



STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR EVIDENCE INFORMED DECISION-MAKING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Lessons from CDD-Ghana's E4D project (2019-2021)

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Acronyms

CDD-Ghana - Ghana Center for Democratic Development
CoP - Community of Practice
CODAC - Community Development And Advocacy Centre
CSOs - Civil Society Organizations
DAs - District Assemblies
DACF - District Assembly Common Fund
DDF - District Development Fund
DPAT - District Assembly Performance Assessment Tool
DMTDP - District Medium-Term Development Plans
DPCU - District Planning and Coordinating Unit
DQAF - Data Quality Assessment Framework
EIDM - Evidence-Informed Decision Making
E4D - Evidence for Development
FGDs - Focus Group Discussions
FoN - Friends of the Nation
GMEF - Ghana Monitoring and Evaluation Forum
GSS - Ghana Statistical Service
KIIs - Key Informant Interviews
NDPC - National Development Planning Commission
OHLGS - Office of the Head of Local Government Service
PAC - Project Advisory Committee
RCC - Regional Coordinating Council
RISE - Ghana - Rural Initiatives for Self-Empowerment - Ghana

Executive Summary

Promoting data and evidence-informed decision-making by elected public officials and bureaucrats has garnered a lot of interest from international development agencies and policy think tanks. This growing interest stems from increasing dissatisfaction with government policies and programs, which have failed to address the intractable development challenges citizens and communities face. In their day-to-day operations, governments and researchers create vast amounts of data and evidence, often with direct policy relevance. Although the different sources of evidence tend to improve policies that affect the lives of citizens, especially the underserved, policymakers rarely rely on evidence in their bid to design policies and programs and make decisions that respond to the growing needs of their citizens. This is often attributed to challenges such as weak individual and institutional capacities; and a lack of platforms to support evidence co-production, sharing capacities, and learning inside and outside of government to promote effective evidence-informed policy decision-making practice. It is, therefore, pertinent to undertake which seek to promote EIDM at all levels.

The Evidence for Development (E4D) Project

The E4D project was piloted by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) with funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to support local government use of data and evidence in policy and program implementation. The project was implemented in three project districts across the country from July 2019 to December 2021 with a long-term objective of the project to institutionalize data and evidence use in policy planning and program implementation at the sub-national government level. To do this, the project team designed interventions which were geared towards building the capacities of state and non-state actors; providing an avenue for co-creating evidence; fostering inter-district learning and creating a platform for people working within the EIDM space to share ideas and best practices.

Summary of Activities Implemented Under the Project



Training for evidence producers and users in each of the three districts



Peer-to-peer learning forum



Set up community of practice platforms in the three project districts



Radio engagements in the three districts by the CSO partners



National Multistakeholder forum

Summary of Findings from the evaluation

The summative evaluation found that the E4D project made several contributions to EIDM practice in the three pilot districts:

- The project strengthened the capacity and motivation of diverse evidence-to-policy stakeholders to support EIDM practice in three districts.
- It contributed to a significant systemic shift in policy planning practices and processes and improved the quality of policy documents produced by the district assemblies.
- It has contributed to nurturing champions for EIDM, thereby helping to strengthen an emerging EIDM community at the national and district level.
- Finally, the E4D project has made progress towards the long-term goal of institutionalizing the use of data and evidence to improve policy and program implementation at the district level.

Summary of Key Insights and Lessons learnt

- Capacity-building EIDM practice is critical but needs to go beyond one-off training to provide follow-up on-the-job training support.
- A Community of Practice (CoP) is a useful mechanism to build community, capacity and strengthen systems to support data and evidence use in government.

- Mobilizing actors, creating platforms for regular evidence-to-policy practice dialogue, and documenting and sharing learning from practice have the potential to nurture and strengthen EIDM field practice.
- Building partnerships in project implementation is necessary for policy uptake
- The timing for the implementation of a project is essential.

Summary of Recommendations

Based on our learnings from the implementation of the E4D project, we make the following recommendations

- Mobilizing actors, creating platforms for regular evidence-to-policy practice dialogue, and documenting and sharing learning from practice have the potential to nurture and strengthen EIDM field practice.
- Building partnerships in project implementation is necessary for policy uptake
- The timing for the implementation of a project is essential.

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Introduction and Overview of Report

Data and evidence have an important role to play in improving policies and programs for achieving better development outcomes. Yet, data and evidence use in government remain a challenge leading to poor policy choices and ineffective development outcomes, particularly in low and middle-income countries. Among the key challenges to evidence and data use in policy and practice are weak individual and institutional capacities; and a lack of platforms to support evidence co-production, sharing capacities, and learning inside and outside of government to promote effective evidence-informed policy decision-making practice. To address this challenge, government, international development actors, research and policy think-tanks, and civil society organizations, have been promoting the practice of evidence-informed decision-making as part of a broad agenda to strengthen governance for inclusive development outcomes.

