



Context Matters Framework *case study*

*Supporting organizational
change to improve the use of
evidence in environmental
protection in Ghana*

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In brief/At a glance

- Ghana's Environmental Protection Agency needs to be able to draw on diverse types of quality evidence in order to understand and respond to environmental protection issues.
- INASP & P&I's Context Matters Framework was used to analyse the factors affecting EPA's use of evidence within 4 dimensions, identify areas for improvement, and develop a plan for change.
- Using a collaborative and participatory approach, the project delivered a series of 8 recommendations which are being incorporated into EPA's strategic plan for 2018-2022.
- The project illustrated the importance of a committed and engaged local team with leadership support and demonstrated the value of focusing on priority areas when time is constrained.

Partner profile

The **Environmental Protection Agency** is the leading public body for protecting and improving the environment in Ghana.

EPA has offices across Ghana working on and carrying out Government policy, inspecting and regulating businesses coordinating and collaborating with relevant institutions on environmental matters, coordinating research and developing database on the environment and responding when there is an emergency such as a pollution incident. Led by an Executive Director and three Deputy Executive Directors, the EPA has 403 employees as well as 350 National Service personnel.

EPA is continuously collecting, analysing, using and communicating evidence from different sources. EPA's responsibility for conducting research and promoting the use of evidence to improve the protection of the environment is mandated in its foundational Act and reinforced in its Strategic Plan.

EPA is committed to enhancing its use of evidence and has undertaken a number of initiatives including improvement of internal communication and data management.

Project brief

This project was the second of two pilots of the Context Matters Framework, by [INASP](#) and [Politics & Ideas](#). Partner institutions for the pilots were identified through a competitive selection process in which 22 agencies in Africa, Asia and Latin America responded to a public call for proposals. Following a shortlisting and interview process, the application by EPA was selected alongside another from the Public Management Secretariat in Peru.

The problem

Environmental protection in Ghana is a cross-cutting area of policy with wide-ranging implications for national development. In order to understand and effectively respond to environmental protection issues, EPA needs to be able to draw on diverse types of quality evidence.

However, many factors affect the degree to which EPA and other policymaking institutions are able to systematically use evidence: from the broader political economy context, to research-policy relationships, to internal systems and resources in policymaking institutions.

Project objectives

1. **Analyse** how EPA currently produces and uses knowledge in its work, in order to identify areas for improvement.
2. **Develop a change plan** - selecting priorities and identifying concrete strategies and actions to achieve desired change - in order to inform and enhance the development of EPA's existing initiatives to strengthen the use of evidence in policymaking.
3. **Pilot the Context Matters Framework** as a diagnostic and planning tool in order to refine and incorporate lessons learnt into future projects.

Project scope

EPA and the project team identified the following 4 priority internal and external dimensions of context for consideration in EPA's use of evidence:

External:

- Macro context
- Relationships with state and non-state stakeholders

Internal:

- Organisational capacity
- Management and processes

“The exposure to the various components/definitions of evidence was key. It was the entry point to our understanding of the Evidence-informed Policy Making concept and related issues.

EPA representative

The Approach

A fundamental part of the diagnostic process was the close collaboration between INASP, P&I and EPA. A focal team of three individuals from EPA worked closely with the INASP and P&I team to design and implement the process. We worked together to establish the main entry points to factors affecting evidence use at EPA, identify the relevant sources of information and key informants, prepare the several instances of stakeholder engagement and validate information emerging from the different activities.

“The approach for the diagnostic was novel, engaging and highly participatory with a functional feedback loop. The reflection meetings were also very useful introductions particularly for lesson sharing.

