: CURRENT PRACTICE, FUTURE POTENTIAL

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Introduction

The role of legislatures in overseeing the implementation of policies and programmes by the executive is inherently evaluative. Tracking whether budgets are spent appropriately, targets are met (monitoring) and assessing whether the lives of citizens have been changed for the better (evaluation) are at the core of what legislatures do (Zantsi, 2020, p. 1). Parliament's functions are summarised as representation, legislation, and oversight (Zantsi, 2020). To play these roles effectively, parliamentarians need access to quality evidence, including from evaluations. They also need the capacity to use the evidence. Benin, Uganda and South Africa have each established a national evaluation system (NES), a national evaluation policy and a central institution which has been tasked with championing and overseeing M&E. This chapter seeks to explore the relationship between each country's parliament and its NES, how their parliaments have used evaluations generated internally and through the NES, and how parliaments have influenced and informed the NES. The authors of this chapter have been involved in either NESs or parliamentary M&E in the three countries. The chapter therefore draws heavily on the authors' experience, also drawing on wider literature and interviews with people who have been involved in these systems.

Democratic governments are built on the separation of the powers of the executive, the legislature and the legal system (Van Rensburg, Vrey & Neethling, 2020). In this system of checks and balances, the legislature sets rules and prescribes how such rules should be executed (Yamamoto, 2007, p. 9). This defines the relationship between the executive and the legislature where the executive remains accountable to the legislature. So what do we mean by evidence? Goldman and Pabari (2020) argue that although evidence is associated with rigorous quantitative scientific studies, it can take many forms and come from many sources, but must have the key qualities of independence, objectivity and verifiability. Evidence from monitoring means using routine administrative data from government services on their operations and survey data from national statistical agencies. Evidence from in-depth research and evaluation studies allows for deeper understanding and helps to unpack the effects of government interventions and how they can be strengthened.

The word evaluation is used loosely for many types of studies. Evaluation is defined by the United Nations Evaluation Group (2016, p. 10) as "an assessment, systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy,

policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area, or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability" (UNEG, 2016).

Evaluations provide parliaments with evidence as to what is working (or not) and this information can be used in parliaments' oversight and legislative roles. In the context of parliaments, Eberli refers to using evaluations for "argumentation, legitimization or rationalization" (Eberli, 2015, p. 1). Argumentation applies where MPs have to convince their colleagues that a certain decision is the right one, whereas legitimisation justifies why specific decisions have been made, and rationalisation speaks to fronting or delaying specific decisions. Evaluations should allow parliamentarians to better interrogate the work of the departments they oversee. The value of a NES is that the discipline of evaluation is mainstreamed across government, guiding how evaluations are selected, implemented and used and the systems in place to ensure quality should increase confidence in the findings (Goldman et al., 2018, p. 1). This means that parliaments should be able to access quality evaluations of government actions across the state. According to Zantsi (2020, p. 6), "there are three ways in which evaluation manifests in the legislative environment. Parliaments can improve the NES by demanding high-quality evaluations from departments; they can lead evaluation efforts, especially for areas that are transversal in nature; and they can initiate self-assessments that not only assist in building an evaluative culture within legislatures but also give insights into the attainment of national goals as a result of the legislature's actions." These three areas interact and reinforce the others, and in efforts to strengthen the NES, all three areas need to be given due attention. Goldman and Pabari (2020b) provide a model of the supply and demand of evidence, introduced in Chapter 2 (see Figure 4.1). For evaluations to be *demanded* and used there needs to be institutionalisation of evidence-based policymaking, planning and decision-making practices in government (Dhakal, 2014, p. 51). In terms of *supply* of evaluations, parliaments may undertake or commission evaluative activities themselves or use evaluations conducted by other organisations e.g. from the NES. To use evaluations from elsewhere a *knowledge broker* is needed who is able to identify relevant evaluations and use the evidence from these to support parliament's work.

Figure 4.1 Supply, demand and knowledge brokering for evidence

Source: Goldman and Pabari, 2020b

Martinuzzi and Sedlacko (2016) suggest that the role of a knowledge broker is threefold:

- ▶ Knowledge brokers as *knowledge managers*; involves the development, transfer and translation of knowledge.
- ▶ Knowledge brokers acting as *linkage agents*; this involves the development of knowledge-based networks, for example ensuring linkages with research institutions or evaluation sections in the executive.
- ▶ Knowledge brokers acting as *capacity builders* involving the development of capacity to produce and use policy-relevant knowledge.

In parliaments a parliamentary research service (PRS) and often a parliamentary budget office (PBO) typically undertake these knowledge broker roles. The next section of this chapter provides a summary of how evaluation and evidence systems are operating in African parliaments. This is followed by a focus on the three African countries that have a NES – Uganda, Benin and South Africa – and an exploration of how evaluation information is supplied, how the national NESs are linked to their respective parliaments, how evaluations are requested, how they are used, and the knowledge broker roles that are being played by the executive and within parliament. In the third section of the chapter, lessons are drawn from the linkages between NES and parliament. Finally,

the fourth section of the chapter reflects on the emerging lessons and draws conclusions, including how the different configurations of the M&E 'ecosystem' affect evidence use in parliaments (demand and use), the lessons for working with committees and/or parliamentary researchers, notably around their knowledge-brokering roles, and overall lessons for institutionalising evaluation in parliament.

