



SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS FOR AFRICAN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

LESSONS FROM THE PARLIAMENT OF TANZANIA

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Introducing CLEAR-AA learning notes

Africa is seeing increasing interest and investment in evaluation as a way to improve governance, accountability and the quality of development policies and programmes. For the past six years, CLEAR-AA has been one of the leading organisations working to build evaluation capacity and strengthen evaluation systems in Africa. We have worked across Ghana, Zambia, Ethiopia, Benin, Uganda and South Africa, driving oversight of parliamentary capacity development and strengthening national evaluation systems. In South Africa alone, CLEAR-AA has carried out two Evaluation Training Authority evaluations and provides ongoing technical assistance in the education and transport sectors. During this time, CLEAR-AA has also developed a flagship training programme, the Development Evaluation Training Programme in Africa and has produced publications, including books, policy briefs and learning notes.

CLEAR-AA learning notes draw on our programmatic work to share lessons for effective evaluation capacity-building and system strengthening. They contribute to scholarship and practice in the evaluation community, and allow us to consolidate and deepen our own work going forward.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN AFRICA

Social media is growing exponentially in Africa. While many governments perceive an increase in political social media as a threat, and several governments have set up social media controls and even sanctioned complete blackouts in moments of heightened political tension, they are also increasingly finding it convenient to interact with their publics through social media. While this is mostly one-way broadcast-style communication about service delivery or in emergencies, the two-way, interactive possibilities of social media offer public institutions opportunities to tap into information *from* citizens and to *interact*.

450 million Africans use the internet to communicate.

177 million Africans are subscribed to Facebook.

10% of global internet users are African.

More Africans than Americans or British use Twitter for political debate.

TANZANIA 2016: A YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIAN BRIDGES COMMUNICATION GAPS

Using social media to cover gaps in traditional media coverage of Parliament

On 19 April 2016, the Tanzanian government banned Bunge Live, the popular live coverage on national television of parliamentary proceedings, citing the high costs to the state broadcaster. Tanzania is a multiparty democracy with a vibrant parliament, and the banning was widely seen as detrimental to government transparency and accountability: 79% of polled Tanzanians disapproved of the government's actions; 92% considered live coverage of parliament to be important. Members of the Young Parliamentarians Association caucus responded to the ban by taking to social media platforms to broadcast parliamentary proceedings.

The Hon. Catherine Ruge, a member of the opposition and MP for the rural constituency of Serengeti, went live on YouTube during parliamentary sessions on the banning of Bunge Live. She not only enabled public access to the debates, but also used the instantaneous reactions from the public via her Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts to contest the banning.

Using traditional media to cover gaps in social media coverage of Parliament

Social media in Tanzania is largely limited to youth in urban areas. So, while over 78% of the population is under the age of 35, giving social media the potential to be widely useful, about 80% of Tanzanians live in rural areas, limiting that potential significantly. In 2018, only 21.4% of polled Tanzanians reported access to the internet on their mobile phones. Ruge met this challenge by combining social media and traditional communications to air recordings of parliamentary sessions at public rallies and community meetings with her rural constituents.

Ruge has emerged as a champion for evidence use by parliamentarians. She is a member of the African Parliamentarians Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE).

