



# SCOPING STUDY: Evidence Translators' Role in Evidence-Informed Policymaking

## Research Findings

### Project Overview

*Policymaking* is a complex process, ranging from agenda setting to policy formulation, decision-making, implementation and evaluation. There is a growing consensus that policymaking should be informed by evidence, and efforts are multiplying to support evidence-informed policymaking (EIP) around the world. Understanding the actors and processes that bridge the gap between evidence and policymaking is key to enhancing their effectiveness. While a universe of ill-defined terms exists to describe the process by which evidence and ideas move into policy, our study focuses on *translation* – an active process through which different actors identify, filter, interpret, adapt, contextualize and communicate evidence for the purposes of policymaking.

*Translators* can be evidence producers, policymakers, or intermediaries such as journalists, advocates and expert advisors. Those who support evidence-informed policymaking need a better understanding of who translators are and how different factors influence translators' ability to promote the use of evidence in policymaking.

This study's objective was to explore factors that enable and constrain translators' ability to effectively support EIP. We carried out our research in three main stages. We first developed a definitional and theoretical framework, based on a review of the literature, which includes definitions of *policymaking*, *evidence* and *translation*, as well as a set of research questions about key enabling and constraining factors that might affect evidence translators' influence. In a second phase, we conducted primary

research around two unfolding translation cases to test our framework in those cases. The first case focuses on Ghana's blue-ribbon commission formed by the country's president in 2015, which was tasked with reviewing Ghana's national health insurance scheme (NHIS). The second case looks at Buenos Aires' 2016 government-led review of the city's right to information (RTI) regime. Finally, we performed a limited validation exercise of findings by reviewing five case studies developed by Yale's School of Management and the Transfer Project.

### Key Findings

- Our research confirmed our hypothesis that **translation is an essential function** and that, absent individuals or organizations taking up the translator role, evidence translation and evidence-informed policymaking do not take place. Our research validated our definition of *translation* as an active process in which agency is essential at every step. Rather than relying on the passive transfer of information, **translators identify, filter, interpret, adapt, contextualize and communicate evidence for the purposes of policymaking.**
- As we hypothesized, **translators can hold a range of formal roles**: they can be research or policy staff at research and evaluation organizations, academic researchers, technical staff within ministries and government agencies, ministers and other government officials and independent experts.

- **Translator credibility** was consistently depicted as crucial to translators' ability to gain access to policymakers and to promote the uptake of evidence. Policymakers' **prior interactions** with translators, translators' **relevant training and expertise**, demonstrated **ability to co-create productively** and an **alignment between policymakers' and translators' objectives** were most important in building translators' credibility.
- The translator skills described as most important were **political savvy** and **stakeholder engagement**, two skills that are closely connected. We define *political savvy* as the ability to identify obstacles to translation and evidence uptake and to develop strategies to overcome them. *Stakeholder engagement* is a key strategy and skill to overcome some of the most common obstacles to evidence uptake, including political contestation and lack of buy-in.
- The validation exercise did not identify **analytical skills** and the **ability to adapt, transform and communicate evidence** as key stand-alone translator skills. Our interpretation is not that analytical skills are unimportant, but rather, that being a credible translator implies a certain level of analytical competency and technical expertise, particularly when the translator is a research organization or research unit within the government. *Translation*, which was at the core of all but one of our cases, can best be defined by the terms *adaption*, *transformation* and *communication*. The lack of consistent mention of these essential translator skills can best be explained by the fact that the case studies were not written with a focus on translators, the intricacies of translation and the skills it requires.
- While conducive policymaking systems undoubtedly facilitate evidence generation and translation, our research found that **effective translators can operate successfully in less-than-ideal systems** by managing and mitigating systemic challenges.
- **Issue politics and other political factors matter.** Translators are more likely to be effective in cases where the focus issue is politically salient but there is no consensus around how to address it. Elections may have an effect on translation, but we were unable to detect a consistent effect. Finally, **translation is most effective when initiated by those in power or when translators place those in power at the center of their efforts.**
- While not insurmountable, **resource constraints** should be considered and managed carefully by translators, as they can jeopardize otherwise promising cases of evidence translation and uptake.
- While policymakers tend to be most receptive to **impact evidence**, the gold standard of evidence, **other types of rigorous evidence, as well as less rigorous evidence, including direct experience and observation** (or experiential evidence) often play an important complementary role, contextualizing the evidence, providing insight into potential issues that need further investigation and convincing individuals to whom quantitative evidence does not speak.

