

Thandika Mkandawire Evidence Uptake Index (Mkandawire Index)

Measuring how institutions use evidence for better policy



The Thandika Mkandawire Evidence Uptake Index (simply referred to as the Mkandawire Index) is a practical and adaptable tool for diagnosing how government and public sector institutions are positioned to use evidence in policymaking. It builds on the Context Matters framework originally developed by Purpose & Ideas, now evolved into a multi-organisational dashboard that blends diagnosis, advocacy, and capacity development.

What the Index does

The Index measures organisational and contextual factors that influence evidence use across six dimensions:

1. **Macro-context:** political, social, and knowledge environment.
2. **Intra- and inter-relationships:** with other agencies and non-state stakeholders.
3. **Culture:** values, incentives, and openness to change.
4. **Organisational capacity:** leadership, human resources, and legal frameworks.
5. **Management and processes:** planning, communication, monitoring and evaluation.
6. **Resources:** budgets, technology, knowledge infrastructure, and time.

By collecting data from staff and stakeholders through surveys and workshops, the tool generates a visual dashboard that allows institutions to identify strengths, diagnose gaps, and track progress over time. Results also enable cross-sector and cross-country comparisons, supporting both local reform efforts and wider advocacy for evidence-informed decision-making.

What we have done so far

- **First pilot:** Parliament of Ghana — tested feasibility of the framework in a legislative context.
- **Second pilot:** Ministry of Health and Ghana Health Service — assessed evidence uptake conditions in the health sector.

Both pilots confirmed the Index's value as a diagnostic and advocacy resource, informing institutional reflection and planning.



What comes next

The next step is a third pilot at regional level through the Africa Evidence Network (AEN). Amongst other things, this pilot will:

- Adapt the tool for use across multiple institutions and countries.
- Test its comparative utility in diverse governance and sectoral settings.
- Lay the foundation for a continental platform that aggregates data, enabling shared learning, benchmarking, and long-term monitoring of evidence use in policy.

Looking further ahead, the Index is designed to be scalable and adaptable. Future applications will feed into a central repository of data across countries and sectors, creating opportunities to:

- Analyse long-term trends in evidence-informed policymaking.
- Develop predictive models to understand the weight of different contextual factors.
- Support practitioners and policymakers with tailored insights for reform.

Why partner with us

By engaging with the Mkandawire Index initiative, partners can:

- Contribute to a uniquely African-led effort to strengthen evidence-informed policymaking.
- Help scale up a tool with proven feasibility and growing demand across sectors.
- Participate in shaping a continental knowledge platform, driving both local capacity development and global policy influence.