



Sedi



**Civil Service capacity development in
Ghana: Lessons from past and existing
structures and initiatives**

SEDI Learning Brief 3



Summary

Strengthening Evidence Use for Development Impact (SEDI) is a UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office- (FCDO-) funded programme that is working on increasing the use of evidence by policymakers in Uganda, Ghana, and Pakistan. While the SEDI programme has a particular interest in capacity development as a means of contributing to embedded, transparent, and instrumental use of evidence in policymaking, this brief offers insights for practitioners from other sectors who are interested in capacity development in Ghana's Civil Service. The brief summarises the findings of a comprehensive scoping study undertaken as part of SEDI in Ghana. The study assessed how capacity development is understood and undertaken within the Civil Service in Ghana, and it identified potential entry points for future capacity development interventions.

The brief highlights the main elements of the capacity development system in Ghana's Civil Service and identifies key existing issues affecting these elements. The 1992 Constitution provides the basic legal background for most of the capacity development structures in the Civil Service. The National Public Sector Reform Strategy (NPSRS) is the current reform agenda, under which major individual and institutional capacity issues have been articulated and synced with the country's medium-term development framework. Many institutions play varied roles in capacity development within the Civil Service, and there are functional overlaps among these stakeholders. While the Office of the Head of Civil Service (OHCS) has the primary responsibility, it faces challenges in enforcing service-wide decisions at ministerial and organisational levels. Notable features of capacity development as understood in Ghana's Civil Service include the following:

- Within the Civil Service, capacity development is conceptualised primarily at the individual level, with an emphasis on training as the main approach to strengthening capacity.
- There are limited systems in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of Civil Service capacity development, with the exception of the Civil Service Training Centre's (CSTC's) action plan approach.
- A complex and fragmented capacity development funding landscape is a key factor affecting any coordinated management process for capacity development within the Civil Service.
- The Civil Service makes both financial and non-financial provisions for incentivising capacity development in Ghana.

- Gender dimensions have been largely overlooked by initiatives that seek to enhance capacities within the Civil Service of Ghana.

The scoping study identifies a number of implications for external/donor-funded capacity development initiatives targeting civil servants in Ghana.

Acronyms

BCURE	Building Capacity to Use Evidence
CLEAR	Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results
CSTC	Civil Service Training Centre
EPL	Emerging Public Leaders
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GIMPA	Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration
GoG	Government of Ghana
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDAs	Ministries, departments, and agencies
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NPSRS	National Public Sector Reform Strategy
OHCS	Office of the Head of Civil Service
PSC	Public Services Commission
SEDI	Strengthening Evidence for Development Impact



Introduction

Public sector capacity development remains a complex yet critical aspect of development practice. Beyond capacity development initiatives driven by individual government ministries and donors, there are dedicated public service institutions that offer important institutional mechanisms for civil servants across ministries and sectors to upgrade their skillsets and undertake professional training. They also play a pivotal role in shaping the performance structures, incentives, and working culture of the Civil Service. This in turn creates the basis of support for evidence-informed decision-making within the public sector.

It is against this background that the SEDI programme commissioned a scoping study in Ghana with the following aims: (a) to assess how capacity development is understood within the Civil Service structures; (b) to understand if

capacity development at the organisational level also happens within Civil Service institutions¹ set up for that purpose, or if it is something that each organisation handles directly with service providers; (c) to use this understanding of the capacity models within government (structures, incentives, performance, etc.) to identify potential entry points for SEDI's capacity development work in Ghana; and (d) to understand how knowledge of capacity-building models can contribute to embedded, transparent, and instrumental use of evidence in policymaking. This learning brief summarises the findings of the scoping study.



Approach

The scoping study on Civil Service capacity development involved the following elements:

- A **comprehensive desk review** that covered how capacity development is understood in the Ghanaian public sector, and the institutional arrangements, policies, frameworks, and procedures for capacity development. The desk review also looked at the key lessons from the past and existing capacity development interventions of both the government and development partners.
- A **mapping of relevant stakeholders**, which identified key institutions and individuals within the public service structure for interview.
- **Stakeholder interviews** with a range of actors. These included: senior officials

in central government agencies and sector/line ministries; and officials from Parliament, universities, civil society organisations, donors, think tanks, etc. These interviews encompassed the various roles of these actors within the country's capacity development framework. Most of the interviews were conducted online in adherence to the COVID-19 protocols of these institutions. They were open and frank since interviewees were assured of their confidentiality (in the study, statements are not attributable to any single interviewee). As a result of this assurance of confidentiality, the validity and relevance of the study was enhanced and the study is more likely to be of use to the wider development community.

- The **collation and analysis of feedback and information** gathered from the interviews. Insights were synthesised in line with the study objectives, to produce the draft scoping report.

The scoping study report received feedback from the teams in ACET, INASP, and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), as well as from an external peer reviewer. A **validation/design workshop** was also held in April 2021 with key stakeholders in the capacity development space in Ghana to validate the findings of the study; feedback has been incorporated into this final document.