It is the hope of the authors that this work can contribute to emerging thinking about how to strengthen evaluation systems and processes within parliaments and executives.

Evaluation and evidence systems in parliaments in Uganda, South Africa and Benin

The parliamentary structures in Uganda and Benin have one national assembly or parliament, while South Africa has a national assembly and an upper house (with regional representation in the upper house).¹ This chapter focuses on the national assembly. The constitutions of all three countries provide for parliament to monitor expenditure of public funds and scrutinise government policy and administration. The roles of parliament are outlined in more detail in Chapter 1 of this volume. To avoid repetition, only the key features which relate to M&E are outlined.

Parliaments have a two-tier management structure. Firstly, the **political** structure, which comprises the plenary, parliamentary committees, and political offices. *Plenary* is where MPs sit to debate and pass laws, resolutions, and motions, and is presided over by the Speaker or Deputy Speaker. All business is introduced in the plenary before being referred to a relevant committee for further consideration. All parliamentary committees report their findings and recommendations to the plenary, which takes the decision. *Parliamentary committees* undertake pre-legislative scrutiny of Bills and scrutiny of the various objects of expenditure and the sums to be spent on each with the objective of assuring transparency and accountability in the application of public funds and monitoring the implementation of government programmes and projects. Many multiparty parliaments have strong systematic structures and procedures geared towards ensuring a strong opposition in a multiparty dispensation. For example, the rules of procedure of the Parliament of Uganda mandate the

¹ World Factbook. Available from: <https://bit.ly/39nohKp> [Accessed 5 July 2020].

leader of the opposition to study all policy statements of government with shadow ministers, attend committee deliberations on policy issues, present their party's views and opinions, and thereafter propose possible alternatives.² The **administrative** structures of parliament are charged with providing logistical support for the political decision-making process of parliament in a non-partisan manner (Hanmer, 2009, p. 3). A secretariat headed by the clerk works under the authority of the speaker and provides administrative, procedural and technical support services to parliamentarians. In Uganda, the Department of Research and Development, the PBO and the PRS unit play critical knowledge broker roles, linking external evaluation producers with parliamentary committees. In South Africa, the PRS, the PBO and content advisors play the equivalent knowledge broker role. In Benin, there are three administrative structures, the State Budget Control and Assessment Analysis Unit (UNACEB), the Project of Support for the Strengthening and Modernization of the National Assembly (PARMAN), and the Benin Parliamentary Institute (IPAB) providing parliament with the means, tools, techniques and expertise necessary for the accomplishment of its constitutional missions.³ In addition, Uganda and South Africa have internal M&E units to review the work of parliament. They also play a key brokering role in evaluation and evidence use. For example, the M&E division in Uganda houses the database for civil society organisations (CSOs) who are key generators of evidence, and links relevant CSOs to respective committees of parliament.

How parliaments use evidence to support their key roles

Law-making (legislation) is regarded as the most important function of parliaments. Parliaments create legislation through private members' Bills, but further amend, approve or reject laws put forward by government. In Uganda, the rules require that for the first reading a new Bill is accompanied with an evaluation report to justify the need for the proposed legislation. Furthermore, upon referral of a Bill to committees, consultation processes are conducted requiring input from highly knowledgeable persons or institutions, creating an avenue for use of evaluations. Post-legislative scrutiny, an ex-post evaluation of enacted legislation, is also emerging as a critical practice in parliaments during which evidence is sought on the effects of legislation in terms of whether intended policy objectives have been met by the legislation and, if so, how

² Rule 14 (4).

³ Available from: <https://bit.ly/3AwN62M> [Accessed 9 April 2020].

effectively (Caygill, 2019). For example, the Persons with Disability Act 2006 of Uganda had to be amended when evidence emerged that some provisions were abused. Parliamentary *oversight* refers to parliament checking whether government's policies have been implemented according to legislative intent and desired goals.

In this case, evaluation evidence on government expenditures is valuable. In exercising their oversight, committees use the PRS to undertake desk research on relevant topics. In some instances, the PRS undertakes field studies to obtain first-hand knowledge from people engaged in the direct implementation of specific programmes and/or who are directly responsible for service delivery and/or by inviting experts from inside and outside government to provide background knowledge and analysis on relevant issues. Citizen evidence is also a common tool for informing decision-making in parliaments through petitions and interactions at constituency level.

Using the supply/demand model, parliaments both supply and demand evaluations; they produce their own evaluations and they use evaluations produced by others (Jacob, Speer & Furubo, 2015, p. 20). As producers, the technical departments are mandated to commission studies that are of interest to the business of parliament. As a user of evidence itself, parliament draws on evidence from evaluation studies generated internally and externally to debate and take policy decisions. In many countries, however, evaluation has become increasingly practised within the executive branch and parliaments have, therefore, indirectly become consumers of evaluative information (Speer, Pattyn & De Peuter, 2015, p. 39).