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), with the support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (Hewlett Foundation) in July 2019, initiated an intervention to strengthen the capacity and motivation of local government policy actors to use data and evidence in policy planning, program design and implementation at the subnational, district level in Ghana. CDD-Ghana presents this end-of-project narrative report on interventions undertaken under the project to the Hewlett Foundation. The report highlights the contributions, lessons learned, and recommendations to advance evidence-informed decision-making practice at the subnational government level in Ghana.

The report is structured as follows: Section 1, provides an overview of the E4D project. It highlights the objectives and broad goals of the E4D intervention and the project implementation approach. Section 2, presents the status of E4D project implementation to-date. Section 3 provides an overview of the end-of-project evaluation study conducted to assess the contribution of the E4D project. Section 4, provides highlights of the key contributions/achievements of the E4D project in enabling and strengthening EIDM practice at the subnational, district government level. The E4D contributions are assessed along three core outcomes: 1) E4D contribution to improving awareness, capacity, and motivation of key policy bureaucrats and other development actors to advance EIDM practice at the subnational, government level; 2) E4D contribution to changes in data and evidence use practices in decision-making, policy processes, and structures of subnational, district government level; and 3) E4D contribution to strengthening EIDM field of practice at the subnational, district level. Section 5, provides a summary reflections on lessons learned and concludes with recommendations on strengthening EIDM practice at the subnational government level.

Section One: CDD-Ghana's Approach to Promoting EIDM in Policy and Practice at the Sub-national, District Level



1.1. The E4D Project: Background and Context

The Evidence for Development (E4D) project seeks to strengthen the capacity of policy actors to access and use relevant data and evidence to inform policy decision-making to improve social development outcomes at the subnational district level in Ghana. To achieve this outcome, CDD-Ghana proposed to pilot and test a series of interventions to learn what works to enhance the capacity and motivation of policy actors to find, analyze, and systematically use data and evidence in decision-making processes. The intervention combine training, nurturing relationships and partnerships, and facilitating collaboration among and across the community of evidence-to-policy practice actors to promote and support the implementation of evidence-informed decision-making approach in policy and practice at the sub-national government levels.

1.2. The Goal and Objectives of the E4D Project

The long-term goal of the E4D intervention is to institutionalize data and evidence use in policy planning and program implementation at the sub-national government level. The objective of the of the E4D intervention was to learn what works; develop partnerships; and identify which of the proposed interventions have the most potential to achieve these expected outcomes:

- Enhanced production, dissemination, and accessibility of high quality, policy-relevant data and evidence by diverse actors and stakeholders within and outside of government; and
- Improved government policy actors' (policy and program bureaucrats; and local elected representatives) capacity and motivation to use diverse data and evidence to inform policy and decision making, program design, implementation, and evaluation, particularly at the subnational levels of government.

CDD-Ghana sees the achievement of these priority outcomes as key to complement existing efforts aimed at promoting evidence-informed decision-making in policy and practice in Ghana.

1.3. E4D Project Implementation Strategy and Approach

CDD-Ghana implemented the E4D intervention as a pilot in three selected districts across three regions (**see Table 1**). In each of the three districts, CDD-Ghana implemented a series of interventions to address the underlying challenges in the use of data and evidence in government decision-making and program implementation. The interventions implemented focused on creating awareness and knowledge, strengthening skills and capacities, and facilitating relationships and networks to support the institutionalization of the EIDM approach to policy and decision-making practice.

CDD-Ghana implemented the E4D project in partnership with both state and non-state actors at the national and district levels. At the national level, CDD-Ghana set up a Project Advisory Committee (PAC)[1] made up of representatives of selected state and non-state organizations working to advance EIDM practice. The PAC is to provide guidance on project implementation strategies and to help facilitate uptake of E4D activities.

A crucial aspect of CDD-Ghana's project implementation approach at the district level is to work with selected civil society organizations (CSOs) as project implementing partners in the pilot districts. In each of the districts, three CSOs were selected as partners, with one of the organizations playing a lead role. The interventions undertaken in the districts were facilitated by these CSO project implementing partners in cooperation with the local District Assemblies (DAs). The CSOs developed a close operational relationship with the DAs and worked with them collaboratively to co-create and implement all the district-level activities under the project.