Key findings and insights

Policy/legal framework for capacity development

The 1992 Constitution provides the basic legal background for most of the capacity development structures in the Civil Service.

Among others, provision is made for the Public Services Commission (PSC), under which the OHCS is to operate (The Republic of Ghana, 1992), using legal instruments such as: the Civil Service Act (Provisional National Defence Council Law 1993, Act 327); the PSC Act, 1994 (Act 482); the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) Act, 1994 (Act 479); the Public Financial Management Act (Act 921 of

2016); as well as their associated regulations. The OHCS, in order to provide direction and strengthen capacity within the Civil Service, uses service instruments, including: (a) client charters; (b) service delivery standards; (c) organisational strategic plans; (d) core values; (e) human resource plans; (f) performance management policies; and (g) public–private partnership policies (Aryee, 2018).

The NPSRS is the current reform agenda, under which major individual and institutional capacity issues have been articulated and synced with the country’s medium-term development framework. The current NPSRS is well-aligned with the current medium-term development plan (‘Agenda for Jobs’²) and complements the government’s desire to create a world-class labour force – a target identified as a crucial driver of change for the agenda (Government of Ghana (GoG), 2017a). It is also consistent with both the regional and global development agendas, which aim to ensure enhanced institutional capacities (see

Aspiration 1 of the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goal 17.6). Notwithstanding this, the NPSRS acknowledges ‘a weak culture of evidence-based policy decision making’ across government agencies. As a result, there is a need to ‘commission a number of mixed methods of evaluations’ in support of adequate implementation of the various reform initiatives (GoG, 2017b, p. 42). The weak culture of evidence-based policymaking is affirmed by the World Bank (2018), which highlights a number of issues, such as: (a) the short supply of core competencies for evidence use; (b) the largely supply-driven evidence ecosystem (mostly spearheaded by development partners); (c) poor budgeting for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans; and (d) the general lack of standardised data collection and reporting templates and instruments, among other organisational challenges.

Conceptualising capacity development in Ghana

In Ghanaian government structures, although capacity development mirrors global conceptualisations, there seems to be more emphasis on individual-level interventions, particularly training.³ For instance, despite a recognition of mentoring and coaching as approaches to enhancing human resources within the Civil Service in the NDPC’s 2019 Annual Performance Report, emphasis is placed on four main types of individual-level intervention: schemes of service training; competency-based training; academic training; and workshops, seminars, and conferences (Civil Service of Ghana, 2019). According to one

Capacity development within the Civil Service of Ghana is mostly training-based, and includes:

- short-term (non-residential) trainings;
- longer-term residential trainings;
- domestic academic courses (with study leave); and
- foreign academic courses (mostly based on scholarships funded through bilateral arrangements).

Other peripheral (non-training) forms include knowledge sharing, coaching and mentorship, supervision, and secondments.

of our interviewees, from 2017, the pre-existing 40-hour training policy has focused on scheme of service training and short-term functional training courses. Another stakeholder noted that there is the notion that capacity development is largely about training. This perception assumes that poor organisational performance is due to the limited skills and competences within an organisation. In the context of larger reform projects, however, individual capacity issues are typically addressed together with significant investments in institutional development, legal/regulatory interventions, and the deployment of ICT infrastructure (Civil Service of Ghana, 2019). The jury is out as to whether investments in these large reform projects have represented value for money in terms of their impact on organisational performance and service delivery. Value for money analysis is not a familiar approach in the public sector and there is a low level of desire and capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions.

The CSTC conducts post-training evaluation (under the auspices of the OHCS) through follow-ups on action plans⁴ submitted by participants in their training workshops. Sadly, most other training service providers

(and the Civil Service generally) do not have systems in place to monitor training outcomes. Some stakeholders acknowledged instances where officers assigned to training programmes had not demonstrated any change in capacity. This may be a result of a number of factors, including the wrong participants having been selected, limited participation, or limited organisational support for the application of new competencies. One stakeholder blamed this issue on the quality of the training delivery value chain. According to them, a cursory review of training reports highlighted weaknesses in the training delivery value chain. For example, training reports comprised the following (in their words): '(a) collated weekly training programmes; (b) handouts given as part of training; (c) list of participants, among others. There was very little in the reports to show what the training was intended to achieve or how it was conducted to ensure training objectives were being met. In essence, there was no evidence of pre-training skills assessment, on-going training evaluation, end of training evaluations and no plans for post-training impact assessment.'