While many sources of information and analysis are available to parliamentarians, the various political parties, CSOs, journalists, etc. have their own agendas. Academic sources are sometimes too complex or theoretical and few, if any, external sources meet the often short and unpredictable timescales in which parliaments make decisions (Global Partners Governance, 2017, p. 1). Hence the internal producers of evidence, PRS, PBO and M&E units play critical roles in supporting committees with evidence.

How the NES and the parliamentary systems link in the three countries

The linkage with the NES and the Ugandan parliamentary system

The introduction of a National Development Plan in 2010 set new demands for national-level M&E. To address the need for M&E of the National Development Plan, a National Policy on Public Sector M&E was approved by Cabinet in 2013 (Office of the Prime Minister, 2013) followed in 2014 by an implementation plan to operationalise the policy (Office of the Prime Minister, 2014). One of the aims of the national M&E policy is to improve the confidence of Ugandan citizens in the parliament's ability to hold ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) and government accountable for development outcomes (Abola, 2014). The policy further details three key responsibilities for parliament: to scrutinise various objects of expenditure and the sums to be spent on each; to assure transparency and accountability in the application of public funds; and to monitor the implementation of government programmes and projects (Office of the Prime Minister, 2013, p. 22).

The policy concretised the key elements of the Uganda NES including embedding M&E in the management practices of MDAs and in local governments and expanding the coverage of public policy and programmes subject to rigorous evaluation. The policy is geared at enhancing the basis on which decision makers make evidence-based public policy and programme decisions and strengthening accountability regarding government policies and programmes (Abola, 2014). The Uganda NES is led by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). Evaluations can either be led by the OPM, a sector ministry or by an agency. The Government Evaluation Facility (GEF) commission was established to conduct and disseminate evaluations of national interest as approved by the Cabinet. A National M&E Technical Working Group (NMETWG) peer reviews evaluations in the GEF and includes representatives from government departments, parliament, the research community, private sector, non-government organisations (NGOs) and development partners.

How parliaments use evidence

The Parliament of Uganda is currently composed of 457 members assigned to 29 committees. Committees of parliament are tasked with the function of monitoring and evaluating government. In exercising their oversight function,

committees may conduct investigations, hold public hearings, acquire reports from the executive or commission studies in reaction to complaints, criticism, opposition or abuses surrounding a programme, operation, agency, or official (Abola, 2014). As mentioned earlier, the legal framework empowers the opposition in parliament to keep the government in check and articulate alternatives to government policies and positions (Parliament of Uganda, 2017; the Republic of Uganda, 1995, 2006). The opposition draws on evidence provided by the internal technical team in the office of the leader of the opposition through alternative policy statements, Bills, analysis reports, issue briefs, minority reports, sectoral briefs, analytical reports, statements, motions, oversight reports, accountability reports and questions.

Key components of the parliamentary administration relating to the use of evidence include the library service, PRS, PBO and the Institute of Parliamentary Studies.⁴ Similar to the MDAs, parliament also has an M&E division. The PRS and PBO are mandated to provide objective, reliable and timely information to individual members and committees of parliament.

Parliaments cannot rely solely on the information provided by the executive but must look at other sources to enable them to explore contrary arguments (Draman et al., 2017, p. 20). The majority of the evidence presented in parliament originates from professional bodies and CSOs outside the NES and GEF structures. Parliamentarians can proactively commission studies to shed light on a topical issue in the House, with the findings packaged in the form of briefs, as well as full reports. This underscores the importance of the internal capacity of specialised units within parliaments to conduct evaluations or research. Internally generated studies are carried out by these units in parliament and may involve specialist researchers and may extend beyond desktop studies to field research or data collection. These studies do not necessarily follow the procedures for commissioning, conducting and disseminating full rigorous evaluations that are required in the NES. This raises questions of quality assurance and verification of evidence.⁵ In addition, external sources of evidence are drawn from the GEF, from sector ministries, or third parties such as Civil Society Organisations (CSO) and academia.

⁴ Available from: <https://bit.ly/39ij46l>

⁵ Even more so if you compare with the good practice of evidence checks used in the House of Commons in the UK.

The PBO has played a critical role in ensuring transparency and accountability in the use of resources by undertaking studies on the performance of the national budget, for example, in terms of the projects under implementation, loans approved, domestic arrears, among others. Often, the PBO also triangulates the findings from the reports of the Auditor-General with their desk reviews on the execution of the national budget. The parliamentary M&E division fulfils many of the functions of the wider national M&E system, including undertaking the annual sector reviews of the legislature, preparing the parliamentary component for the government annual performance report. It also participates in the peer review of key national evaluation studies commissioned through the GEF. In setting up the NES, capacity was identified as a major impediment. The Civil Service College provided training which was attended by several parliamentary staff members. What has proved more valuable is the M&E training provided by the in-house Institute of Parliamentary Studies to members, committees and staff of parliament, and which has led to better use of evaluation evidence (Lwebuga & Busiku, 2015).

