APPENDIX 7: CASE STUDY ON THE AWARENESS MECHANISM

Title of the case study:
Evidence for Democracy: raising awareness of the need for evidence-based decision-making in government

What mechanism is the case about?

Mechanism: Building awareness for, and positive attitudes towards, evidence-based policy-making. This mechanism emphasises the importance of policy-makers’ valuing the concept of evidence-based policy-making.

What happened (description of the background to the case and its key features)?

Evidence for Democracy (E4D) is a fact-driven, non-partisan, not-for-profit organisation promoting the transparent use of evidence in government decision-making in Canada. Through research, education and issue campaigns, the organisation engages and empowers the science community while cultivating public and political demand for evidence-based policy-making (EBPM). The organisation’s vision is to contribute to strong public policies, built on the best available evidence, for the health and prosperity of all Canadians.

E4D was funded in the aftermath of the 2012 ‘Death of Evidence’ rallies. In July of that year, thousands of Canadians concerned about the diminishing role of evidence in government decision-making organised to march in nation-wide rallies. These rallies built such a momentum for EBPM in the country that a number of co-organisers of these marches decided to continue this advocacy work under a newly formed organisation: E4D.

E4D focusses on three areas of activities to enhance awareness of EBPM. First, issue-based campaigns to tackle emerging issues affecting science and evidence-based public policy in Canada. This includes collaboration with national and local partners to organise events, raise awareness, and engage the public directly with policy-makers. Second, education programmes to put knowledge and skills into the hands of Canada’s scientific community and the wider public. This includes the facilitation of expert panels, lectures, and documentary screenings to educate Canadians on issues concerning evidence-based decision-making. It also entails hands-on workshops providing training for communication and action to support science in Canada. Third, E4D also maintains an original research programme addressing knowledge gaps at the interface of policy and evidence. This research focuses on what works for evidence use, what hasn’t, and what opportunities exist for improvement. This research provides critical analyses intended for use by government, industry, NGOs and the public to strengthen the inclusion of evidence-based decision-making in policy.

What impact did the case have? / What is the importance of the case to EBPM?


E4D works in a number of areas to support EBPM in Canada. Based on the success of the ‘Death of Evidence’ rallies, the organisation is based on an active grassroots community of EBPM advocates. Through this grassroots network, it supports a variety of initiatives including:

- Based on its advocacy campaign on the Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics Act, E4D testified on the need for open science to standing committee overseeing this act.
- E4D contributed to 2 federal consultations on proposed policies such as the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.
- E4D organised 8 Canadian satellite events as part of the US March for Science.
- E4D organised over 2,600 Canadians and 250 prominent international climate scientists to advocate for increased funding for climate science in the country.
- E4D advocated for the reinstating of the Chief Science Advisory post in government and for an overall increase in the science budget. Both outcomes were achieved.

**What is the relevance of the case for South Africa?**

The role of civil society and advocacy groups in EBPM is not yet well explored in South Africa. This is despite the country’s long-history of active citizenry and grassroots movements. If EBPM is to contribute to the achievement of the NDP, citizen and civil society voices need to be included in the EBPM movement. E4D provides many valuable lessons on how to mobilise civil society to rally for the use of evidence in government decision-making. South Africa has a range of existing mechanisms that could benefit from exploring synergies with E4D advocacy work. These refer to DPME’s citizen-based monitoring and frontline service delivery programmes.

**Conclusion: why does this case illustrate the power of the mechanism in supporting the use of evidence?**

E4D is an excellent case study illustrating the intersection between advocacy, civil society activism, and EBPM. Too often, EBPM is seen as a technocratic exercise left to the realm of researchers and policy-makers. E4D shows that this is not the case. Unless there is broad societal agreement on the value of using evidence to inform policies, and civil society feels strongly enough to engage in activism to uphold this value, EBPM will remain a technical process. Systemic support for EBPM rests on broad societal agreement for its benefits to social development and needs to be nurtured explicitly through advocacy and awareness campaigns.