Institutional framework for capacity development

While many institutions play varied roles within the Civil Service with respect to capacity development, the OHCS has the primary responsibility. The OHCS is the primary formal institution responsible for human resources within the Civil Service in Ghana. It is responsible for recruitment, secondments, and transfers for all civil servants below director rank (Ohemeng, Anebo, and Adusah-Karikari, 2012). Similar functions above director rank fall

under the mandate of the PSC – see Table 1 and Figure 1 for details on this split role. The OHCS faces major challenges in regard to enforcing service-wide decisions at the ministerial and organisational level, and therefore only has an aggregating function when capacity gaps are identified. The bulk of the work on capacity development is delivered at individual levels through sector ministries, without any clear link as regards how this will transform the

ministry or sector. Human resources directors within each government agency identify these gaps from performance evaluation reports by individual civil servants, as part of the performance management system when they complete appraisal forms for each officer role.⁵ The gaps identified are shared with the OHCS and inform the design of specific capacity development initiatives, as well as the choice of the appropriate capacity development approach or mix (training, mentoring, coaching, etc.).⁶

Within government institutional arrangements, the OHCS has oversight responsibility for the CSTC, the Management Development and Productivity Institute, and the Institute

for Technical Supervision. However, other institutions of higher learning, such as the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) School of Public Service and Governance and similar schools in various Ghanaian universities, provide opportunities for further studies and capacity development in functional areas within the Civil Service. Other major institutions currently playing various roles in the Civil Service capacity development framework include the PSC, the Public Sector Reform Secretariat, the Office of the President, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Monitoring and Evaluation, the NDPC, and the sector ministries themselves.

Table 1: Stakeholders and their roles in Civil Service capacity development

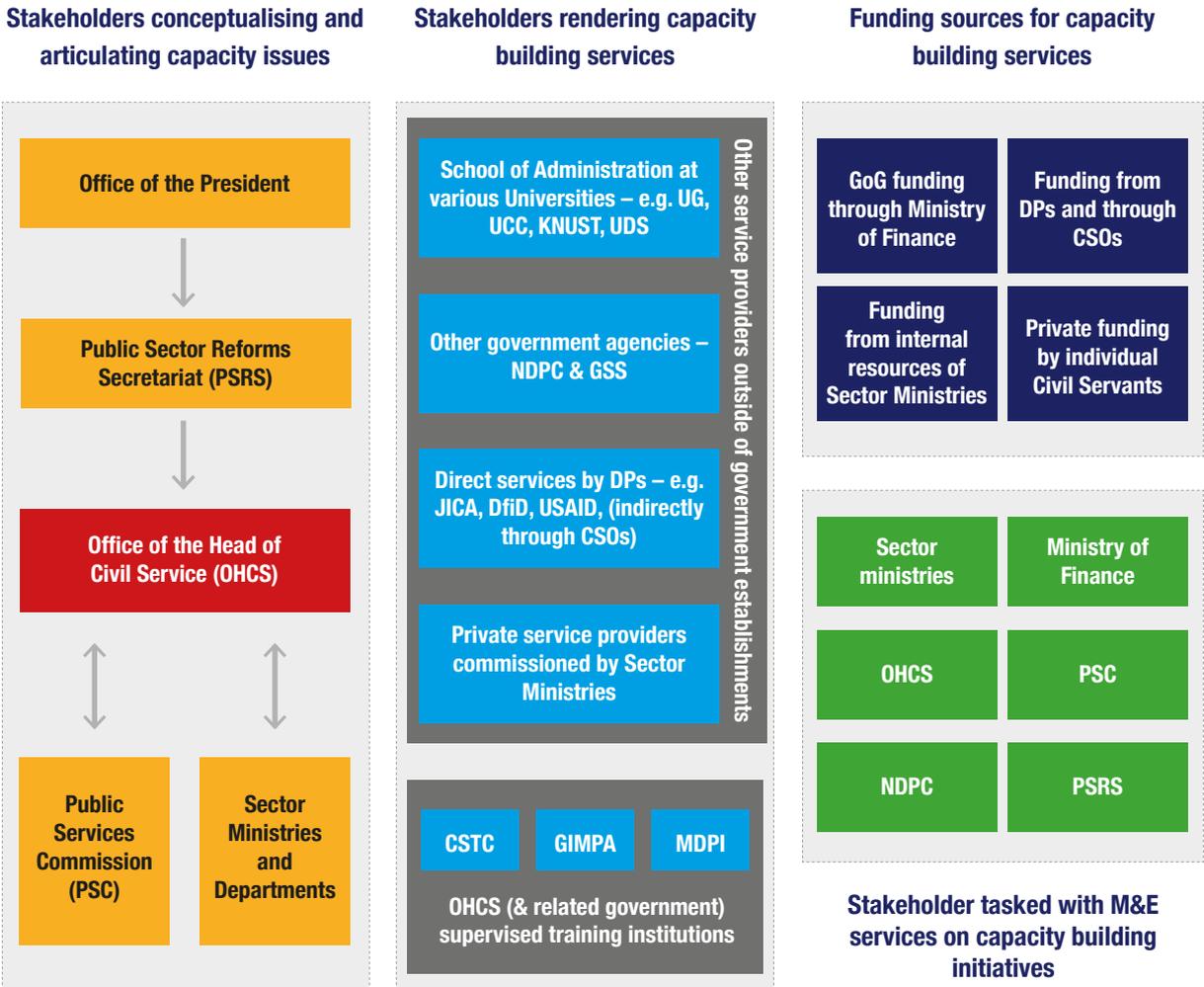
Organisation	Roles related to Civil Service capacity development
OHCS	Aggregates and articulates issues around capacity within the Civil Service as part of personnel functions
PSC	Aggregates and articulates issues around capacity within the wider public service as part of personnel functions
Public Sector Reform Secretariat	Responsible for overall coordination, financial management, and M&E of reform activities implemented by various government agencies
Office of the President	Provides oversight responsibility (political leadership) for the government machinery sector, comprising seven cost centres within the Presidency and 26 departments and agencies, including councils and commissions
Ministry of Finance	Leads on all policy issues relevant to effective and efficient macroeconomic and financial management of the economy, including making budgetary allocations and releasing funds for implementing capacity development initiatives
NDPC	Studies and undertakes strategic analyses of macroeconomic and structural reform options, including Civil Service staff capacities
Sector ministries	Lead and coordinate all policy issues within the sectors they superintend, including coordinating staff capacity issues under their jurisdiction (sector)
Ministry of Monitoring and Evaluation	Facilitates, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates programmes and projects aimed at addressing national development needs, including capacity development initiatives within government agencies