Table 1: E4D Project Districts

District	Region	Regional and District context	Lead CSO Implementing partner
Dormaa East	Bono	The district is relatively poor. The district is a long-standing beneficiary of a number of CDD-Ghana initiated social accountability interventions	Hope Alive 360 Foundation
Sagnerigu	Northern	A peri-urban district; located in the regional capital of the spatially poor Northern region of Ghana; the district has a strong presence of CSO activities	Norsaac
Bolgatanga East	Upper East	Newly created district, and relatively poor, nested within the Upper East regional capital. No strong history of CSO presences	RISE-Ghana

[1] Members of the PAC include: The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Office of Head of Local Government Service (OHLGS); PACKS Africa; SEND-Ghana, Ghana Monitoring and Evaluation Forum (GMEF), Friends of the Nation (FoN); Rural Initiative for Self-Empowerment Ghana; Norsaac, Hope Alive 360 Foundation

Section Two: Interventions Implemented Under the E4D Project



2.1. E4D Planned Interventions

To learn what interventions work, how, and why in institutionalizing the culture of data and evidence use in policy and practice, CDD-Ghana piloted a series of interventions to promote and support EIDM practice at the subnational, government level. The focus of the interventions include training to support capacity building; convening and nurturing communities of practice to enhance relationships and dialogue to foster a more inclusive, and equitable evidence ecosystem; and documenting and sharing lessons learned from the project to inform field practice. The goal underlying the interventions is to learn what works in strengthening individual and institutional capacities to implement the EIDM approach in policy, program implementation and routine decision-making practice to improve development outcomes.

2.2. Highlights of Major Activities Implemented Under the E4D

Between June 2019 to March 2022, CDD-Ghana and its partners implemented a series of interventions to strengthen capacity, motivation, and incentive for data and evidence use by subnational level government policy actors and program bureaucrats in the three pilot districts. The following are the interventions implemented under the E4D project:

Capacity Building Workshops for Evidence Producers and Users



CDD-Ghana and its partners organized training workshops to equip subnational local government policy bureaucrats and non-governmental actors with the tools and skills to support evidence/data generation, analysis, interpretation, presentation, and use in decision-making and program implementation. CDD-Ghana and partners facilitated the following three (3) EIDM focused trainings:

The first, was a three-day training workshop focused on strengthening the capacity of district statistics officers and civil society organization and researchers based in the three pilot districts on how to support evidence generation and use practices at the subnational government level.



Training for local government data officers, civil society actors and researchers on EIDM, Tamale

The training workshop exposed the participants and built their capacity in the following three broad thematic areas: 1) the concept, practice, and moral case for evidence-informed decision-making; 2) supporting evidence-informed decision-making in policy practice: approaches and strategies; and 3) research communication and policy engagement strategies: what works? A total of 27 participants participated in the training

The second training focused on strengthening the capacity of local policy and program bureaucrats (district coordinating directors, development planning officers, heads of decentralized service delivery agencies: health and education) on the use of data and evidence in policy planning, program design, and implementation at the district level. The training was conducted in each of the three pilot districts.



Training for local government policy bureaucrats and civil society organizations on EIDM

- The training exposed the participants to a) the EIDM approach to policy planning and practice; b) developing evidence-informed district medium-term development plans, and c) convening a community of practice (CoP) as a mechanism to strengthen EIDM practice
- A total of 45 representatives across the districts participated in the training programs

The third set of trainings focused on supporting the three pilot districts in the preparation of the new District Medium-Term Development Plans [DMTDP] for 2022-2025. The goal of the training was to take advantage of the policy planning window to support increased use of evidence in the preparations of DMTDP, strengthen capacity, as well as foster demand for accountability for evidence use in the plan preparation process.



Training of CoP Members on the District Medium-Term Development Plans, Bolgatanga East District Assembly

- The training exposed and built the capacity of all of the members of each of the district E4D community of practice and other stakeholders on a) the 2022-2025 DMTDP framework and planning guidelines; b) collecting and using data and evidence in the planning cycle, and c) monitoring and evaluation of plans and programs.

A total of 69 representatives participated in the trainings across the three pilot districts.



Community of Practice Platforms

2. CDD-ghana facilitated the set up of evidence use Communities of Practice (CoPs) platforms in each of the three pilot districts to enhance collaboration, strengthen relationships, and foster dialogue to improve EIDM practices.