**References**

- Evidence for Democracy: [https://evidencefordemocracy.ca/en/research](https://evidencefordemocracy.ca/en/research)
APPENDIX 8: CASE STUDY ON THE AGREEMENT MECHANISM

Title of the case study:
The development of bipartisan evidence standards in the US: The Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programme as a mechanism for building agreement on what constitutes evidence for policy decisions.

What mechanism is the case about?

Mechanism: Building mutual understanding and agreement on policy-relevant questions and the kind of evidence needed to answer them.
This mechanism emphasises the importance of building mutual understanding and agreement on policy questions and what constitutes fit-for-purpose evidence.

What happened (description of the background to the case and its key features)?

There are more calls now more than ever for increased investment in interventions that are evidence-based. With intensifying calls, more pressure is levelled on policy-makers to find and use programmes that are backed by strong evidence for purposes of policy decisions. However, for a potential intervention to meet the status of ‘evidence-based’ is also a matter of challenge. For example, there isn’t enough agreement on what should be the benchmark for an adequate standard for evidence in policy-making. This case is about the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programme. It demonstrates the important, yet difficult path taken in measures for building and clarifying what constitutes evidence for policy decisions. This case illuminates on levels of evidential rigour and standards that the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programme had to meet to attract the ‘evidence-based’ status.

President Barack Obama’s approach to funding evidence-based initiatives centred on his commitment to only spending federal dollars on programmes which were adequately demonstrated by rigorous evaluations to effect a substantial positive impact on teenagers’ mindset and sexual behavioural shift. Because of a deep partisan split on conceptualising this scourge of teen pregnancy in America and consequent challenges in agreeing on mitigation measures, this programme drew very important lines for guiding thinking on what builds consensus on what is evidence for a policy decision. Republicans stood fast on a conservative stance to interpreting and mitigating the challenge. They vowed that programmes to be funded should demonstrate evidence of sexual abstinence and that sexual activity before marriage was immoral. Democrats, on the other hand, took a liberal approach on the matter and argued that programmes to be funded show evidence of sex and birth control education. Tearing the line on partisan grounds on how the problem is to be conceptualised makes this case interesting. Moreover, soliciting agreement on what constitutes evidence for the programmes that ultimately received funding gives us much-needed education on building agreement on evidence standards for policy decisions in the evidence-based policy making (EBPM) space.
The Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programme’s point of departure was to first ground itself on what it means for a programme to be evidence-based. This was done by developing a procedure that spelt out the criterion in specific terms. The procedure was then used to grade and evaluate teen pregnancy programmes as per the criterion. The important task was to find and isolate evaluations for funding that met rigorous standards. However, this came at a high price. The programme’s working group had to work around translating ‘evidence-based’ from theory into practice, and this was no easy challenge. They were bogged down by problems they encountered in attempting to respond to the “evidence of what?” question. This seemingly trivial question required for its response that the teen pregnancy working group deliberate on which outcomes to consider important in evaluating whether the programme has a positive impact or not.

Teen pregnancy prevention programmes’ outcomes vary, and they can be measured on many fronts. For example, measures of outcome can be on contraceptive use, sexually transmitted infections, behavioural attitudes and expectations, the age of initial intercourse, number of sexual partners and pregnancy itself, to count but a few. Settling the question ‘evidence for what?’ in approving programmes for funding proved difficult because of the many measures of outcomes. This meant that they had to first fix on evidence standards to be met by candidate programmes. This altered the question from ‘evidence for what?’ to a more informative question of “Where do we draw the line in terms of saying, ‘This is a measure that’s sufficient to be evidence of an effect or a potential effect on pregnancy’?” (Haskins & Margolis 2015: 87).