Source: Authors' construct (2021)

Despite its apparently central role, the OHCS’s difficulty in enforcing service-wide decisions at the ministerial and organisational levels adversely affects its ability to effectively deliver change management or run capacity development initiatives in the wider Civil Service. As noted above, there are some tensions between some sector ministries and the OHCS around the centralised control of capacity development services by the latter. This situation contributes to the many capacity-related challenges facing the Civil Service, as individual ministries can take decisions that are contrary to the system-wide capacity plans directed by the OHCS. An uncoordinated situation is created

when ministries retain the right to contract capacity development service providers directly beyond those managed by the OHCS, and on the blind side of the OHCS (see Figure 1). It is worth noting that some of these persistent conflicts around critical capacity development issues ultimately informed the splitting of these capacity development responsibilities between the OHCS and the PSC, with the latter being responsible for senior officers of the Civil Service (Aye, 2001). Some stakeholders suggested that the latent tensions between the OHCS and the PSC are more likely to be about access to, and control over, resources.

Figure 1: Stakeholder map of the capacity development ecosystem



Source: Authors' construct (2021)

This approach to the funding of capacity development interventions drastically impedes the conceptualising, prioritisation, and organisation of various initiatives.

According to some of the stakeholders interviewed, there are issues with the way funding is sourced and managed. While the OHCS manages the central pool of GoG resources dedicated to capacity development with the Ministry of Finance, resources are also committed by stakeholders external to the government, without the OHCS being informed. Most of these external financial resources come from development partners⁷ and are deployed through civil society organisations

or bilateral arrangements offering scholarships or grants to support the participation of civil servants in international workshops, seminars, conferences, and massive open online courses.⁸ Other initiatives have been funded through internally generated resources by individual ministries and departments.⁹ Due to a lack of funding opportunities, a growing trend has seen individual civil servants self-financing their participation in various capacity development initiatives, with such expenses later reimbursed by the government. The fragmentation in funding therefore largely affects the possibility of a coordinated management process for capacity development within the Civil Service.

Recent developments and key issues in capacity development

A new performance management system was introduced in 2010, which paved the way for the signing of performance agreements (contracts) with institutional leaderships of ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). This enabled frequent reviews of these contracts through institutional performance assessments (PSC, 2013). This was the first time in Ghana that a major reform initiative had been introduced purely under a bureaucratic leadership.¹⁰ More importantly, it created room for systemic use of evidence in service improvement, with evidence generated from performance appraisals informing decisions made about improving performance and productivity. Revised performance appraisal templates for junior officers focus on competencies that have little direct bearing on evidence use. Those for their seniors are based on five focal areas – with the ‘policy formulation’ and ‘research and information management’

areas seen as encouraging evidence use. Experience from the relatively successful implementation of this policy is evidenced by the engendered ownership of reform initiatives within the Civil Service. This has subsequently informed revision of the policy in 2021 for improved impact, while expanding its core elements (including performance planning, M&E, and associated actions) into the NPSRS.

Despite these successes in refining some of the institutional, legal, and policy arrangements, major challenges within the system still impede the delivery of effective capacity development initiatives in the Civil Service. As highlighted earlier, responsibilities for capacity-related issues remain scattered among multiple institutions; these include conceptualising capacity development needs, prioritising them, and taking action to address, fund, monitor, and evaluate them.

Uncoordinated approaches to capacity development and the provision of capacity development support by multiple donors can lead to varied understanding of capacity-building concepts and methods. Unsurprisingly, we find multiple instances of duplicated efforts in this regard, with Figure 1 exemplifying how M&E functions on capacity issues alone are performed by multiple organisations. These prevailing challenges were also recognised when the World Bank Group (2018, p. 10) reported 'a disconnect between the formal structures of managing performance — which exist — and the functional usage of these structures to drive performance and deliver results'. The NPSRS has attempted to address some of these by creating new institutional arrangements, but with the scrapping of the Office of the Senior Minister¹¹ the successful implementation (and perhaps even survival) of the reform strategy is now in doubt.¹²

Key among these institutional lapses is the largely ignored gender dimension in initiatives that seek to enhance capacities within the Civil Service of Ghana.