Examples of where evaluations have been used

In terms of using evaluations from the NES, a limited number of GEF evaluations have been tabled in parliament in cases where a specific parliamentary committee has an interest in a specific subject. One example was the evaluation by the OPM on the efficiency, rationalisation and prioritisation of public sector organisations. The report made fundamental recommendations, including merging and abolishing some government agencies and departments. This report prompted intense media attention which stimulated parliament's interest. Another landmark example is when parliament demanded an evaluation of the Youth Livelihood Programme. The Auditor-General issued a report which stated that the Youth Livelihood Programme was not meeting its intended objectives of empowering youth with necessary skills and start-up capital. Upon receipt of the audit report, the Public Accounts Committee demanded an evaluation of the Youth Livelihood Programme by the executive. The Public Accounts Committee also asked the PRS to carry out its own internal study to see if it confirmed the evaluation by the executive, to ensure they had a rapid response to the Auditor-General's findings, and to exert pressure on the executive to deliver the evaluation quickly. The two separate studies drew the same conclusions as the Auditor-General.

Accordingly, parliament pushed the executive to restructure the programme and relax some of the tight minimum requirements that were hindering access by beneficiaries. In practice, committees find it easier to request research evidence on specific matters of concern from inhouse structures including the PRS and PBO.⁶ Recent examples are the post-legislative scrutiny studies of the Domestic Violence Act, 2010; the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2006; and the Female Genital Mutilation Act, 2010. The PRS undertook field activities and collected data from a cross-section of respondents. The findings led to rigorous debate in parliament which resulted in the amendment of these laws.

The findings of the PBO's reports and recommendations from parliamentary accountability committees have resulted in recoveries of substantial amounts of money and resources. A case in point is the recovery of the land titles belonging to the national broadcaster, which had been fraudulently allocated to an individual. The fraud was exposed in a report of the Auditor-General. The PBO and PRS helped the public accounts committee to assess the findings in corroboration of the oral evidence submitted by witnesses and which, ultimately, informed the move to recover the land titles. The leader of the opposition has undertaken several studies, for example, on the operation of a police interrogation centre, locally known as 'Nalufenya'. The findings of citizen abuse resulted in a detailed investigation by parliament and the closure of the facility.

Overall lessons

Parliamentary committees focus strongly on oversight rather than evaluation. Studies undertaken on the funding available, to enable parliament to play an oversight role, reveal that this is still a challenge despite the National M&E policy dictating that all MDAs allocate 3% of project funds towards M&E and this should also apply to parliament (Office of the Prime Minister, 2013). Uganda's National M&E Policy has led to a greater appreciation of the need for evidence to inform policy and programmatic decisions, including in parliament. The policy has helped to hold the public sector accountable for its application of resources. It has also addressed gaps in existing legislation and administrative practices concerning tracking performance and evaluating public policies and the policy has clarified the roles of different stakeholders, including parliament (Office of the Prime Minister, 2013). In practice, however, evidence advanced by the executive is often not well packaged nor is it readily available for use

⁶ Each committee has a full-time researcher.

in parliament both of which obstruct the uptake of evidence. Parliament is demanding and using a range of sources of evidence including evaluations, reviews, desktop research and impact assessments.

The use of formal evaluations is very limited. This is partly due to the urgency of decisions that have to be taken in parliament. On the supply side, parliament prefers internally produced evidence due to the ease of access to internal resources such as parliamentary researchers, economists, legal advisors and policy analysts. Also, the credibility of internally sourced evidence is perceived to be higher than evidence provided by the executive because parliamentarians regard internal evidence as more impartial. There is little linkage between the formal evaluation programme of the GEF and the outputs of parliament's internal sources. The demand for internal sources should be of interest to the OPM as they inform on how to build capacity for conducting evaluations in parliament and how to incorporate evaluations produced in parliament with the GEF to enable wider access and use in the NES. While parliament is not necessarily a major producer of evaluations and other studies, there is a heightened emerging interest in evaluation. This can be seen through the emergence of a parliamentary forum on development evaluation, a chapter of the African Parliamentarians Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE). In addition, changes to the Uganda parliamentary rules of procedure in 2017 included a request that a study accompanies new legislation to justify the necessity for the new legislation.

Links of the NES to the South African parliamentary system

The supply system – the National Evaluation System

The Department of Performance (later Planning), Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) was established in the Presidency in 2010 to drive government M&E (Engela & Ajam, 2010). An official NES was established in South Africa in 2011, when the first national evaluation policy framework was approved by Cabinet (DPME, 2011). The establishment of the system is described by Goldman et al. (2015). Key elements of the NES in South Africa include national/provincial/departmental evaluation plans, evaluation standards, competencies, a range of evaluation courses, 27 guidelines and templates, a quality assurance and assessment system and a set of communication materials including annual reports and policy briefs highlighting the content of evaluations as well as the progress in establishing the system (DPME, 2017). In addition, a national Evaluation Technical Working Group (ETWG) of key stakeholders in the

evaluation system, both at the national and provincial levels, was used to broaden ownership of the NES. Parliament was not involved in this. The last annual report undertaken on the NES was for the period 2016/17 (DPME, 2017), and it summarised the situation at that time, as does the evaluation of the NES conducted in 2016/2017. The report indicated that while many elements were working, the improvement plan system needed to be followed up and tracked more rigorously (Goldman et al., 2019).