EPA representative

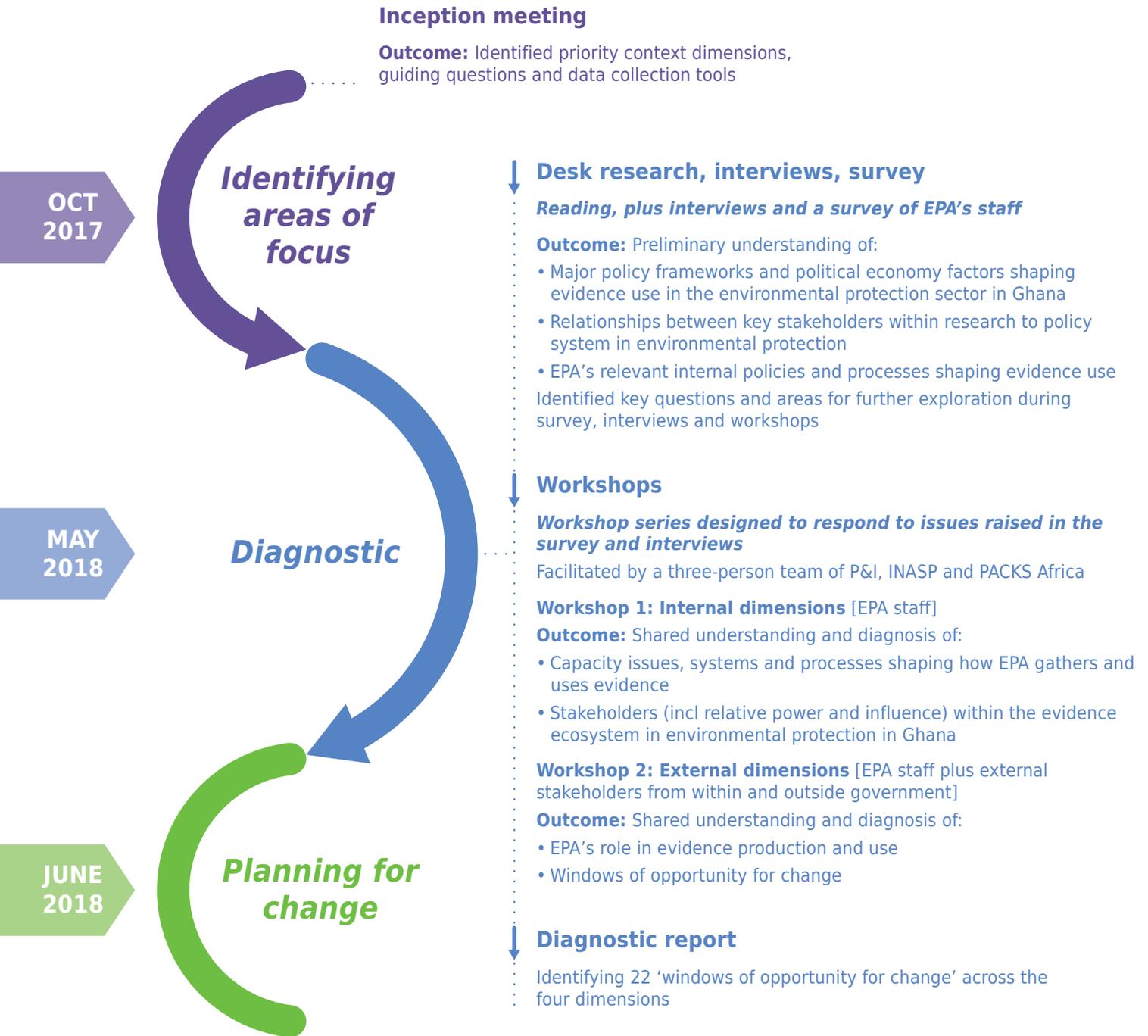
Participatory workshops were a fundamental part of our diagnostic process, as the EPA-INASP-P&I team was committed to using a collaborative approach. Workshop sessions with a wide cross-section of EPA staff built on the document review and interviews to triangulate our emerging findings and understand different perspectives on key issues. Workshops allowed INASP, P&I and EPA's leaders and staff to get to know each other, building consensus towards the change planning process. In addition, our post-workshop reflection meetings provided a valuable space to take stock of the pilot process and adapt our approach in response to our learning. The workshops were supported by a local facilitator (PACKS Africa), whose support in coordination and delivery was integral to the success of the pilot.

Throughout the process we paid particular attention to the 'softer side' of evidence use - the politics, organizational cultures, relationships and behaviours - which have as much impact on evidence use as technical elements, but are often overlooked.

Methodological limitations

Data collection was uneven in some places, and the diagnosis could also have benefited from involvement of a wider range of stakeholders.

Pilot process



Workshop

Workshop to identify concrete strategies and actions to achieve change [EPA staff]

Facilitated by a three-person team of P&I, INASP and PACKS Africa

Outcome:

- Prioritisation of areas of change
- Participatory planning for change

Change plan

Identifying recommendations for incorporation into EPA's Strategic Plan

Summary of findings

EPA is in a strong position to scale up and deepen its approach to evidence.

At the external level the diagnostic identified:

- **An enabling environment within which EPA has space to contribute:** The new government's commitment to the environment sector, the national policy frameworks and the incipient efforts led by Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) to coordinate a national approach to research, offer an enabling environment for EPA to contribute to decision making with its evidence.
- **Opportunities to collaborate with a wider range of stakeholders:** A range of opportunities were identified including promoting more citizen engagement to revive multi-stakeholder networks, strategically engaging research institutions and the media, building a strategic relationship with the STI Directorate at MESTI, and developing donors' support.

At the internal level, key windows of opportunity include:

- **Senior Management buy-in and commitment to EIPM:** EPA benefits from experienced staff and supportive leaders and senior management committed to improving evidence use
- **Existing plans to strengthen evidence use:** EPA can integrate findings from the pilot into their established training infrastructure and existing/new strategic and work plans to enhance the Agency's communications and data management.

Outcomes/Achievements

The change plan, co-developed as a result of this process, is expected to be incorporated in EPA's Strategic Plan 2018-2023. Among other efforts, the agreements summarised in the change plan are being used to:

- Develop objectives, functions and KPIs for EPA's proposed new Research and Development unit
- Encourage departments, field offices and units to establish systems for the structured gathering of evidence
- Develop a programme to continuously strengthen the capacity of EPA staff in key EIPM areas
- Reviving the Intersectoral Networks to promote sharing of evidence and learning

In addition, EPA are engaging with regional and international EIPM efforts to share their learning, via workshops and conferences.

“The framework has exposed the EPA to the critical factors – both internal and external – that influence its work within those dimensions and has engendered a high commitment by management to promote the production and use of evidence at all levels within the organization.”

EPA representative

Lessons learnt/key takeaways

Identify key change agents and champions to achieve local ownership: The full engagement and dedication of the EPA team, was critical to the success of the project. The EPA team included both a coordinator/manager and a leadership figure/champion, both of whom were closely involved in the diagnostic. This enabled EPA to have ownership over the process throughout, ensuring that the outcome would meet their needs. For the INASP/P&I team, EPA's close involvement and strategic direction-setting was a fundamental and necessary prerequisite for the pilot.

Be realistic about what can be achieved: The team wanted the process to be fully and widely consultative, involving colleagues from across EPA (including HoDs), and a wide range of external participants such as donors, civil society and research institutions. However, in practice it was very challenging to get as much participation as we had hoped in such a short period of time. While we involved all of these groups in different ways, the engagement wasn't as deep as we would all have liked.

Prioritise the focus: The framework considers six dimensions as entry points to understand the use of evidence in a certain agency. However, we decided along with EPA, to focus on four, due to pilot time constraints. This allowed us and EPA to work in more depth with each dimension and tackle the agency's priorities.

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