Although opportunities exist for integrating gender needs throughout programme design, implementation, and M&E, these have mostly been missed. This is not surprising, considering that an earlier political economy analysis by SEDI observed a prevalent patriarchal political system that 'reinforces both explicit and implicit gendered and inequitable decision-making' (Gatune et al., 2020, p. 19). According to some of the stakeholders interviewed, in instances where gender needs have been considered, this has mostly been at the implementation stage, relating to the selection of participants, and facilities to host them. None of the capacity development initiatives reviewed had any special arrangements to promote gender inclusion. This may well be because gender issues remain less important in the design of these initiatives

– including those pursued by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.¹³ A review of gender issues across recruitment, training, and development practice at the OHCS testifies to this situation, as acknowledged in its 2019 annual report. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection's commitment to encouraging the development of indicators for measuring gender equality and women's empowerment in collaboration with the OHCS and PSC offers an opportunity to change this narrative. Another stakeholder also indicated that success in integrating gender equality and social inclusion issues into capacity development initiatives largely depends on the availability of real champions within the male-dominated political institutional culture and governance architecture. While this may pose a challenge for projects that have a heavy leaning towards gender inclusion, the prevailing situation also presents an opportunity to test various approaches to integrating gender equality and social inclusion in a highly patriarchal set-up. A genuine commitment at the highest level of political office and within the leadership of the public sector will need to be secured to ensure the success of gender equality and social inclusion initiatives.

The Civil Service makes financial and non-financial provisions for incentivising capacity development in Ghana. Financial incentives, such as per diem allowances and travel allowances, are used to encourage the participation of personnel in 'approved job related training and development programmes within Ghana and overseas' (Civil Service of Ghana, 2017, p. 7). The operational performance management system also includes non-financial incentives, particularly involving tying demand-driven requests for capacity development services to evidence for training needs from an evaluation of performance. Other non-financial incentives – including demotion

or reassignment, reduced duties, or termination of contracts (PSC, 2013) – are applied, albeit with some difficulties.¹⁴ Taken together, these should represent a good reason for officers to willingly participate in capacity development interventions and apply their acquired competencies for performance improvement, although their ability to do this is largely contingent on the organisational environment to which trained staff return.

The incentives for capacity development within the Civil Service have mostly been subject to abuse, and risk becoming counterproductive.

Interestingly, some powerful individuals (politicians and bureaucrats alike) have used these opportunities to promote patronage. Other staff have used the opportunities for self-development – after which they have sought greener pastures elsewhere (Stevens, 2005). Other civil servants have also used opportunities for capacity development as ‘salary augmentation mechanisms’, drawing extra resources from the sponsors of those programmes (Stevens, 2005, p. 14). In this latter case, they reject capacity development opportunities that may not be financially rewarding, irrespective of the potential impact on individual or organisational productivity levels. In 2019, the GoG recognised the debilitating effect of this practice on capacity development, productivity, and the general attainment of development goals. As a result, it denounced the practice of public officials accepting per diems from development partners within Ghana.¹⁵ This was followed by a communiqué by the Ministry of Finance to all government agencies, confirming an agreement with organised labour over revised rates for Category 2 and Category 3 allowances,¹⁶ which included payments for per diems.



Lessons from other government capacity development initiatives in Ghana

A number of lessons have emerged from previous and ongoing government capacity development initiatives in Ghana:¹⁷

- **With capacity development widely understood within the Civil Service of Ghana as meaning training, capacity development interventions with large training components often require partnerships with government capacity development structures in order to achieve success and sustainability.**

Donor-led public sector capacity development projects in Ghana always have to decide whether to work within the government's own capacity development structures, or to offer training and other opportunities independently. While the former seems relatively more sustainable, securing buy-in and surmounting the administrative bureaucracies involved can be very frustrating. According to stakeholder interviews, in most cases capacity development initiatives that do not have a training component can successfully proceed without the involvement of the established government training institutions. However, capacity development programmes with substantial training components need to be co-developed with government structures, such as the OHCS and its allied agencies, in order to be successful. This is because of the central role of the OHCS in the capacity development framework of the public service. In such instances, capacity development programmes will have to creatively manage expectations around providing motivation in the form of allowances to beneficiary public servants. Opportunities for sustained funding for such trainings equally need to be discussed with the relevant entities at the design stage.