The working group agreed on prioritising only behavioural outcomes. But this raises the important question of why? Why behavioural outcomes and not others? Coupled with this concern, the working group had to also decide on research designs to be used in gathering high-quality evidence to meet the evidence-based standards. For example, would the working group only consider evidence from RCTs or would their approach be open to other mediums of research evidence? Do they take on board expert knowledge? How many experts would be sufficient? The working group’s own considerations on these matters capture the spirit of this point succinctly:

If you took eight very basic indicators of evidence … [for example,] was the effect short or long term? … Was there an effect on multiple outcomes or one outcome? Was there replication? Was it a high or medium quality study? …and you consider using those to create categories, that … becomes two to the eight categories, which becomes completely uncountable … And so that becomes a challenge … how do you take all this information and condense it down to a set of categories that a policymaker can actually work with? (ibid.)

The working group pondered on these questions and resolved to focus on only four measures of outcomes: sexual activity, contraceptive use, sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy or birth. Their criterion for screening studies was interested in studies reporting only empirical evidence. Studies to be included had to report programme(s)’ impacts on at least one of the four measures of outcome above. Lastly, the study had to be about reports on American youth age 19 or below and only studies conducted post-1989 were to count. Very important, each study was rated for quality under five criteria developed by the Institute of Education Sciences for its What Works Clearinghouse, counting among others study design and checking for possible confounding factors.

What impact did the case have? / What is the importance of the case to EBPM?

A total of 28 programmes were identified as having met the evidence standards set out; that is, at least having one significant impact on one of the four outcome measures stated above. Such
Programmes were considered ‘evidence-based’ and were to be funded. An additional three programmes (already approved and funded prior to the evidence-based programme initiative’s launch) were added to the total of 28, raising the number of overall funded programmes for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programme up to 31. Of the 31 programmes, the following impact was achieved: 13 increased the use of contraceptives, 21 reduced sexual activity, 5 decreased pregnancy rates, and another 5 decreased STI rates.

The working group followed a strict mechanism for identifying relevant programmes for reducing teen pregnancy. The confidence brought about by their strict standards for what constituted evidence meant that they knew that the programmes they were funding would deliver positive results and for that reason, federal money would have been put to effective use. Furthermore, ensuring that policy decisions to fund programmes working to bring down high rates of teen pregnancy in America be informed exclusively by evidence and nothing else worked well to dissolve ideological biases on the matter. Evidence of results from programmes selected delivered the desired outcomes and no other influences and this was a remarkable effort. The recorded success delivered by evidence-based programmes brought about more awareness of the potential of EBPM for good and transparent governance.

**What is the relevance of the case for South Africa?**

The relevance of this case to South Africa can never be downplayed. First, the case is about a societal problem prevalent in South Africa too. South Africa can learn a lot in terms of accessing and agreeing on what constitutes evidence for challenges of this nature. Second, this programme informed by evidence-based research seemed to work: it decreased teen pregnancy, something that South Africa can learn from and emulate for similar initiatives. Third, the case shows an approach to deliberate formulating evidence standards which then determine policy design. This is akin to South Africa’s SEIAS approach.

**Conclusion: why does this case illustrate the power of the mechanism in supporting the use of evidence?**

This case illustrates the power of the ‘Agreement’ mechanism in supporting the use of evidence. In a highly charged political situation, policy-makers were able to overcome partisan lines and to agree on a standard of evidence required to fund federal programmes. This indicates the power of relying on empirical evidence and of building agreement on what constitutes evidence. Ultimately, the evidence-based programme delivered positive results as pregnancy, STIs, and sexual activity rates dropped remarkably, and contraceptive use increased, which was the main mandate of the programme. This is a case about evidence use which delivered as per the initiative’s desires.

**References**

APPENDIX 9: CASE STUDY ON THE ACCESS & COMMUNICATION MECHANISM

Title of the case study:
Policy-relevant evidence maps: an innovative tool for policy-makers to access and make sense of evidence

What mechanism is the case about?
Mechanism: Providing communication of, and access to, evidence.
This mechanism emphasises the importance of policy-makers receiving effective communication of evidence and convenient access to evidence.