## Detailed findings

### Translation and translators' formal roles

**Our research validated our original definition of translation:**

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

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

### Relationship to policymakers

#### Primary Research

In **Ghana**, President Mahama, the policymaker-in-chief, handpicked well-known health economist Chris Atim to head the independent Technical Review Committee. Together, the president, the minister of Health and the leadership of the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) selected individuals to sit on the Review Committee. The translators in this case were thus appointed and

**TABLE 1: Translator types**

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

empowered by key policymakers, including the president, to lead an evidence-informed review. Their selection to sit on the committee gave them access to the president, who initiated and became a champion for the evidence-informed process. Translators also engaged with a range of other stakeholders, including policymakers, to build their support for the review committee's recommendations.

In **Buenos Aires**, main translator Hernán Charosky was appointed sub-secretary of Political Reform and Legislative Affairs by Horacio Rodríguez Larreta, Buenos Aires' new chief of government. Larreta empowered Charosky and his team to lead a structured, evidence-informed reform process to review the city's access to information regime. Translators' relationships with and access to the policymaker and champion were key to the Political Reform Office's efforts to carry out a review process informed by evidence. Charosky and his team prioritized building relationships with policymakers through consultations with the head of government, the cabinet, members of Congress and ministers from across the public administration.

In both primary research cases, the translators-in-chief were appointed and empowered by the head of the executive branch to design and carry out participatory evidence-informed review processes. They had access to and support from high-level policymakers, who became champions for the processes and findings. Translators also invested heavily in cultivating relationships with these and other policymakers, including key legislators and government bureaucrats, through consultations and participatory processes. These preexisting and strengthened relationships with policymakers were key to translators' success.

### Secondary Research

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

**TABLE 2: Translators' relationships with policymakers**

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

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

Our research finds that translators' existing relationships with policymakers and their efforts to build these relationships are essential to successful EIP efforts.

## Translator credibility

### Primary Research

The credibility of those chosen to sit on **Ghana's** Review Committee was key to their selection; this credibility was based on a number of characteristics, including translators' training and experience. Review committee members were described as "accomplished scholars," with extensive and practical knowledge of the focus topic. Translators' credibility was also linked to their objectivity, independence and commitment to evidence.

Similarly, translator credibility appears to have been essential to the success of **Buenos Aires' Access to Information (ATI)** review and reform process. This credibility seems to be the product of relevant academic training, a deep knowledge of access to information issues and a commitment to evidence and objectivity; Charosky and his team were said to be non-partisan, objective and unbiased, basing their thinking on evidence throughout their work.

### Secondary Research

Our secondary research confirmed that credibility is a key factor in translators' success. In policymaker-initiated EIP efforts, translators were selected in large part because of their credibility. In cases where translators (either inside or outside of government) initiated the EIP effort, credibility was crucial to

getting access to policymakers. Translator credibility appears to have been linked to a few factors, including:

- *Prior collaboration with the target policymaker* (all secondary cases except GUP). While prior collaborations between translators and policymakers were not explicitly mentioned in our primary cases, the fact that translators were appointed by policymakers suggests some level of prior interaction around the focus topic;
- *Translator efforts to build productive, collaborative relationships with policymakers* (three secondary cases);
- *Relevant translator training and expertise* (mentioned explicitly in three secondary research cases);
- *Alignment and shared vision*, typically around a shared commitment to evidence and a shared commitment to the project objective (four of the secondary cases). In the case of non-governmental translators, this shared commitment and vision were often demonstrated as the project and relationships developed.