- **From the outset, it is crucial to ensure 'genuine' buy-in by the leadership of relevant public sector institutions.**

Feedback from our stakeholders emphasised the need for donor-led capacity development projects to look beyond 'face-value' statements of interest from government capacity development agencies. The experiences of capacity development projects, such as Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE), and the views of stakeholders, underscore the need to ensure genuine buy-in from both the political and technical leadership of public sector institutions before proceeding on capacity development initiatives. It is common to see public sector institutions welcome such initiatives when these are presented to them. They often do this without committing to actionable guarantees of support or the sustainability of programme outcomes beyond the lifespan of the project. To ensure commitment to the process, an ongoing capacity development initiative dubbed Emerging Public Leaders (EPL) encouraged the CSTC to competitively bid for the role of training partner for the programme.¹⁸

- **To sustain the capacity development gains made, it is crucial to build strategic relationships with the Ministry of Finance early in the project.**

To ensure the financial sustainability of the post-implementation phase of any capacity development programme, initiatives need to ensure strong buy-in from the Ministry of Finance. They must also be in a good position to demonstrate the relevance of the programme to a coordinating entity (either the OHCS, the PSC, or the Public Sector Reform Secretariat). Indeed, the influence of the Ministry of Finance extends beyond the funding of capacity development initiatives.

After the lifespan of a project, the ministry is involved in prioritising capacity issues in budgeting, providing financial clearance for post-programme implementation activities, ensuring the timely release of funds, and monitoring the funds released. To adequately provide for these commitments, the current public service reform programme positions the Ministry of Finance within its Public Service Reform Advisory Committee. Without these arrangements, in addition to institutional buy-in (as outlined above), capacity development interventions might face similar challenges to VakaYiko (a BCURE project). In this instance, the sustainability of the interventions with CSTC and GIMPA were affected by a lack of funds beyond the lifespan of the project. The EPL Ghana programme, on the other hand, identified and leveraged relationships within the Ministry of Finance to secure changes to financing arrangements for recruitment, which ultimately fast-tracked the integration of their graduating fellows into the Civil Service, and contributed to the financing of the programme.

- **The ability of capacity projects to link individual-level outputs and outcomes from the project with desirable changes in the beneficiary institution provides an incentive for their supervisory heads to demand change immediately upon the return of their trained officers to their offices.** This was the approach adopted by the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) GIMPA project, which focused on boosting the capacity of selected MDAs in the following four operational areas: (a) strengthening national evaluation systems; (b) strengthening legislative oversight; (c) strengthening evaluation practice; and (d) strategic knowledge management and research. However, the

scale of such an intervention is critical, as it becomes increasingly difficult to monitor organisation-level changes for larger-scale interventions, such as BCURE, which trained hundreds of civil servants in Ghana via the CSTC. While each of the trainees produced an action plan linking the training to organisational change, the programme was unable to monitor their implementation across all 27 participating MDAs.¹⁹

- **Public sector capacity development interventions should consider the unique needs of both technocrats and political actors.** The findings of the scoping study suggest that capacity development interventions, as well as policies and frameworks for capacity development, have often targeted career civil servants (technocrats). In doing so they have neglected, or have provided limited support to, strengthening the capacity of political appointees in public institutions. There is a high level of influence of political actors in decision-making, strategic direction, and driving reforms in the public service. It is therefore crucial that both technocrats and political leadership be adequately catered for in capacity development interventions for any public organisation in Ghana. Side-stepping political officials in the capacity development process could potentially affect the desired impact and sustainability of such initiatives. In a particularly fluid political environment, a change in the political leadership of the institution or a transfer of the administrative head of the institution could affect the chances of success of a project. This underscores the need to carry both political actors and technocrats along in capacity development programmes. The experience from evidence-informed decision-making projects such as CLEAR GIMPA has shown that identifying evidence-

informed decision-making champions among political leadership yields better results. Providing uniquely tailored but flexible capacity development opportunities that also facilitate and bring on board political actors is similarly beneficial.

- **Smaller-scale interventions with few trainees seem to allow for greater follow-up and sustainability.** The experience of the BCURE project suggests that the success of capacity development initiatives is not necessarily enhanced by the critical mass of the competencies that are developed (Vogel and Punton, 2018). Rather, the relevance of the programme to the work of civil servants, to optimising incentives, and to the creation of supportive organisational structures is what has the best potential to enhance the success of these programmes. To this end, many of the interviewees noted the need for future capacity development initiatives to prioritise small-scale interventions. Such interventions can secure the necessary conditions to guarantee sustainability beyond the lifespan of the project. EPL Ghana, for instance, enrolls only 20 fellows annually. Annual enrolment has allowed for non-training interventions to be deployed adequately, while applying the necessary M&E tools effectively, and allowing partner government agencies to succeed in their contributory roles.



Implications for future programmes

This review offers several potential implications for future programmes focusing on capacity development in the Ghanaian Civil Service. These include the following:

- **Theory of change:** The insights offered in this brief can contribute to the conceptualisation of individual-level capacity development strategies and outcomes at project design stage. In particular, the scoping study suggests that practitioners' theories of change should be explicit as regards three levels: (a) how it is envisaged that individual-level changes achieved through activities with government capacity

development structures can support organisation-level changes in MDAs; (b) how the links between individual-level changes among technocrats vs political actors relate to each other; and (c) how the programme chooses to approach financial incentives for capacity development activities. This should include a frank assessment and identification of risks.