Community of practice platform meeting in Sagnerigu Municipal

- The CoPs comprised local government policy and program bureaucrats and civil society organizations and other development partners working in each of the districts to promote and support the implementation of evidence to policy practice
- The CoPs helped facilitate the co-creation of district-wide EIDM action plans, supported the production and sharing of relevant data, participated and led in the preparation of the DMTDP process, and undertook public/radio outreach to share the draft plans and programs of the districts to crowdsourced citizens' feedback
- Membership of the CoPs in the district was not less than 15. Averagely each of the CoPs held 7 meetings between March to December 2021

3. Peer-to-peer learning forum



3. To promote learning and strengthen relationship, CDD-Ghana organized [peer-to-peer learning forum](#) for local government policy actors to facilitate experience sharing, strategies, and ideas in promoting data and evidence use more effectively for policymaking in government at the district level:

- The forum brought together selected members of the CoPs from the three pilot districts to share their stories of success and challenges, and to reflect on what strategies are working in fostering evidence use practice in their districts
- A total of 28 representatives participated in the learning forum
- Additionally, district CSO project partners convened inter and intra-district peer-to-peer learning fora, extending the learning on the E4D project to other districts as well as departments within the district



*Peer-to-peer learning forum
in Tamale*



Radio Outreach and Public Advocacy

The E4D district partners undertook radio outreach/ public advocacy engagements to create awareness about the E4D project, and to foster dialogue and accountability towards improving data and evidence use in policy and practice at the district level:

- The radio outreach was organized in all the three pilot districts to provide an opportunity for the CSOs and the local policy bureaucrats to provide information and facilitate community participation in the district's medium-term development planning process, crowdsourced for information on community needs; as well as to strengthen citizen participation in the development planning process
- A total of 12 radio programs were organized in each of the districts reaching an estimated 120,000 citizens



*E4D radio outreach in
Bolga East*

National Multistakeholder Forum



5. CDD - Ghana organized a national Multistakeholder Forum to discuss and share insights on EIDM practice; and coordinate efforts to strengthen advocacy and promote the EIDM approach in policy and decision-making at the national and district level in Ghana.

- The forum provided an opportunity for actors in the EIDM space to share learnings from their work, as well as to discuss emerging opportunities in the EIDM ecosystem
- A total of 40 participants drawn from government agencies, research think-tanks, civil society organizations, and policy and program bureaucrats from the three pilot districts participated in the two-day forum

Additionally, CDD-Ghana and district CSO partners facilitated regional-multi-stakeholder convening to share lessons learned from the national multi-stakeholder forum on evidence use practices



E4D National Multistakeholder Forum

Section Three: E4D Project Evaluation: Purpose, Questions and Data Collection Approach



3.1. E4D Project Evaluation Study: Purpose, Questions and Objectives

In November 2021, we undertook a summative (end-of-project) evaluation of the E4D intervention. The evaluation sought to assess the contribution of the E4D project to specific outcomes as stated in the project result framework. The goal of the evaluation was to support CDD-Ghana's learning and to inform the future scale-up of the E4D intervention. Generally, the evaluation sought to answer these three questions:

- How effective was the E4D in contributing to improved awareness, capacity, and motivation of key policy bureaucrats and other development actors to promote EIDM practice at the district level?
- How has E4D enabled change in evidence use in government decision-making systems, policy processes, and structures at the district level?
- How well did the E4D project contribute to strengthening the EIDM field of practice at the district level?

Objective of the evaluation study

The objective of the evaluation is two-fold:

- Assess project outcomes in terms of the impact of E4D intervention on local policy actors, policy processes and systems; and
- To determine how different dimensions of project implementation and contextual factors have contributed to these observed outcomes; and how these insights should inform learning on EIDM approach and practice.

3.2. Evaluation Approach and Data Collection Method

The evaluation combined outcome mapping and outcome harvesting methods to identify, describe, verify and analyze changes brought about by the intervention. The evaluation drew on a variety of data sources including those gathered from Desk Reviews (analysis of project documents including proposal, field activity reports and evaluations, end-of-year reports, and other relevant EIDM materials), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Interviews and discussions were conducted using appropriate interview guides. In addition, the evaluation drew insights from the broad EIDM field practice literature on how to strengthen evidence-to-policy practice to analyze the contributions of the E4D project.

The fieldwork for the evaluation involved participatory engagement with key project stakeholders: government policy and program bureaucrats, and civil society partners who were directly involved in the project implementation at the district and national levels. Data collection in the three districts was carried out from **November 7 to 19, 2021**. In addition to the district-level interviews, national-level interviews were also conducted between **January 10 to 20, 2022**. In all, a total of 3 FGDs and 27 KII were conducted across the three districts and at the national level.