What happened (description of the background to the case and its key features)?
Evidence maps are an evidence synthesis tool that allows decision-makers to rapidly access a body of evidence relevant to their policy questions. Based on a rigorous and transparent research methodology (i.e. systematic review), they collect, organise, and appraise different forms of policy-relevant evidence (e.g. evaluations, case studies, surveys, government reports). This evidence is then mapped against a policy framework and visualised on an interactive evidence interface to allow public servants to interrogate and engage with the evidence.

In 2015/16, South Africa’s National Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) undertook a pilot Evidence Mapping exercise in response to a critical policy moment in the human settlements sector in South Africa, which was generating a high demand for policy-relevant evidence. Decision-makers in the public sector expressed a need to take stock of and engage with the body of evidence available to support the transition from housing policy to human settlements policy. Therefore, an appropriate research methodology was required that seeks to source, appraise, and synthesise all types of relevant evidence to inform policy analysis and to summarise what works, why, in what context, and for whom.

Due to a lack of responses following the procurement of intellectual services and further driven by a need to adapt evidence synthesis to the needs of public servants, DPME decided to undertake the production of policy-relevant evidence synthesis in-house. In this effort, local as well as international researchers joined the Departmental team to adapt and innovate the evidence synthesis methodology. The multi-disciplinary team of technical and content policy experts, methodologists, and human settlements researchers reviewed, modified, and transformed the research methodology (i.e. systematic review) into a decision-making tool in the public sector producing a policy-relevant evidence map in the human settlements sector. The Department also invested in its own evidence mapping and knowledge managing platform hosted by its IT department. This knowledge management software facilitates direct access to the individual studies and reports as well as 1-page summaries of these.
Given the positive response to the Human Settlements evidence map and its effect on policy-making, DPME decided to enhance its evidence mapping programme and by January 2019 had produced three additional evidence maps in strategic policy areas: state capability, early-grade mathematics, and spatial planning. The evidence mapping platform was also further updated allowing for more advanced knowledge management and visualisation. The Department then started to experiment with using the evidence maps to support rapid responses to key policy questions with six such responses being completed in 2018 alone.

What impact did the case have? / What is the importance of the case to EBPM?

The objective of DPME’s policy-relevant evidence mapping programme is to facilitate the use of evidence by public servants. That is, the evidence maps present a method to inform policy-making using the best available evidence and explicitly fulfil a knowledge management and translation function. By appraising all policy-relevant evidence on a policy question, the maps ensure that policy-makers engage with evidence that is trustworthy. They also make the use of evidence less labour-intensive and more engaging. Policy-makers who wish to use evidence have a repository of the available evidence at hand that they can tailor to their own needs and access only the types of evidence they require and trust. Evidence maps thereby encourage public servants to consult a variety of evidence when making decisions rather than consulting individual studies and reports, or selected experts and consultants.

A key component of the evidence maps is to structure the available evidence around existing policy frameworks such as the MTSF and to build an evidence-base that is inclusive of academic evidence as much as of government’s own evidence. This constitutes the policy relevance of the maps as they organise the evidence according to policy decision needs and not vice versa. This evidence-base can then conveniently be accessed by policy-makers in-house ensuring a responsive interaction between policy decision needs and the best available evidence.

What is the relevance of the case for South Africa?

Following a review of the produced evidence maps, eight applications of evidence maps in a policy context where explored in South Africa:

Using evidence maps as:
— a scoping tool to set policy objectives and outline policy direction, background, and evaluation.
— a decision-making tool to inform policy design and implementation.
— an engagement tool to facilitate policy conversations with different actors from a mutual basis.
— an organisational tool to raise awareness for evidence-based policymaking and to facilitate its process.
— a knowledge management tool providing a repository of easily accessible and policy-relevant evidence tailored to decision-makers’ needs.
— a research tool to identify gaps, coverage, and patterns in the available evidence on a policy question.
— an accountability tool to record the evidence behind a decision and the construction of different evidence-bases and narratives for future decisions.
— a research commissioning tool to target funding for new primary and secondary evidence.
These apply across policy sectors and evidence mapping is a knowledge management tool applicable to each government department.