■ **Design of capacity development**

interventions: The review points to a number of existing Civil Service frameworks that external capacity development can respond to. These include an established range of approaches to individual capacity development and an existing structure for identifying and addressing capacity gaps at the individual level, as well as for monitoring performance. The scoping study suggests that projects should, as much as possible, aim to frame and design capacity development interventions with reference and relevance to these existing systems: ‘working with the grain’ to respond to existing drivers of change in the public sector.

■ **Working within GoG capacity**

development structures rather than outside them: The review recommends an approach that works through existing government capacity development structures. Such an approach needs to narrow down the target participants to a particular sector or ministry. This would be the most appropriate way for donor-funded initiatives to achieve project-level capacity development outcomes in a way which simultaneously strengthens the government’s broader capacity development architecture. The EPL and CLEAR projects provide examples of how this could be achieved. These examples start with the sector or MDA, and then incorporate

capacity development stakeholders, rather than beginning with the latter. The review further suggests that a demand-driven approach (i.e. inviting possible government capacity development institutions to apply for involvement in the programme) may be worth considering, to ensure the ‘genuine’ buy-in of capacity development organisations.

■ **Understanding organisational factors in**

MDAs: This brief points to the importance of understanding organisational incentives, processes, working cultures, and structures (both formal and informal) within individual target ministries. These are important because they affect the degree to which individual capacity development outcomes can translate into enhanced organisational capacity interventions.²⁰ The Context Matters Framework used by the SEDI programme is a tool that is specific to the evidence-informed policy sector. The Context Matters Framework offers a problem-driven, participatory diagnostic approach to understanding factors affecting evidence use at the organisational level. It provides an opportunity to understand capacity issues within the broader organisational and government context, co-identifying problems and co-creating interventions with government agencies.

■ **Stakeholder engagement:** Capacity development projects should create, or strengthen, relationships with the Ministry of Finance, anticipating that this will be a critical factor in the sustainability of capacity development interventions. The scoping study also points to a number of key stakeholders, including the OHCS, the PSC, and providers such as CSTC and GIMPA who should be considered within stakeholder engagement plans for

capacity development projects. An important consideration for such projects will be how to balance organisational ownership and buy-in between capacity development structures/organisations and MDAs, given the sometimes competing interests described in the review.

■ **Financial incentives and per diems:**

Capacity development initiatives should continue to monitor GoG procedures and advice on per diems, as outlined by the GoG and Ministry of Finance. This scoping study also suggests that decisions taken by projects about per diems, allowances, or other financial incentives for capacity development activities should be explicitly factored into the theory of change and applied consistently across implementation, as they have the potential to significantly impact outcomes and change pathways.

The review also points to several unanswered questions that we believe merit further exploration:

- How can capacity development projects most effectively identify entry points in Ghana's public sector, in view of the stakeholder landscape described in this brief, and the sometimes competing interests on capacity development?
- What are the opportunities for EIDM capacity development programmes to contribute to the evidence-related areas (research and information management) of the new GoG performance management system?
- How can capacity development projects most effectively navigate the limited interest/attention given to gender in existing public sector capacity development interventions in Ghana? How can such projects design and implement a gender-sensitive approach that is also co-owned by government?
- How can capacity development projects best respond to the gap around evaluating training effectiveness in the Ghanaian Civil Service?

About SEDI

Strengthening Evidence Use for Development Impact (SEDI) is a five-year programme (2019-24) that is working on increasing the use of evidence by policy makers in Uganda, Ghana, and Pakistan. In partnership with country governments, this programme aims to develop capacity and promote innovation in increasing evidence-informed decision making. SEDI is funded by UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

The SEDI consortium is led by Oxford Policy Management and comprises national, international, and regional partners. The national lead organisations – the African Center for Economic Transformation in Ghana, the Economic Policy Research Centre in Uganda and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in Pakistan – provide programme leadership and coordination in each country. These national organisations are authoritative voices in policy processes and will ensure effective engagement and a sustainable legacy for SEDI.

The international partners – International Network for Advancing Science and Policy, the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, the Overseas Development Institute, and Oxford Policy Management – as well as the regional partners – the African Institute for Development Policy and the Africa Centre for Evidence – contribute their knowledge and years of experience in working with governments across the world to promote evidence-informed development. They provide technical thought partnership, facilitate cross-country learning, and collaborate on programme delivery.

Endnotes

¹The Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC), the Management Development and Productivity Institute, and the Institute for Technical Supervision.

²The abridged version of the development agenda can be found here: <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/new-ndpc-static1/CACHES/PUBLICATIONS/2018/04/18/CP-Abridge+Version+2.1.pdf>

³The Civil Service Training and Development Policy, for instance, emphasises training as the predominant component of capacity development through the various forms identified, but highlights attachments and internships, mentoring, coaching, study tours, job rotation, and conferences and other knowledge-sharing platforms as complementary approaches for capacity building.

⁴The action plan format of the CSTC was adapted by the VakaYiko programme and included in its Evidence-Informed Policy Making Toolkit as a means of following up the deployment of acquired competencies by participants in their work environments.