Section Four: The Contribution of the E4D Project to Strengthening EIDM Practice at the District Level



4.1. How Well did the E4D Intervention Contribute to Strengthening EIDM Practice at the District Level?

In this section, we draw from the findings of the summative evaluation study to highlight the contributions of the E4D project to advance EIDM practice at the subnational, government levels. Overall, the evaluation showed that, notwithstanding its short duration, novelty, and challenging context, the E4D project made several contributions to EIDM practice in the three pilot districts. The evaluation notes the following four areas of contribution of the E4D project:

First, **the E4D project strengthened the capacity and motivation of diverse evidence-to-policy stakeholders to support EIDM practice in three districts.** The training on the EIDM approach to policymaking for both policy and program bureaucrats and civil society actors facilitated by CDD-Ghana and partners at the start of the project, as well as on-the-job training facilitated by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) for district level EIDM Communities of Practice (CoPs), created awareness, improved knowledge and enhanced interest and commitment of key actors both within and outside government to support and advocate for EIDM practice. These actors became very instrumental in the implementation of the project and are now champions of the EIDM approach to policymaking and practice in the individual districts and beyond.

Second, **the E4D project contributed to a significant systemic shift in policy planning practices and processes and improved the quality of policy documents produced by the district assemblies.** The work of CoPs in each district has had the most significant impact in this respect. The CoPs have enabled broad, inclusive participation in policy planning processes, strengthened information sharing, and helped to build relationships that supported data and evidence used in the development planning process. These changes have helped to improve the quality of the recent policy planning preparation process and the draft district medium-term development policy documents (2022-2025) produced by the district assemblies.

“... the E4D project has made our DMTDP a better document. We would have submitted our medium-term development plan anyway but this has come in as a positive intervention.”

~ Interview with Abdul Jalal, District Development Planning Officer, Bolgatanga East District, Nov. 11, 2021

Third, **the E4D project has contributed to nurturing champions for EIDM, thereby helping to strengthen an emerging EIDM community at the national and district level.** The project has exposed relevant policy stakeholders' to EIDM practice and stimulated the interest of particularly civil society actors and local international development actors in supporting the practice of EIDM as a mechanism to improve the quality of governance and government responsiveness for better development outcomes. Most importantly, the local policy bureaucrats and political actors who were engaged through the project have become key promoters of EIDM in their various departments.

Fourth, **the E4D project has made progress towards the long-term goal of institutionalizing the use of data and evidence to improve policy and program implementation at the district level.** The project has contributed to a step-change – albeit nascent and varied across the project districts - in the institutionalization of the EIDM approach to policy planning and program implementation in the pilot districts. This is demonstrated by the success story of the Bolgatanga East District Assembly in the Upper East Region (**see spotlight for a detail account of the assembly's efforts to promote EIDM**). The Bolgatanga East District Assembly's efforts to mainstream the EIDM action plans facilitated by the E4D CoP into the medium-term district development plans for 2022-2025, as well as commitments to improve organizational practices at the department level to facilitate data and evidence use in policy planning and practice is a notable outcome.

“I will also say that this project is beginning to institutionalize the use of evidence. The planning cycle is four years now, the district assembly has already input aspects of E4D within the plan and the budget. So, a list of activities was designed around improving the data ecosystem (generation, management and processing) and this has been incorporated into the DMTDP for Bolgatanga East District. Going forward, if we can facilitate such processes for other districts and we work with other districts on projects and with district assemblies and we can get the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) to come together with all the planners, and look at entry points within the DMTDP, we will be able to make headway in promoting an inclusive and equitable ecosystem to support EIDM practice.”

~ Interview with Awal Ahmed, Executive Director, RISE-Ghana, Nov. 15, 2021

Spotlight: Institutionalizing the Culture of Evidence Use in Policy and Practice: The Story of the Bolgatanga East District Assembly

"Our E4D story is largely positive. On a scale of 1-10, I will say we are on 8 not because we can implement all E4D activities through the CoP, but because there is that readiness or willingness on the part of the E4D policy actors to work to get these activities to work in the district. We have already started some of them such as preparing our annual action plan on E4D and incorporating them into our medium-term development plan and budget."

**(Interview with Abdul-Jalal, District Development Planning officer,
Bolgatanga East District Assembly)**

The Bolgatanga East District is one of the newly created districts in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The district was carved out of the Bolgatanga Municipal - which is the regional capital of the Upper East Region - in March 2018. As with all newly created districts in Ghana, the district faces a number of challenges: poor social development outcomes, and how to coordinate newly created decentralized departments to deliver better governance and development. A central challenge for the assembly is how to build the capacity to generate and use district-specific data on key socio-economic issues, and to strengthen the interdepartmental collaboration and cooperation system to facilitate information sharing to improve better decision-making and effective policy and program implementation for better development outcomes. It was for these challenges that the district was selected as one of the pilot districts for the E4D intervention.