**Conclusion: why does this case illustrate the power of the mechanism in supporting the use of evidence?**

Access to evidence is a major bottleneck for policy-makers. In a high-pressured and rapid decision-making context in the public service, policy-makers rarely have time to search for all the evidence (with the academic evidence often inaccessible behind paywalls). Policy-relevant evidence maps can unlock the bottleneck in two ways: first, they take care of searching for and collecting all the available evidence. The maps provide a repository of the available research evidence as well as the available government and grey literature evidence. Second, evidence maps provide a meaningful and convenient interaction to this evidence-base. The available evidence is organised and visualised according to policy-makers’ needs and preference, with the ability to individually tailor the maps as needed. This allows the maps to serve as a versatile and flexible tool providing tailor-made and rapid access to the relevant evidence for policy-makers.

**References**

APPENDIX 10: CASE STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIPS & INTERACTIONS MECHANISM

Title of the case study:

What mechanism is the case about?
Mechanism: Building intra- and inter-relationships and interactions between researchers and policy-makers.
This mechanism emphasises the importance of policy-makers interacting with each other and with researchers in order to build trusted relationships, collaborate, and gain exposure to a different type of social influence.

What happened (description of the background to the case and its key features)?
The Africa Evidence Network (AEN) is a large and diverse continent-wide community of people interested in EBPM. As of January 2019, the network has over 2,000 members for 42 African countries, 30% of these being from government. The AEN provides different opportunities to build relationships and interactions in order to strengthen the African evidence ecosystem. The Network was established in 2012 by a group of 23 African delegates attending the same evidence synthesis event in Bangladesh. The founding members felt that a space where African practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers with an interest in evidence production and use could engage would be beneficial to the EBPM movement in Africa.

Since 2012, the AEN has grown into a vibrant and dynamic continent-wide network of people. It has hosted biannual large-scale evidence events attended by over 200 African delegates. These evidence conferences are a dedicated space for network members to interact, build relationships, and share experiences on using evidence to inform policy-making on the continent. In addition, the AEN hosts regular webinars and in-country roadshows to foster African conversations on EBPM. This is complimented by a dedicated set of social network activities, including Twitter and LinkedIn, as well as a regular Africa Evidence blogs.

Most AEN activities are bundled on its website which brings together the whole set of EBPM services that the Network has to offer to its members. Specific high-profile outputs include a series of landscapes maps on EBPM in 14 different African countries as well as the Africa Evidence Leadership award. There is also a geo-map of institutions supporting EBPM on the continent accessible to members. Last, the Network maintains a range of EBPM capacity-building resources including a database of over 400 tools for such capacity-building, all of which are freely accessible to members.

1 http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/
What impact did the case have? / What is the importance of the case to EBPM?

The AEN is a reflection of the African EBPM community. From 2012 to 2019, the Network grew from 23 to over 2000 members. This shows the vibrant and dynamic nature of the African EBPM community. The AEN is a platform to share continent-wide EBPM efforts and to build connections between African policy-makers and researchers working in different countries. Its key contribution thereby lies in fostering African conversations on EBPM and to nurture the African voice in global EBPM conversations. In this, it also supports EBPM capacity through offering free resources for capacity-building and through connecting African individuals with complementary EBPM capacities and capacity needs.

The AEN’s main strength and impact rests in its ability to bring members together. The strength and the depth of relationships is thus a key indicator of its success. To this end, the AEN runs a detailed bi-annual survey to explore how the strength and depth of its members’ relationships have changed. These surveys include a formal social network analysis. Surveys run in 2016 and 2018 showed a strong growth in the overall number of relationships as well as their strength and depth.