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

## Translator skills

### Primary Research

In **Ghana**, interviewees repeatedly mentioned strong analytical and interpretation skills as essential. Similarly, translators were described as needing the skills to interact with and adapt the evidence to make it useful for a particular policy context. Beyond simplifying evidence, translators often need to transform it into workable solutions or policy recommendations for policymakers to adopt. Translators' and their executive branch supporters' political savvy was implicit in the review's emphasis on selecting credible committee members from across the political spectrum and on making the process

**TABLE 3: Importance and drivers of translator credibility**

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

extremely participatory at all stages. The objective was to ensure that all voices were heard and that the Review Committee was made aware of perceived and actual issues with the NHIS so that it had the opportunity to build additional evidence to validate (or debunk) the existence of issues. The goal was to engage as many stakeholders as possible — including critics of NHIS and members of the opposition — and to develop buy-in for the process and eventual recommendations. Those who participated in the consultative processes described it positively, suggesting that those leading the review process had stakeholder convening and facilitation skills that enabled them to elicit input and foster buy-in.

In **Buenos Aires**, translators were described as needing the skills to synthesize, adapt and communicate research products that are often long and complex. Interviewees insisted that political savvy is also crucial to translators' success. They pointed to the participatory design of the ATI regime review process and the review team's navigation and use of that participation as an example of the importance of this skill. Charosky and the Office of Political Reform consulted with people who might not agree with what they wanted to do, in order to understand — and to some extent address — the concerns of all parties and to obtain their buy-in into the process. These consultations took place as part of facilitated stakeholder roundtables called *Dialogando*, as well as in political validation meetings with the head of government, the cabinet, legislators and ministers from across the public administration. The team's draft law was as faithful as possible to international models and best practices, while ensuring that it would be politically feasible or acceptable to policymakers. This approach demonstrates political savvy and the ability to compromise. Here as well, the review teams and stakeholders who participated in the consultative processes described them as productive, suggesting that those leading the processes had the skills required to successfully convene relevant stakeholders, extract input from participants and foster buy-in. These convening and facilitating skills, connected to, but distinct from, political savvy, are also essential to effective translation.

## Secondary Research

*The ability to adapt, transform and communicate evidence, political savvy and stakeholder engagement and convening skills were the translator skills that came out as most important in our*

*primary research. The five secondary research cases validated the importance of most of these skills.*

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

Political savvy was described as an essential translator skill in all of the cases except one (GUP, where translation was not attempted). Stakeholder engagement and convening were mentioned in three of the secondary research cases (CALIE, LEAP and TCAI), and in all the secondary research cases led by a non-governmental entity. A subset of these cases specified these skills with terms such as *co-creation*, *ability to compromise* and *negotiation*. In cases initiated by non-governmental actors, these skills, as well as the ability to build government ownership, were particularly important. It is worth noting that the first two groups of skills are closely linked. We define *political savvy* as the ability to understand potential obstacles to the desired reform and to design approaches to navigate and overcome these obstacles. In many cases, particularly those initiated by actors outside of government, a key obstacle to evidence translation and uptake is inadequate government engagement, buy-in and ownership. Overcoming this obstacle requires deliberate and effective stakeholder engagement and convening.

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

The ability to adapt and communicate evidence, which was described as important in our two primary research cases, did not come out as clearly in the five secondary research cases (only one of the cases, Progresa, mentions it explicitly). This is

TABLE 4: Translator skills mentioned

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

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

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

## Policymaking system

### Primary Research

In **Ghana**, interviewees noted that the lack of communication and collaboration between evidence

producers and policymakers was one of the main obstacles to EIP in Ghana, and the NHIS review was described as the first of its kind. Similarly, interviewees provided very limited information about the policymaking system in **Buenos Aires** but they did mention that collecting evidence to support policymaking is an unusual practice. Similarly, the participatory consultations were described as quite unusual.

### Secondary Research

The two formal review processes we studied as part of our primary research did not take place in contexts where consultation, strategic planning and such review processes were reported as being the norm. Rather, the review processes were described as exceptional in their particular policymaking system in terms of their use of evidence and participation. Similarly, the policymaking systems in the five cases were not described as particularly conducive. While strong evidence-informed policymaking systems undoubtedly facilitate evidence generation and translation, *our review of the five case studies validates our primary research finding that effective translators can operate successfully in less-than-ideal systems by managing and mitigating systemic challenges.*

Our research indicates that evidence translation can take place even in contexts where such processes are not the norm.