To address these challenges, CDD-Ghana as part of the E4D intervention supported the district assembly to set up a Community of Practice (CoP) platform to broker EIDM practice. The CoP was facilitated by three E4D project partner civil society organizations (RISE-Ghana; TEERE; and CODAC). These organizations are actively working in the district and at the regional level. At the district level, the CoP was coordinated by the District Statistics Officer who is supported by the District Development Planning Officer, who is the secretary to the District Planning and Coordinating Unit (DPCU). The CoP has a membership of 15; drawn from heads of decentralized departments (health, education, statistics); chairs of three sub-committees of the local elected, representative assembly (social welfare, development planning; and finance and administration sub-committees); and the district coordinating director who is the chief of staff of the assembly. The CoP held regular meetings: in total, throughout the period of the project, they held 6 meetings.

The evaluation revealed that the assembly has adopted progressive and innovative measures and strategies to sustain the activities implemented under the E4D project to improve evidence use for better governance and development outcomes. The assembly has adopted the following 4 specific actions/measure to institutionalize the EIDM approach to governance and development practice in the district.

- **First, the district assembly through the CoP developed an action plan to strengthen EIDM practice beyond the project implementation period.** The Assembly leveraged the CoP platform to develop actionable plans and strategies to enhance data and evidence use practice in the districts beyond the pilot phase of the E4D project. Key areas of the action plan include; 1) convening regular capacity-building workshops to enhance the knowledge and skills of their policy staff in the areas of data collection, processing and storage, and citizen feedback mechanisms/tool; 2) strengthening assembly-community feedback through community town hall meetings and regular radio outreach; 3) enhancing information sharing among the departments of the assembly through the use of a common template for reporting; and 4) providing resources to key functional departments such as the District Planning and Coordinating Unit, the District Education Committee and the Client Service Unit to deliver on their respective mandates in improving information sharing, transparency, and accountability.
- **Second, the district assembly has incorporated the EIDM action plans into the district assembly's new district medium-term development plan for the period 2022-2025.** To demonstrate a strong uptake of the EIDM action plans, the assembly has included all the action plans in its new four-year cycle medium-term development plan which will span from 2022 to 2025. To show a strong commitment to the implementation of the action plans, the assembly tied up the funding for the implementation of the action plans to be drawn from the capacity building grant component of the District Assembly Performance Assessment Tool (DPAT) fund, formerly known as the District Development Facility (DDF). This funding source is more secure for programs such as E4D because it has a component dedicated specifically to capacity building, unlike the unreliable central government grant transfer: The District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF).

- **Third, the district assembly co-opted members of the CoP who are not members of the District Planning and Coordinating Unit (DPCU) into the DPCU.** The DPCU is a very important policy and monitoring unit in the assembly: it provides a forum for coordinating inter-departmental action, oversees the preparation of the district's medium-term development plans, and facilitates evidence generation to inform the planning and evaluation of plans and programs of the district. Its membership involves all heads of decentralized service delivery departments and also representatives from civil society. However, the Bolgatanga East Assembly for a long time has not included civil society as members of the DPCU. Through the CoP, the assembly identified and enlisted two civil society representatives (RISE-Ghana and TEERE) who are members of the CoP into the DPCU. This falls in line with section 84, subsection 4 of the Local Governance Act 2016 (Act 936), which stipulates that a District Planning Coordinating Unit shall comprise the Heads of Departments of a District Assembly and any other person that the District Planning Authority may deem fit. The assembly hopes to draw on the perspectives of these civil society organizations on key development issues, and cross-fertilize ideas to influence and sustain the EIDM approach to policy practice in the district.
- **Fourth, the assembly developed a novel “District Resource Distribution Evidence Gap Map” to inform planning, guide the allocation of development projects by the assembly, and manage citizen representatives’ expectations and demands.** The knowledge and lessons acquired through the E4D project have empowered the DPCU to develop a map of district resources/projects within the district. The tool is currently being used to a) prevent duplication of projects, b) identify abandoned/stalled projects for action, and more importantly c) manage expectations and demands by assembly members and citizens for projects by showing them the projects/resources existing within their electoral areas, highlighting areas which lack same.

These efforts put in place by the district assembly have made the E4D intervention in the district the most transformative and impactful.