⁵Two types of performance appraisal tool are used in the Civil Service: performance agreements (with chief directors, directors, and heads of departments) and staff performance appraisals (for deputy directors, analogous grades, and below).

⁶It is currently difficult to establish the direct impact of these interventions on the annual performance of chief directors (for instance), or on that of the Civil Service as a whole.

⁷One stakeholder noted that 'donors are not blameless as their enthusiasm for supporting capacity development initiatives irrespective of the context is driven more by the desire to utilise budgeted resources than the appropriateness, timing, and those responsible for CB [capacity-building] initiatives.'

⁸Massive open online courses are courses of study made available over the internet (mostly without charge) to a very large number of people.

⁹There is limited evidence on how widespread this is, but this is one of the institutionally designed political economy realities that the OHCS has had to co-exist with. Although useful for making use of widely available internally generated resources from some MDAs, it also complicates the work of the OHCS in allocating GoG training resources from the Ministry of Finance.

¹⁰All previous reform efforts have been led either by political agents or by development partners.

¹¹For more details on the scrapping of the Office of the Senior Minister, see: www.primenews.com.gh/politics/osafo-mafo-didnt-resign-his-office-was-scrapped-franklin-cudjoe.html

¹²The researchers did not find any independent evidence on the performance of the Office of the Senior Minister; the conclusion of an apparent success is proffered (in line with the literature)

because of its role as a champion of reform policies within government over the past few years. The potential challenge envisaged with the collapse of this office is the new competition that reform initiatives may have to face, alongside other development initiatives supervised directly by the Office of the President.

¹³An analysis of the National Gender Policy (2015) suggests that gender issues are (in practice) directed at poverty alleviation and economic development: across ministries, special programmes (including capacity-building programmes) to protect and empower women are mostly operational in these domains. Although generally conceptualised (in principle under Policy Commitment 4), this has not yet been actualised in Civil Service capacity-building initiatives.

¹⁴Instances of difficulties in applying sanctions, in particular, were highlighted by the Director of the Recruitment, Training and Development Division during an induction workshop in 2020.

¹⁵Per diems were denounced together with workshop and meeting allowances in the 'Ghana Beyond Aid' aspirational document: http://osm.gov.gh/assets/downloads/ghana_beyond_aid_charter.pdf.

¹⁶The complete communiqué (with the various allowances) can be seen at https://mofep.gov.gh/sites/default/files/news/2021-2024-Budget-Preparation-Categories_2_3.pdf.

¹⁷Three existing/past capacity development projects were reviewed as part of this scoping work: VakaYiko (a DfID-funded project under the Building Capacity for the Use of Evidence (BCURE) initiative; the Emerging Public Leaders (EPL) programme; and the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) project hosted by GIMPA.

¹⁸This was a similar approach to that used by INASP following the conclusion of the VakaYiko project in Ghana. In order to identify government partners to pilot the Context Matters Framework, and in response to experience with partnerships in BCURE, INASP issued an open call for government partners. See: <http://blog.inasp.info/context-matters-organizational-change-but-exactly>

¹⁹A similar challenge was faced by the BCURE project in Pakistan, which also trained a large number of civil servants from many different agencies.

²⁰The approach to organisational evidence diagnostics in SEDI began with the 'light-touch' authority, acceptance, and ability lens of analysis, which was integrated within SEDI's political economy analysis approach and aimed to provide an initial sense of organisational entry points. This was expanded on through the launch of organisational evidence diagnostics with government partner agencies in Pakistan and Uganda, with Ghana soon to begin at the time of writing. Lessons from the approach to organisational diagnostics will be further elaborated in a forthcoming SEDI learning brief.

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Ambassador Sullivan Kumasi tours to promote partnerships on health, education, good governance, and economic development, 2019. US Embassy Ghana

Continental Youth Engagement Workshop: Strategic Engagement and Capacity Development of Youth in Agri-Entrepreneurship for Technology Adoption. Nawsheen Hosenally

First Cohort YALI Accra Regional Leadership Center. US Embassy Ghana

Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Mandela Washington Fellowship departure reception 2019. US Embassy Archibald Sackey and Courage Ahiati

CLTS triggering process in the Volta Region of Ghana

The picture was taken on 27th August 2014 in a community called Attakrom in the Volta Region of Ghana during a CLTS triggering process. The scene depicts community members busily drawing the community map of defecation under the guidance of Environmental Health Assistants (EHAs). Jesse Coffie Danku

CARE-CCAFS in Gender & Participatory Research in Ghana. In June of 2014, the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) together with CARE trained and tested an upcoming Participatory Action Research Manual collecting valuable gender and social information about farmers. Taylor Spicer (CCAFS)

Ghana enterprise Josephine demonstrates how to make, price and, market items at a community action day. International citizen service / Katherine Stone

CARE-CCAFS in Gender & Participatory Research in Ghana 2014. CGIAR Climate

CARE-CCAFS in Gender & Participatory Research in Ghana. Taylor Spicer (Climate Change Agriculture and Food Security)

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Email: sedi@opml.co.uk

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