Benefits of the AEN to members indicated in the survey reports illustrate diverse contributions that the Networks makes to members’ efforts to support EBPM in Africa. For some, the AEN’s ability to match-make and to link them to members with complementary skills and experience was most important; others appreciated the AEN’s efforts in keeping them up-to-date with news on the fast-growing African evidence ecosystem. Representing Africa’s voice on EBPM globally was also highlighted as a main benefit as was the ability to meet at face-to-face events organised by the AEN. A sense of increased awareness of EBPM and advocacy for its cause ran across the survey.

What is the relevance of the case for South Africa?

The South African EBPM community is the largest sub-community within the AEN: a total of 706 South Africans are AEN members and the Network’s secretariat is based in South Africa. Unsurprisingly, the Network has a strong footprint in the country and has fostered a range of relationships and interactions in the South African EBPM community. This includes increasing interactions and networks between different types of EBPM organisations in the country.

Conclusion: why does this case illustrate the power of the mechanism in supporting the use of evidence?

Starting from only 23 members in 2012 to over 2000 members in 2019, the growth of the AEN reflects the wider growth of EBPM in Africa. It illustrates the importance of strong evidence networks and the desire of different African evidence communities to connect, exchange, and learn from one another. Only together can EBPM become a reality on the continent and no one organisation is able to institutionalise the use of evidence across policy-makers on the continent. The AEN, as a home of the African community of people interested in EBPM, is channelling this combined power of the African evidence ecosystem to mitigate against working in isolation and silos. In addition, it formulates an African perspective on and voice in global EBPM issues.

For more information:

- Africa Evidence Website: http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org/
APPENDIX 11: CASE STUDY ON THE SKILLS MECHANISM

Title of the case study:

Working for solutions: UJ-BCURE’s problem-based and relationship-centred approach to building capacity to use research evidence in Africa

What mechanism is the case about?

Mechanism: Supporting policy-makers to develop skills in accessing and making sense of evidence. This mechanism emphasises the importance of policy-makers having the necessary skills to locate, appraise, synthesise evidence, and integrate it with other information and political needs etc.

What happened (description of the background to the case and its key features)?

The University of Johannesburg-led programme to Build Capacity to Use Research Evidence (UJ-BCURE) was a £1.2 million imitative funded by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development. The programme operated for three years from January 2014 to December 2016. UJ-BCURE focussed on increasing evidence-based policy-making among civil servants in South Africa and Malawi through the application of EBPM training workshops and mentorships and supporting the growth of the Africa Evidence Network. The programme subscribed to a needs-led and relationship-centred capacity-building approach, responsive to the needs of policy-makers and embedded within the existing evidence ecosystems.

UJ-BCURE developed a unique approach to EBPM capacity-building combining a range of training workshops with different types of mentoring opportunities. Across these two main instruments, the programme centred on (i) building strong relationships between policy-makers and researchers as a key vehicle for change; (ii) embedding the capacity-building activities in policy-makers’ real-world decision-making needs and existing structures and systems, and (iii) fostering the use of bodies of evidence rather than single studies, and the relevant EBPM capacities associated with this. As a consequence, UJ-BCURE worked closely in its design and implementation with policy-makers gradually moving towards co-production approaches towards the end of the 3-year programme.

The programme offered a range of entry-level EBPM capacity-building workshops to civil servants in Malawi and South Africa. These workshops focused on generic EBPM skills such as searching for evidence, appraisal of evidence, and integration of evidence into policy processes. From these workshops, demand was assessed for more in-depth capacity needs linked to more detailed policy decision-making priorities. At this stage more specialised and tailored training opportunities were designed according to the specific needs of the policy-makers.

Having identified an acute evidence and policy decision need and supported the building of baseline EBPM capacity, the programme then went into the mentoring stage to provide personalised and tailored in-depth support for policy-makers along their evidence journey. The exact type of such mentoring differed according to policy needs and ranged from individual one-on-one mentoring, to team mentoring, as well as unit-wide mentoring. The topics of the mentoring were close linked to
the policy development process at hand and therefore could be very specific (e.g. finding a particular type of evidence, designing a specified appraisal tool). The mentorships were mediated by mentorship guidelines and a signed mentorship agreement.