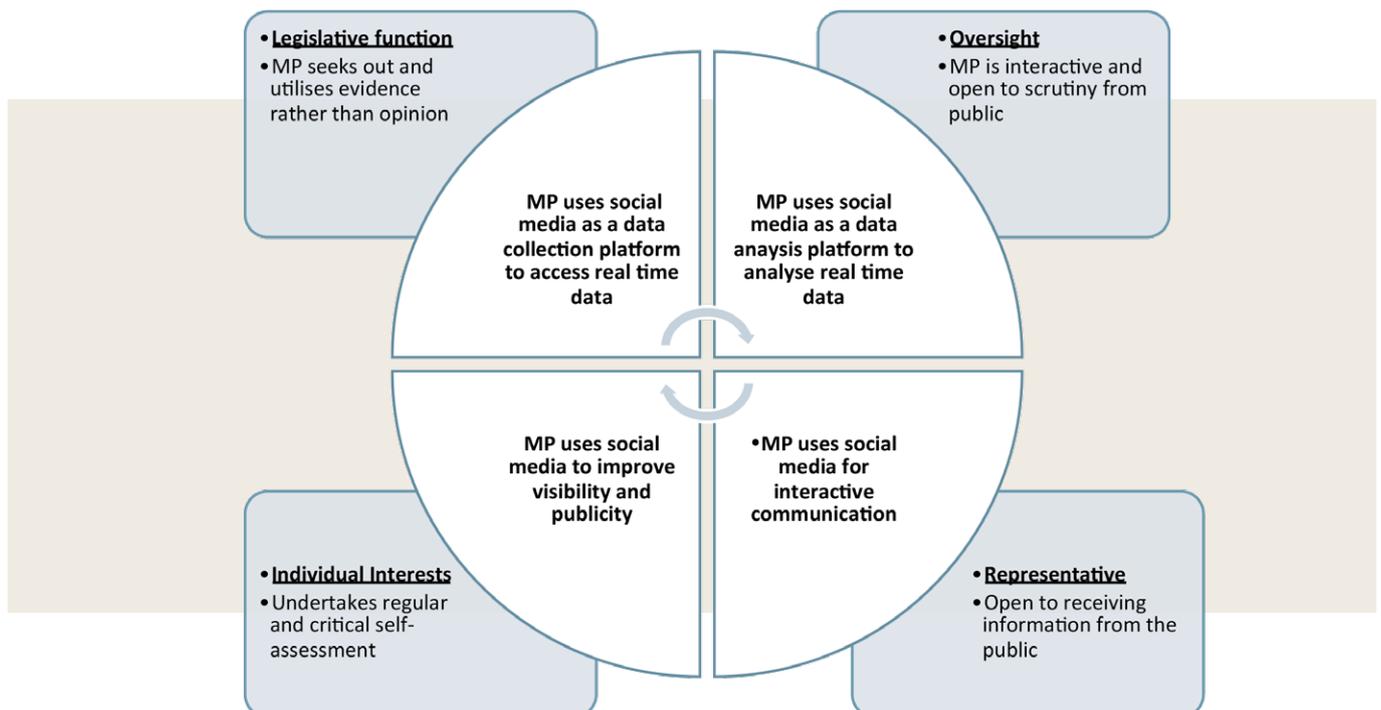
8 KEY WAYS SOCIAL MEDIA CAN BOOST PARLIAMENTARY ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Parliamentarians can use social media to communicate with the public when other communications methods are not available.
2. Social media provides a channel for the public to communicate with their MPs, bringing real-time user-generated information into parliamentary proceedings.
3. The two-way, instantaneous nature of social media may boost public participation in parliament.
4. Parliamentarians can analyse information on social media to generate evidence rather than relying on their individual opinions in debates.
5. Social media can allow the public to monitor MPs.
6. Social media has the potential to enhance transparency and accountability.
7. Parliamentarians can use social media for much more than the quick wins of visibility and publicity.
8. Enterprising individual actions, if replicated across the institution, may over time contribute to a culture of evidence use and transparency and thereby improve parliamentarians' delivery of their legislative, oversight and representation functions.

5 KEY RISKS FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS USING SOCIAL MEDIA

1. If social media is not used ethically, the implications are very serious.
2. Access to social media is uneven and inequitable (though growing steadily because of the global decrease in the costs of devices and data).
3. The tension created by the inherent informality of social media and the formality of the exercise of public authority presents a challenge. Unstructured and inappropriate social media could damage institutions.
4. If the value of social media as interactive, two-way communication is not properly understood, it may become another mode for one-way, broadcast communication.
5. If a public institution is not ready to engage closely with the public, using social media may lead to added reputational risks if they cannot sustain the engagement.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERLOCKING PARLIAMENTARY FUNCTIONS



CLEAR-AA RECOMMENDS

1. Institutions must have the required capabilities for a social media strategy.

A social media strategy requires specific capabilities to be effective. Public institutions would do well to conduct an inventory of their social networks, collaborations, personnel, ICT capabilities and technologies and prepare sufficiently for interacting with the public.

2. Public officials must understand the specific value of social media for their institution.

Using social media must be purposefully envisioned and public officials inculcated into the additional value it provides. Institutions should adopt social media only after they understand how the institution could benefit from it.

3. The adaption to social media must be driven by an institution's leadership.

Drive the adaptation to social media in public institutions from the top down. Institutional leadership is critical in creating a social media policy that must then be applied responsibly.

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