## Time and resource constraints

### Primary Research

Donor support, including financial resources, was essential to the review process in **Ghana**; donors commissioned or financed studies that were carried out during the review process to generate additional evidence and better understand the challenges faced by the NHIS. Though the process was exceptionally long and benefited from significant donor resources, interviewees reported that additional funding and time to gather and review evidence would have been valuable. In **Buenos Aires**, while time was mentioned as an unavoidable constraint, resource limitations do not appear to have been a significant challenge.

### Secondary Research

*A number of the secondary research case studies suggest the importance of resource availability for the uptake of evidence and the negative effect that resource constraints can have on the success of EIP efforts.* In some cases, particularly government-led efforts, additional funding for a program or policy is the desired policy outcome. In cases initiated by non-governmental actors, ensuring that funding is available or that the proposed policy or program will not require additional funding from the government is a consistent priority. In the case of TCAI, where most conducive translation factors were in place, the uptake of the evidence fell through in large part due to a loss of a funding commitment. Cases led by non-governmental translators emphasized the importance of translator activities, including relationship building, stakeholder management and partner advising. These activities, which require flexibility and responsiveness, are often quite time-intensive and, in some cases, take place outside of the research period. Typical project funding may not be well-suited to cover such long-term activities and organizations that have flexible or unrestricted funding may be better able to carry them out.

**Our research finds that resource constraints are an important factor for translators and their supporters to consider and manage because these constraints can undo otherwise promising EIP efforts.**

## Policymaker background and position

### Primary Research

The key policymakers in **Ghana** were the minister of Health and the elected president who appointed him, as well as elected members of Parliament who will eventually play a role if and when guidance is given by the executive. The main policymakers in **Buenos Aires** were elected officials: Chief of Government Larreta and the legislators who eventually passed the law. In both primary research cases, limited information was provided about these policymakers and a link could not be established between policymakers' positions (appointed or elected) and their use of evidence or between their training and their use of evidence.

### Secondary Research

*The five case studies we reviewed similarly provided little information about policymakers' educational and professional training; the effect of their backgrounds on their receptiveness to evidence therefore cannot be determined.* While two of the five case studies mention policymakers' academic background, suggesting that academic training may predispose policymakers to support EIP, our secondary research generally failed to find a clear link between whether a policymaker is elected or appointed and his or her use of evidence.

**Our research could not establish a clear link between policymakers' training and position and his or her use of evidence.**

## Issue politics and other political factors

### Primary Research

In **Ghana**, there was widespread consensus about the importance of reforming the NHIS. The inadequacies of the existing national health insurance scheme were seen as threatening the survival of the widely popular program, and therefore as urgent to address. Many in the global health community considered Ghana's scheme a pioneer model in Africa that held promise for adaptation in other contexts. Many interviewees described the scheme as a key, "flagship" component of Ghana's international reputation, generating



international pressure for the government to ensure its survival. Given the NHIS's widespread domestic and international popularity, leaders across the political spectrum were, and continue to be, committed to the scheme's financial survival.

Despite national and international support for a functioning NHIS, there was limited consensus about how the program should be reformed. Indeed, the review took place in a highly politicized pre-election atmosphere, making it vulnerable to political obstruction and attack by members of the opposition. While the president and health minister accepted the Review Committee's findings and recommendations, they delayed the adoption of the recommendations until after the upcoming 2016 presidential election, which the opposition party ultimately won, shifting the politics around the issue. Having criticized the former government during the campaign, the new government was reluctant to support reforms, even reforms that were technically valid and evidence-informed, because they were developed under its predecessor. As time since the election passes and political incentives shift, however, developments suggest that the new government may be moving in the direction of accepting and rolling out the most important review recommendations, including a free basic primary health care package for all Ghanaians. This indicates that individuals across party lines likely recognized the value of an evidence-informed approach and its potential to help save the scheme but felt constrained to adopt what might look like another administration's recommendations in a highly politicized moment.

In **Buenos Aires**, there was a broad agreement that the status quo ATI regime was not working. More important than the inadequacies of the current policy were other factors, including the national and municipal contexts. Most catalytic was the election of a new administration to the government of Buenos Aires after a campaign focused on transparency and access to information. A parallel ATI reform was taking place at the national level and reportedly created a mood favorable to ATI. It appears that the global movement for greater government openness did, at least indirectly, help spur the review of Buenos Aires' ATI policy. As in Ghana, there was less consensus about the specific changes needed to improve the ATI regime. In particular, individuals within the government were resistant to a reform of the ATI regime that would subject their work to greater public scrutiny.