During 2018-2019 there were high-level changes in personnel in DPME which resulted in the evaluation system faltering. In 2020 there were signs that it might re-established and a new National Evaluation Policy Framework was approved (DPME, 2020). Despite the weakening of the DPME's central coordination role, the system has continued to operate with individual provinces and departments continuing to conduct evaluations.

The link between the NES and the parliamentary system

South Africa has a bicameral system. The National Assembly has 30 committees to which departments and public entities report.⁷ The administration has a department of knowledge and information services, which includes documentation services, the parliamentary library, a PRS and a PBO. The committees of parliament are supported by content advisors who perform a similar function to parliamentary researchers.

DPME initially reported to the Standing Committee on Appropriations (SCOA) whose primary mandate is overseeing departmental expenditure. Overseeing DPME was a significant additional responsibility for the committee and DPME undertook major efforts to brief them on the M&E system and assist them to play their role effectively.⁸ SCOA became the key champion for M&E in parliament. These efforts were very successful at building a strong understanding in SCOA of the work of DPME and led to a much more collegial atmosphere between the committee and DPME. Unfortunately, after the 2014 elections all the members of the committee changed and DPME was asked to report to the Public Services Committee instead. Hence all the institutional memory was lost and DPME had to build a new working relationship.

⁷ Available from: <https://bit.ly/3hOxJvf>

⁸ This included a 3-day training in July 2012 and taking 6 members of the committee accompanied by the Deputy Minister of DPME on study tours to the US and Canada in September/October 2012 and to Uganda and Kenya in June/July 2013.

It became standard practice in DPME that evaluation reports and improvement plans were sent to the relevant parliamentary portfolio committees ensure that the portfolio committees were aware of the findings. Presentations were made at the Committee of Chairs of Portfolio Committees in 2012, 2013 and 2015 to make them all aware of DPME's work and to apprise them of evaluations conducted which could be followed up on. DPME also established links with the PBO so that researchers would use evaluation reports.

In addition, DPME presented to the parliamentary researchers to enable them to understand the evaluation system and how to access evaluations. However, this only occurred in 2013 and the failure to repeat the exercise represents a missed opportunity considering the importance of the parliamentary researchers in ensuring evaluations are used in parliament.

Evidence of demand – examples of where evaluations have been used

Several parliamentary committees asked for evaluations to be presented to them including the Rural Development and Land Reform Portfolio Committee, the Basic Education Portfolio Committee, the Mineral Resources Committee, and the Standing Committee on Appropriations. There are cases where parliament specifically requested information on evaluations. This shows there is demand for evaluations from committees and the desire to hold the government accountable. There are examples in the parliamentary records of parliamentarians asking for information about the number and use of evaluations. For example, in 2013 an MP of one of the opposition parties asked the Minister in the Presidency:⁹

- Whether, with reference to the implementation of the National Evaluation Policy Framework of 2011 and the National Evaluation Plan 2012-2013, whose stated objectives are to improve policy and programme performance and accountability, there is sufficient political will from the Cabinet and the Executive to ensure the implementation of these evaluation plans; if so, then why do certain government departments, such as Human Settlements and Arts and Culture, continue to violate the constitutional rights of South Africans to the speedy delivery of services by underspending their budgetary allocations year after year?

In 2015 an MP of the ruling party asked the Minister in the Presidency to report on:

- How many evaluation projects on the performance of government departments had been undertaken and completed by his office in the 2014-2015 financial year

⁹ Written questions submitted to DPME to be answered.

- in order to ensure that the 14 outcomes of the medium-term strategic framework were achieved?
- ▶ How many of these evaluations his office planned to undertake for the 2016-2017 financial year?
 - ▶ What did the results of the completed evaluations indicate in terms of achieved progress and the impact of government programmes on improving the lives of the citizens?

In addition, in May 2016 SCOA requested that National Treasury work with stakeholders to assess the funding for, and performance of, the scholar transport programme. As a direct result of this, an evaluation of scholar transport was initiated as part of the National Evaluation Plan for 2017/2018, the first example of a national evaluation requested by parliament.

Lessons

An evaluation of the NES in 2016/2017 demonstrated limitations in the turnaround time for evaluations. In addition, while it is difficult to assess use of evaluations, case studies revealed that instrumental and process use were prominent. It has been argued that there is a high return on evaluations of between R7 and R13 per rand invested (Goldman et al., 2019).

Some of the emerging lessons are:

- ▶ The NES should be formally linked with parliamentary institutions such as the PRS and PBO so that evaluations are automatically sent when they have been completed and departments should automatically include reporting on evaluations in their reports to parliamentary committees.
- ▶ The South African NES demonstrates that committees can propose evaluations, and the first such evaluation has been completed.
- ▶ It would be useful if parliamentary committees took responsibility for following up on the improvements which departments are requested to implement as part of an evaluation process to ensure sure that the changes needed are implemented. Committees could play a pivotal role in this regard.