4.2. How Well was the E4D Project Implemented: Evaluating the Project Theory of Change?

The E4D project theory of change was based on two broad EIDM intervention mechanisms: 1) strengthening coordination of data and evidence generation and accessibility; and 2) enhancing the capacity and motivation of policy actors to use data and evidence. The evaluation assessed the assumptions underlying the mechanisms:

Assumption	Assessment
A multi-stakeholder engagement platform would enhance coordination and standardization in the production and sharing of high-quality policy-relevant evidence	Partially True: Although a national Data Quality Assurance Framework (DQAF) has been developed to help standardize data and evidence production and sharing, through the efforts of a multi-stakeholder coalition – including CDD-Ghana - led by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), this is yet to be operationalized to improve standardization in data production and sharing among key actors in the EIDM ecosystem. Intensive and strategic public outreach/advocacy and resources are required to realize the potential of the DQAF
A multi-stakeholder engagement platform would improve government policy actors' incentive to use a variety of evidence to inform policy decisions.	True: The community of practice (CoP) approach – a multi-stakeholder policy engagement and dialogue platform – proved useful in fostering dialogue and building a trusting relationship among evidence producers and policy actors; improved knowledge sharing; and enabled demand for, and use of different types of data and evidence by policy actors in policy-making
Building the capacity of government policy actors to use evidence will motivate them to access, engage with and use policy-relevant data and evidence to inform policy and decision-making.	Partially True: Capacity building is certainly critical. However, there is the need to complement capacity strengthening efforts by facilitating relationships and spaces for dialogue that support ongoing data and evidence-use by policy actors; and by creating user-friendly policy planning guidelines to ease data and evidence use by policy actors.
Government policy actors will use data and evidence to inform policy if it is valued, understood and useable	True: Co-creating evidence engenders a sense of ownership in policymakers which helps them better appreciate and apply evidence in decision-making and program implementation.
Government policy actors will use evidence to inform policy if there is the policy space and political support to bring that evidence into decision-making	True: Political consideration are particularly key to translating data and evidence into policy. Additionally policy windows provide opportunity for evidence use

Section Five: Reflections on Lessons Learned and Recommendations



5.1. Key Insights and Lessons Learned

The evaluation has observed significant contribution across several E4D project objectives and outcomes, though it is too early to judge the extent to which these changes will contribute to institutionalize a culture of data and evidence use in the medium to long-term. The following key insights and lessons are drawn from the evaluation:

Capacity-building training on EIDM practice is critical but needs to go beyond one-off training to provide follow-up on-the-job training support. The evaluation shows that improving individual level awareness, knowledge, and skills through targeted capacity development, can incentivize evidence use and have a system-wide effect - motivate people to join with others to undertake interventions to strengthen the organizational and institutional process to support EIDM practice. However, training support should go beyond building general knowledge to include follow-up sessions to support the application of skills gained. This has been found in other contexts to be useful in promoting data and evidence use in government[2].

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a useful mechanism to build community, capacity and strengthen systems to support data and evidence use in government. The evaluation found that, when properly constituted and incentivized, a CoP can help to address key organizational constraints to EIDM practice at the subnational levels of government. Findings from the evaluation suggest that to be successful, a CoP needs to adopt a whole-of-government approach; leverage diverse actors and resources within and outside of government, have a local champion and take advantage of important windows of opportunity to implement practices and norms that improve the culture of data and evidence use. These organizational and individual attributes are essential for a CoP to serve as a mechanism to promote the culture of data and evidence use in policy practice.

Mobilizing actors, creating platforms for regular evidence-to-policy practice dialogue, and documenting and sharing learning from practice have the potential to nurture and strengthen EIDM field practice. Fostering partnerships with state and non-state actors, facilitating regular engagement, and providing opportunities for actors to discuss, share and collaborate on evidence to policy practice issues improves the awareness, capacity, and the potential to nurture champions and activists to advance EIDM field practice at the subnational, district level.

[2] See: Isabel, V and Malenie P (2016): Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) Evaluation: Synthesis Report. Accessed at: https://www.itad.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/BCURE-Evaluation-Synthesis-Report_August-2016-1.pdf

The notable contributions of the E4D project in fostering evidence-to-policy practice culture at the district level were underpinned by various factors. One of these factors was building partnerships in project implementation. Partnership with both state and non-state actors extended the reach and influence of the project. Another factor that contributed to the success of the project was that its implementation coincided with a major policy planning window at the district level: the preparation of the 2022-2025 district medium-term development plan. The policy planning window provided the opportunity to apply newly acquired skills and practices and to assess the impact of the various project interventions on EIDM practice at the district level.

Finally, the ability of the project team to adapt and iterate project intervention strategies and approaches in response to opportunities and challenges also contributed to the success of the E4D project. A key example, was when the project team moved away from the original idea of setting up a virtual platform in favor of a physical CoP platform. This adaptation in project implementation resulted in more significant outcomes than would be achieved if the CoP had been exclusively virtual.