## Secondary Research

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

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

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

**TABLE 5: Issue politics and other political factors**

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

## Nature and source of the evidence

### Primary Research

#### Source

The evidence that was most used in the **Ghana** review was produced by global institutions such as the WHO, scholarly researchers and domestic government agencies including the National Health Insurance Authority and the Ghana Health Service. The review of international evidence, benchmarks and best practices from other countries, such as Botswana, Canada, Chile, Estonia, Rwanda, Thailand and the United Kingdom, helped translators determine good practice and policy options, while data and research about Ghana were essential to understanding the specific issues with NHIS and to designing policy options tailored to the particular issues at play and the resources available. Input from stakeholders was another important source of data. Respondents

overwhelmingly described stakeholders, from NHIA leadership and staff to NHIS members, as willing to share their data, experience and views.

In **Buenos Aires**, the sources of the information used were varied and included regional and global institutions, scholarly researchers (domestic and international) and administrative data. The Office for Political Reform relied most heavily on the Organization of American States' Model Inter-American Law on Access to Information, or Model Law as it is more commonly referred to. International cases were also reviewed, as were other sources of evidence, including comparative analyses of access to public information and international rankings. Existing national statistical information about the number and types of requests and response lags was used to identify consequences of the policy's weaknesses, particularly the fact that it was not leading to citizens using it as frequently as hoped. While data about the use and effectiveness of Buenos Aires' ATI regime were crucial

to diagnosing the issues with the current policy, international country experiences and best practices were instrumental in shaping the proposed reforms. Stakeholders' input was another essential source of information that helped review leaders understand the inadequacies of the current policies and develop political buy-in for the process and recommendations.

### Directionality and accessibility

The directionality and accessibility of evidence was not brought up by interviewees in either of the primary cases.

### Rigor

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

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

## Secondary Research

### Source

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

*Our primary research found that international evidence (including international standards and evidence about other countries' experience) was important in determining good practice and policy*

*options. Research and evidence in and about the focus countries, however, were essential to building an understanding of the specific local context and to designing policy options that were appropriate and feasible for that context. These findings were validated by our secondary research.*

**Both international and domestic evidence have a role in effective translation. While international evidence about comparable programs or policies abroad was instrumental in spurring the generation of domestic evidence, domestic evidence was needed to demonstrate that the focus interventions could be implemented and effective in the particular context.**

### Directionality and accessibility

Interviewees did not bring up directionality or accessibility in either of the primary cases, so little can be said about their importance to translators' success. This may suggest that translators' ability to access and translate the evidence has more impact on their success than the evidence's inherent accessibility and directionality. While most of the case studies we reviewed as part of our secondary research do not address directionality and accessibility explicitly, they do suggest more clearly than the primary research that the directionality of evidence is important to translation efforts. Indeed, each of the five translation cases relied on RCT results that distinctly demonstrated the relative effectiveness of different policies.

**The cases' lack of focus on accessibility confirms our finding that translators' ability to access and translate the evidence may have more impact on his or her success than the evidence's inherent accessibility.**

### Rigor

Our primary research suggests that evidence's *relative* level of rigor affects its use. Because we selected the five translation case studies we reviewed (in part) based on their use of impact evidence, rigorous evidence was available in each of the examples. In a number of cases, authors highlight that the evidence's rigor and quality were essential to its credibility and uptake by policymakers. In the GUP and TCAI projects,

the existence of rigorous evidence was not enough to stimulate the uptake of evidence, suggesting that rigorous impact evidence is instrumental, but not sufficient for translators' EIP efforts to be successful. Other factors, such as the absence of someone taking up the translator role and inadequate resources, can block even rigorous evidence from informing policy.

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

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

**Our research finds that rigorous impact evidence is instrumental, though not sufficient, to successful evidence translation. In addition, other types of evidence, including less rigorous evidence, can play an important complementary role, bringing impact evidence to life.**

**TABLE 6: Nature and source of the evidence**

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



**RESULTS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

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