How the NES links to the Benin parliamentary system

The supply system – the national evaluation system in Benin

A Bureau for Evaluation of Public Policies (BEPP), now called the Bureau for Evaluation of Public Policies and Government Action Analysis (BEPPAAG), was created in 2007. Located in the Presidency, the Bureau's role is primarily

the establishment of the NES and to ensure that evaluation becomes a strategic tool for development across all levels. A 10-year (2012-2021) National Evaluation Policy was adopted in 2011 to promote learning for the improvement of management decision-making, as well as to ensure that government is accountable for its actions. (BEPP, 2012). An institutional framework has been established which defines the mechanisms for conducting evaluations and includes guidance on selecting evaluations and structures, engaging stakeholders, disseminating results, and monitoring the implementation of recommendations. A national evaluation guideline was also adopted by the government in 2018. Evaluation findings are seen as 'public goods' and are made available through the website. The National Evaluation Policy recently underwent a mid-term evaluation (BEPPAAG, 2019).

How does the NES link to the parliamentary system – what evidence is there of demand?

Benin has a unicameral National Assembly with 83 seats with 5 standing committees.¹⁰ There are three components of the parliamentary administration. One is the Benin Parliamentary Institute (IPAB) created in September 2019 to correct the imbalance of resources between the executive and parliament by providing the latter with the means, tools, techniques and expertise necessary for achieving its constitutional mission. Theoretically, the IPAB has the responsibility in parliament to analyse and evaluate public policies of the government, although it is not clear whether this is happening in practice.

In 2018, the Twende Mbele network, the APNODE and the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR-AA) provided technical assistance to the BEPPAAG to train MPs to understand the purpose of evaluation and the role MPs can play in supporting an evaluation culture in the country. Evaluation findings were shared during these training sessions. Various events have taken place in Benin to raise awareness of the value of evaluation in parliament. The Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Benin and the president of APNODE Benin participated in Benin's Evaluation Days conference in 2016 and 2018 (a biennial event designed to promote an evaluation culture)¹¹ and attended

¹⁰ *Commission des Lois, de l'Administration et des Droits de l'Homme; Commission des Finances et des Échanges; Commission du Plan, de l'Équipement et de la Production; Commission de l'Éducation, de la Culture, de l'Emploi et des Affaires Sociales; Commission des Relations Extérieures, de la Coopération au Développement, de la Défense et de la Sécurité.*

¹¹ Because of separation of powers it is not possible to invite MPs individually. These came from the invitation of the minister.

capacity-development activities and panel discussions. At a meeting of the Benin APNODE branch in 2017, most of the 15 completed evaluation reports were shared with members of parliament who attended. Key MPs (including the Deputy Speaker) have a list of evaluations that have been undertaken.

In the past, 25 of the 83 members of parliament were members of the Benin branch of APNODE. Many of these MPs lost their seats in a subsequent election and this weakened the APNODE branch. A discussion is ongoing between parliament and the secretariat of APNODE about creating an evaluation committee in parliament that can interact with BEPPAAG to use evaluation findings. Unfortunately, however, this may not be possible. As stated in the following quote from the APNODE president:

In the Parliament of Benin, we are far from effectively playing our oversight role, despite the efforts of APNODE BENIN since 2018. Our efforts to institute evaluation in the constitution did not bear fruit in the 2019 constitutional review. Even our efforts to introduce a technical committee for the evaluation of public policies in the rules of procedure of the national assembly, accepted in committee during the seventh legislature (but not scheduled to be voted on in plenary at the time) was rejected in plenary during the vote on the revision of the rules of procedure two weeks ago by the government, because it implies additional burdens.¹²

Incentives have been used to encourage MPs to use NES findings in parliamentary committees, including training in the use of evaluations and issuing invitations to panel discussions on the role of parliament in evaluations.

Examples of where evaluations have been used

Evaluations have never been used in parliamentary debates or to formulate questions to the government. At the country level, collaboration between government, civil society, and academia on evaluation appears to be increasing. However, the separation of powers leads to a reluctance by parliament to use government evaluations. The view of some of the evaluation champions is that government should not be evaluating itself and that the evaluation function should be independent. There is, however, a discussion regarding the establishment of an evaluation office in parliament as part of IPAB with possible support from the UNDP. There are also opportunities to collaborate more closely, to strengthen capacity, and to build an evaluation culture at the national level which will involve parliament (in terms of the decision-making

¹² Response to a questionnaire completed for this chapter.

process), academia (in terms of curriculum development and research), VOPes (in relation to evaluators conducting evaluations), and civil society (in terms of dissemination).

Lessons

The relationship between the Benin NES and parliament is poor and much needs to be done to improve it. There is evidence of some use in the executive of evaluations from the government-led evaluation system in Benin (DGE, 2016; BEPPAAG, 2018a). However, evaluations are not used consistently to oversee the executive and parliament relies primarily on administrative data.

The establishment of an evaluation committee in parliament is a possible solution to increase the demand for and use of evaluation. BEPPAAG needs to present evaluation findings to MPs frequently and to formalise the sharing of evaluation findings. It also needs to work with IPAB to support capacity development activities to strengthen parliament's understanding of the role of evaluation and how it can strengthen parliament's oversight role.