This combined model for EBPM capacity-building was then lastly embedded in a wider systemic attempt to build national and regional evidence networks between policy-makers and researchers. To this end, the programme hosted a range of networking events such as the Evidence 2014 and Evidence 2016 conferences. This was based on the premise that only through long-lasting and trusted relationships can EBPM become a reality.

**What impact did the case have? / What is the importance of the case to EBPM?**

In total, UB-BCURE offered 614 EBPM workshop places and providing over 126 mentorship opportunities for EBPM. The programme was externally evaluated and documented over 100 instances in which policy-makers changed their practice as a result of the programme activities, increasing their understanding and use of evidence. In South Africa, the programme worked with nine government departments and increasingly focussed on in-depth mentoring for applied cases of evidence use during policy development. These mentorships commonly took the form of either individual or team mentorships, with optional workplace visits to enhance learning. In total, UJ-BCURE delivered 52 individual mentorships and six team mentorships for three policy teams, with 40 workplace visits facilitated.

Some of the more prominent products from this arm of the programme include a co-produced evidence map, the co-development of a guidance note for policy-makers on producing and using evidence maps during policy design, and input into a draft national water stewardship policy. In terms of sustainability, the recognition from policy-makers of the usefulness of evidence synthesis methods for EPBM is an important element of UJ-BCURE’s work.

**What is the relevance of the case for South Africa?**

UJ-BCURE was implemented in South Africa and thus naturally supported the local evidence ecosystem. The programme left a legacy of a more well-connected evidence ecosystem and a strong mentoring model for EBPM capacity-support. Having worked with 9 government departments, the programme brought EBPM stakeholders in South Africa together. It also facilitated a high-level cross-government group on EBPM to nurture thought leadership and discussions on the use of evidence in the country.

**Conclusion: why does this case illustrate the power of the mechanism in supporting the use of evidence?**

UJ-BCURE is a powerful case to explore the potential of EBPM capacity-building as a tool to support the use of evidence. The programme developed a model of EBPM capacity-building that went beyond mere technical skills and embedded relationships and evidence networks as a central capacity component. This was achieved through the combination of workshops and mentoring opportunities and an increased focus on co-production for EBPM. The programme successfully implemented this model in two different countries hinting at its potential wider applicability.


APPENDIX 12: CASE STUDY ON THE PROCESS & STRUCTURES MECHANISM

Title of the case study:
Developing organisational structures and processes for evidence-based policy-making in South Africa’s Department of Environmental Affairs

What mechanism is the case about?

Mechanism: Influencing decision-making structures and processes.
This mechanism emphasises the importance of decision-makers’ psychological, social, and environmental structures and processes (for example, mental models, professional norms, habits, organisational and institutional rules) in providing means and barriers to action.

What happened (description of the background to the case and its key features)?

In recent times, the concept of evidence-based policymaking (EBPM) has been widely recognised as being at the forefront of national growth and development strategies. In a resource-constrained environment, it remains imperative that government departments are cognisant of budgetary limitations and formulate prudent strategic plans to ensure consistent service delivery. In 2008, the Department of Environment (DEA) undertook to improve the uptake of evidence as a means through which its path to policy implementation could be smoothened. In addition to charting an efficient path to influential and realistic policy design, DEA understands that organisational structures and processes play an integral role in the systemic improvement of policy-making. Furthermore, the route to organisational synergy and intimate understanding is largely an iterative process which involves constant reflection and learning from experience.