5.2. Recommendations: Ideas for Consideration for E4D Intervention Scale-up

There is strong evidence from the evaluation findings to suggest that, the E4D intervention is contributing to fostering systemic changes in evidence-to-policy practice and shaping the EIDM ecosystem at the district level. To consolidate the contributions of the E4D to EIDM practice at the subnational government level, the evaluation offered the following suggestions for consideration for future work by CDD-Ghana. The recommendations are to support and strengthen processes, systems and practices, and create an enabling condition for the institutionalization of the EIDM approach to policy planning and program implementation.

[2] See: Isabel, V and Malenie P (2016): Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) Evaluation: Synthesis Report. Accessed at: https://www.itad.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/BCURE-Evaluation-Synthesis-Report_August-2016-1.pdf

1. Continue supporting and promoting – through advocacy, public outreach, and partnership - national and local level government efforts to build a stronger, more responsive, and accountable data and evidence ecosystem to strengthen EIDM practice. CDD-Ghana should support public outreach on government commitment to strengthen the data and evidence ecosystem, particularly the implementation of the national data quality assurance framework; and advocate for increased resources to support district assemblies' access to basic infrastructures such as the internet and centralized data management systems.

“I believe that the evidence-to-policy ecosystem is still at its nascent stage in the country, considering that many initiatives are still beginning to take full shape in transforming this practice.”

~ Interview with Kirchuffs Atengble,
Executive Director, PACKS Africa, Jan 13,
2022

Furthermore, CDD-Ghana should facilitate more opportunities for partnerships between civil society organizations and research/policy think tanks and government actors, agencies, and departments to work towards advancing the use of evidence in decision-making through the provision of timely, accessible, and policy-relevant data and evidence. Additionally, CDD-Ghana should convene national, regional and district fora regularly to provide opportunities for EIDM ecosystem actors to discuss, highlight and showcase the challenges and opportunities for strengthening the EIDM field of practice in Ghana.

2. Popularize and support the establishment of communities of practice (CoPs) as a mechanism to promote dialogue, cultivate trust, and build relationships that increase opportunities for diverse actors within and outside government to engage in policy processes at the district level. CDD-Ghana should consider expanding to additional districts and establishing more CoPs for policy actors and evidence producers to engage, share and support data and evidence use practice in government decision-making processes and systems. Most importantly, the project should continue to support the pilot districts to implement their action plans to institutionalize CoPs as a mechanism to promote effective EIDM practices.



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3. The need to continue to prioritize and support capacity strengthening efforts aimed at addressing barriers that limit the engagement of local government policy actors, civil society organizations, and other development partners in public policy planning and decision-making processes and systems at the district level. CDD-Ghana should develop and support capacity building that aligns with what policy and program actors in local government assemblies are trying to accomplish. For example, district assemblies are mostly focused on developing district medium-term plans, policy and program implementation, raising resources, and conducting annual performance reviews of their development plans and programs. These activities require local policy actors to have specific skills to undertake policy analysis and conduct monitoring, evaluation, and stakeholder engagement. Similarly, CDD-Ghana should build the capacity of local-based civil society organizations to better understand; 1) the policy process and how to influence contextual factors informing policy decision making by local policy actors 2) how to conduct policy-relevant evaluations; and 3) how to present and communicate data and evidence for policy uptake. CDD-Ghana should support capacity-building efforts with attention to building and strengthening these skill sets.

4. Design interventions to incentivize citizens and the media to use data and evidence to strengthen transparency, oversight and accountability of district-level government. CDD-Ghana should consider designing interventions to support local transparency and open government initiatives that prioritize citizen access to government data, and accountability in subnational government planning and decision-making. Specifically, CDD-Ghana should create platforms for meaningful inclusive citizen participation in the policy process and local level decision-making as part of the broader mechanism to promote accountability and support government use of data and evidence in routine decision-making.

5. The need to design a strong monitoring and evaluation system to measure the impact of the E4D project, specifically to measure how each of the project intervention strategies and mechanisms contributes to the broader goal of institutionalizing a culture of data and evidence use in government. CDD-Ghana should develop a standardized theory of change focused specifically on strengthening the demand for, and use of data and evidence in decision-making, that is responsive and adaptable to different contexts. This would help build a shared understanding of the desired outcomes and impacts of institutionalizing the use of evidence and data in policy and implementation practice. Additionally, CDD-Ghana should aim to generate more evidence on what works; how and why, when it comes to supporting data and evidence use; and further investigate the contexts in which evidence-informed decision-making takes place, including understanding the political economy of data and evidence use by government.