Some areas of action needed include:

- Ensuring that government, in collaboration with its partners, plans for evaluation and allocates funding for M&E. This requires a change in political will, culture and practice;
- To strengthen the use of Benin's NES, the country needs legitimacy from parliament through a law and this must be supported by MPs who are evaluation champions inside parliament.¹³ The government is considering whether to include evaluation in the constitution or to push for the passing of a specific law on evaluation. In 2020 a consultant was being procured to draft the law. This would provide an opportunity to institutionalise the link between parliament and the NES and maximise the likelihood of the use of evaluation findings to control government action.

Similarities and differences between the three case study countries

Frameworks such as the Holvoet and Renard (2007) framework have been developed to examine NESs. This framework has been applied to compare the systems in Benin, South Africa and Uganda (see Goldman et al., 2018). However, none of these frameworks specifically address links between a country's NES and parliament.

¹³ Notably members of the Benin branch of APNODE.

The inclusion of parliament in the M&E policies of Benin and Uganda demonstrates a recognition of the role of parliament in the NES and an expectation that parliaments should use evaluation evidence. In all cases, though, the link between parliament and the NES is weak in practice reflecting a separation of powers and silo operations. In all three countries, the separation of powers between legislature and executive is reflected in the NES, as it is not formally linked to parliament. The experience arising from these three countries suggests that formalising the link would be beneficial in two main respects. First, it would assist to ensure the use of evaluations by parliament. Second, it would potentially help to ensure that evaluations that parliament's preferred evaluations are included on the list of candidate evaluations in national evaluation agendas. As the two arms of the state are autonomous, parliament would need to consider how to incorporate the use of evaluations in its processes. A discussion will follow on what the executive would need to do in terms of the NES. Ideally, this should be embedded either in policy or legislation.

Strengthening the link between the NES and evidence generation and use in parliamentary processes is likely to increase the demand for evidence and its use in policy and decision-making. In turn, this can build a culture of evaluation within parliament thereby establishing the necessary enabling environment and implementing systems (i.e. guidelines for evidence utilisation in parliament). The involvement of parliament as an institution in the evaluation process implies focusing on and investing in structures such as committees, parliamentary research services, budget offices, M&E units and other support structures, rather than investing in individual parliamentarians. The importance of this is shown in the experience of changes in MPs in South Africa and Benin.

Emerging lessons

Institutionalising evaluation in parliament

In cases of Uganda and South Africa (as well as Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania and Zambia) the PRS provides important services to committees, supports evaluative studies of different types and, to some degree, draws on evaluations from the NES.¹⁴ Key in institutionalising evaluations in parliament is that the NES champion should work with parliamentary researchers and committees. Several additional factors emerge as important, as discussed below.

¹⁴ This comes from CLEAR's work on national evaluation systems and with parliament in these countries

Building capacity of MPs to use M&E evidence: Induction of MPs is limited in scope. Committee members need to understand the policy process and possess the necessary skills to use M&E evidence. To carry out their roles effectively, parliamentary committees need to request evaluations from MDAs, including requesting that the executive undertakes evaluations, as has happened in South Africa. Areas of capacity development include asking the right policy questions, critical thinking, interpretation and utilisation of M&E evidence. Capacity development should not be a once-off event but should be sustained to enhance the link between NES and parliament. Current members of parliament should receive capacity-building training and this should also be included in the induction of new members of parliament. Given the challenge of MPs not being retained, capacity building should also focus on the PRS, PBO, etc. This is key to holding the executive to account, particularly given the shift from a transactional-oriented approach (process and compliance) to a more transformational and outcome-oriented approach (Zantsi, 2020).

Building capacity of technical structures in parliament: Parliamentary researchers¹⁵ are sector experts or research specialists with little or no M&E knowledge and skills.¹⁶ They are, generally few and overstretched. They require capacity building in M&E, including training, coaching, mentoring and technical assistance.

Effective networking with external researchers: Parliamentary researchers primarily conduct desktop reviews rather than primary research. However, they also need to access data located within research institutions, CSOs, think tanks and private consultancies. External links are often weak, such as with academia, think tanks, and other research providers. To strengthen these linkages, the South African and Ugandan parliaments require external bodies to present their research. This is greatly facilitated where relationships exist between committees and trusted external researchers and where researchers are able to communicate in accessible ways (Goldman & Pabari, 2020a).

Inclusion in the evaluation process: Research or evaluation studies that are internal to parliament are initiated by committees more frequently than donor- or executive-initiated evaluations. Committees are often not involved in evaluation processes conducted by the executive. Involvement in evaluation

¹⁵ And content advisors in South Africa.

¹⁶ From interviews with researchers.

processes increases the likelihood of ownership and use of evaluative knowledge and learning. One way to maximise buy-in by committees would be by including MPs in evaluation steering committees or validation workshops. Their participation can boost the legitimacy of evaluation results and improve the use of evaluation reports by parliamentarians (Zantsi, 2020). This may be seen to conflict with the separation of powers.