DEA submits that organisations are inherently distinguishable and that the management thereof is a complex path of managing skills, processes, and people. Therefore, EBPM needs to be integrated within the DNA of the organisation in order to mainstream through Departmental decision-making structures. In this regard, the Department has: (i) developed and implemented five principles on how EBPM can be put into practice, (ii) developed research and evidence structures and strategies that align Departmental evidence needs with policy-making priorities, (iii) committed to hosting an annual Biodiversity Research and Evidence Indaba which looks to strengthen the knowledge, science and policy interface in the environmental sector, (iv) dedicated efforts to build capacity for skills, systems and incentives to use evidence across the environmental sector, and (v) committed to incentivising the use of evidence through annual performance plans which are aligned to its strategic objectives.

First, in its effort to guide policy-makers across the Department on how to integrate evidence, DEA has outlined five principles for EBPM. These principles can be summarised below:

1. The department uses a more comprehensive definition of what constitutes robust evidence. This means that there is little prospect of overlooking important data and information which may otherwise fall through the cracks.

2. A collaborative approach to matching the evidentiary needs of the department and the policy priorities of South Africa is needed. This would yield a better assessment of policy
priorities through extensive stakeholder engagement and to ensure that the environmental needs of the country are not foregone in the face of fiscal constraints.

3. The **operational management of the department should be aligned with its evidence needs** insofar as reporting and budgeting for evidence-gleaning procedures are concerned.

4. DEA considers that **effective policymaking is an inclusive and participatory process with stakeholders**. By design, such an approach yields trust, commitment and respect across the sector and minimises uncertainty.

5. The **co-production of evidence and policy** is the final principle that DEA has embedded within its activities. This means that policy designs that consider contributions from policymakers, researchers, citizens and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are more results-orientated and relevant.

Second, DEA has developed explicit research and evidence strategies in the environmental sector; this has been an essential part of strengthening EBPM across the Department. To this end, the Environment Sector Research, Development and Evidence (R, D&E) framework was accepted in 2012 and now informs critical decision-making based on key sector priorities. Third, The successful hosting of the annual Biodiversity Research and Evidence Indaba since 2016 is another way in which DEA has resolved to embed EBPM in its processes and structures. The Indaba has enabled DEA to keep a pulse on the top research and evidence priorities in the sector while strengthening its policy, practice and people interface through engagement. Fourth, DEA has looked to build capacity for the collection and use of evidence within its internal structures. Through training and interactive workshops, the DEA staff can better understand the use of evidence in ensuring that policy-making is based on credible data and information. Fifth, analogous to this is the effective use of performance plans to ensure that the uptake of evidence is incentivised within the Department. As an additional layer to ensuring that EBPM is implemented prudently, the performance plans have proven to be successful in yielding better branch and individual performance insofar as evidence use is concerned. With such a comprehensive modification in structures and processes, DEA has been able to conduct its work in a more effective and efficient way.

**What impact did the case have? / What is the importance of the case to EBPM?**

Through the redevelopment of its structures and processes, DEA's strategic outlook continues to thrive and improve the growth and development of the environmental sector in South Africa. As a result, there has been a marked improvement in the use of high-quality evidence as was the case with the White Paper on National Environmental Management of the Ocean or the White Paper on National Climate Change Response. Moreover, the short-term reporting needs of DEA have been improved which has assisted in cultivating long-term strategies. This is an important development due to the social, economic and environmental issues which continue to riddle South Africa. Policy development through more robust structures and processes enables the institutionalisation of evidence use and thus bodes well for the efficacy of EBPM.

**Conclusion: why does this case illustrate the power of the mechanism in supporting the use of evidence?**

Through building internal organisational structures and processes for EBPM, DEA has supported the institutionalisation of evidence use as a practice of decision-making in the public sector. Making organisational structures more receptive to evidence use holds the potential to incentivise the routine behaviour of using evidence by policy-makers. To this end, DEA has experimented successfully with
the following process innovation for EBPM: (i) building evidence use as a performance indicator into annual performance assessments, (ii) developing Departmental research & evidence strategies, and (iii) developing departmental principles and guidelines for EBPM. These show that with stable and sustainable structures and processes in place, evidence use—as an organisational imperative—can be embedded within the core fundamentals of public sector organisations and thereby lead to improved economic and social development.

References