Oversight of action by the executive on evaluation recommendations:

Where research, evaluations, and, where available, resulting improvement plans are presented to parliamentary committees, there is often no process to check whether MDAs are following up on recommendations and learning. This could become an important part of committees' oversight function and could potentially have a positive impact on the follow-up of these recommendations.

Political will and champions: Institutionalisation of the generation and use of evidence is critical for the work of committees. Political will from both the ruling party and the opposition party and advocacy for evidence use by champions may persuade other members of committees to value evaluation and allocate resources for the use of evaluation as a significant component of the portfolio committees' day-to-day work to strengthen accountability and transparency.

Strengthening the links of the NES with Parliament

Several elements could be incorporated into national evaluation policies or legislation to ensure that NESs consider parliament's needs. For instance, it can be required that once evaluation reports and improvement plans are approved that ***evaluation reports are submitted to the appropriate parliamentary committees, as well as the PRS/PBO***. It should also be standard practice that evaluation findings are presented to the relevant committee of parliament that oversees the evaluation of the public service.

National/ministry evaluation plans: In South Africa, there is already an example of an evaluation undertaken at the request of a parliamentary committee. All parliamentary committees could systematically and formally be requested to propose that evaluations are included in national or departmental evaluation plans. Once the evaluation plan/agenda is approved it should be shared with parliament so that it is clear which evaluations can be expected and can then schedule feedback presentations on the committee calendar.

MDA reporting to parliament: MDAs could be required to report on evaluations when they report to parliamentary committees. This would institutionalise reporting on evaluations.

Knowledge-brokering role: Goldman and Pabari (2020a) point to the importance of the facilitation and knowledge-brokering role for the effective use of evaluations. The sharing of information requires a relationship and, potentially, a partnership between knowledge brokers in parliament and the executive. Specifically, parliamentary structures such as the PRS and PBO need to be linked with M&E units in the presidency, ministries, departments and agencies and research institutions that can provide research and evaluation evidence and knowledge.

Repository: If knowledge brokering is to be successful, evaluation repositories should be created where evaluations are organised and publicly accessible and the PRS/PBO be made aware of them. All three countries have created such repositories.

Oversight of improvement plans: Potentially, an important part of the parliamentary oversight role is ensuring that progress reports on implementing improvement plans are tabled to parliamentary committees as part of ministry reporting. In this way, committees know what is working or not working in terms of specific policies and programmes, what changes are being proposed, and whether ministries are taking forward those changes, and ministries could be held accountable for making the changes.

Conclusions

The policymaking process is subject to political contestation as it is grounded in theory, values, ideology and practice (Davies, 2011). Parliaments are political arenas where interests compete in shaping decision-making. For parliaments operating in a multiparty system, the landscape is complex and composed of a wide diversity of opinion (Blaser Mapitsa, Ali & Khumalo, 2020) with influence and interests dictating how evidence is demanded and actually used. If the information being provided supports the position of the ruling party, the chances of the evidence, such as an evaluation, being demanded by the party would be very high (Kiranda & Kamp, 2010). Examples of how opposition parties use evidence were also evident.

This chapter explored the supply of evaluations commissioned by the executive and undertaken within parliament, the demand from parliament, and the knowledge-brokering role carried out within parliament by the PRS or PBO and within the executive by custodian central units (for example in the Presidency), and M&E units of ministries, departments and agencies.

Parliaments draw evidence from a variety of studies, both internally generated and externally generated. There is some evidence that parliament prefers internally generated evidence, which responds to parliament's timescales and addresses the specific questions parliament must answer. These studies are often rapid desktop studies which are valuable but could also be complemented by rigorous and rapid evaluations and research conducted by the executive. While Benin, Uganda and South Africa have all made great strides in the development of NESs serving the executive, the separation of powers means that the executive and parliament keep each other at arm's length and the links between the NES and parliamentary systems are weak, often informal, and dependant on relationships.

Goldman and Pabari (2020a) point to the importance of building agreement, trust, access, and institutional mechanisms to promote a deeper connection between the bodies responsible for research and evaluation and parliament. South Africa and Benin devoted resources to building the capacity of members of parliament to use evidence, but their efforts lost momentum when MPs changed – as frequently happens at the end of each parliamentary term. This points to the need to strengthen the links between the institutions – the knowledge brokers in parliament (the M&E divisions, PRS and PBO) and the national and departmental M&E champions in the executive – so that evidence flows between them, and accountability needs are met. Those links need to be relational (building trust, commitment, and collaboration) and institutional (shared values and principles encouraging accountability and transparency amongst others). Several ways of institutionalising links emerge. Firstly, making it a formal requirement that all evaluations are presented to the relevant parliamentary committee. This would help parliamentarians to use evaluations in their oversight role and might stimulate them to demand evaluations.

Secondly, parliamentarians should also gain expertise in requesting evaluations that are more suited to their needs and time scales. Thirdly, it would be significant if parliaments could take on the role of monitoring the executive on the implementation of the action plans for improvements that form part of every evaluation. It would reinforce the fact that MDAs are accountable. Lastly, the legislative opportunity as is currently under consideration in Benin and South Africa would serve to institutionalise the linkages officially. The tension is how to manage to build a more collegial approach while maintaining the separation of powers.

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