

### Policy in Ghana changes after real costs revealed

Local government decision-makers in Ghana have implemented a policy which dictates that only districts that complete infrastructure projects (such as school or hospital buildings) will receive future funding. Featured in a [mini documentary](#) published by the [International Growth Centre](#) (IGC), the policy implementation is informed by an investigation into the discrepancy in infrastructure project completion between various districts. The evidence indicated that districts would lobby for new infrastructure projects to be started before other projects had been completed, resulting in not only a low project completion rate overall but also wasted expenditure.



**Working to avoid waste** Research team in Ghana involved in the IGC research project featured in the mini documentary.

A useful [blog](#) written by Marta Teperek for the [London School of Economics and Political Sciences](#) shares some awesome tips about how to get the most out of academic conferences. With [EVIDENCE 2018](#) coming up, it serves as a useful reminder to participants to schedule tweets to be posted during your talk or make notes of people you network with on their business cards to make following up after the event easier.

A recent report entitled [Opportunities and Policy Actions to Maximise the Demographic Dividend in Botswana](#) has found – among other findings – that many of Botswana’s youth remain dependent on their parents until the age of 32. The report explores the population dynamics and age-structure changes in Botswana, as well as the policy implications of these.

The South African National Research Foundation [co-hosted a pre-event](#) at the Next Einstein Forum, which recently took place in Kigali, Rwanda. The pre-event highlighted the scientific contributions made by pan-African organisations from across sectors, and focused conversations on funding and actions to support future innovation and research in Africa.

In a fascinating [blog post](#), the [Results for All](#) research team discusses the culture of evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) and evidence use. Drawing on examples of evidence networks that include those from across Africa, the team argue that nurturing an evidence use culture is key to supporting EIDM. One way of nurturing this culture, the authors suggest, is to invest in evidence ‘leaders and champions’.

### Evidence events

2-4 May: [Joanna Briggs Colloquium](#), Antwerp, Belgium.

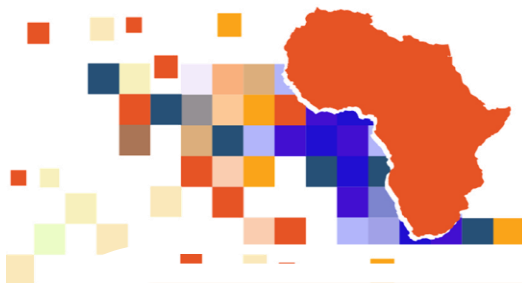
23-25 May: [African Unity for Renaissance Conference](#), Pretoria, South Africa.

25-28 September: [EVIDENCE 2018](#), Pretoria, South Africa.

### Announcements

- The AEN [annual member survey](#) closes on 30 April; make sure you have your say.
- Communication for research and policy [online course](#).
- Primer in Systematic Review [online short course](#).
- Reduced [registration fees](#) for Cochrane 2018.
- [Material](#) to learn more about systematic maps.
- Director [position](#) open with the United Nations Foundation.

This month’s blog is written by two of the strand leaders from EVIDENCE 2018: Dr Patrick Okwen and Danielle Mason where they share [what their strands will focus on at EVIDENCE 2018](#). View all blog posts [online](#) and submit your AEN blog [here](#).



## Start research with impact in mind

The [Overseas Development Institute](#) (ODI) encourages researchers to start thinking about the impact their research might have and how it will be measured at the start of a research project. This recommendation, among others, is part of the [Research Excellence Framework Impact Toolkit](#) that the ODI published last month. The toolkit is intended to assist researchers in planning for the impact of their work, and in monitoring and measuring the impact their work might have on decision-making. In addition to beginning with impact in mind, researchers are urged to consider not only the context in which their work is taking place but also that their role in attaining impact may not be straightforward. The toolkit takes researchers through six modules designed to support their planning for impact.



**Thinking about impact** The Research Excellence Framework Impact Toolkit is accessible to all researchers seeking to plan for the impact of their work.

## INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

[Superu](#) – a New Zealand government agency that focuses on improving the lives of families through the use of evidence – has published a [guide](#) to using evidence for policy. The useful content includes what to do when there are gaps in the evidence base or conflicting evidence. The second in their *Making Sense* series, this guide follows on from their *Making Sense of Evaluation for Everyone handbook*.

Canada's chief science advisor Mona Nemer is adamant that the country's [government scientists should be retrained](#) in science communication and evidence-informed decision-making. At the heart of this move is the aim to make government science accessible to the public, and allow scientists employed by the government to speak freely about their work. Scientists were invited by Nemer to let her know what their most pressing needs were.

In a thought-provoking [blog post](#) on the [London School of Economics and Political Sciences](#) blog, Anne-Wil Harzing of [Publish or Perish software](#) fame argues that in certain circumstances, Google Scholar can provide an alternative to Web of Science. She argues that the search engine platform performs particularly well when searching for conference proceedings, books and book chapters, as well as research within the social sciences.

## Evidence from academia

[Goldman et al](#): 'The emergence of government evaluation systems in Africa: The case of Benin, Uganda and South Africa'

[Kaplan et al](#): 'Going on a statewide listening tour: involving education leaders in the process of research to enhance the practical value of qualitative research'

[Rickonson et al](#): 'Understanding evidence use within education policy: a policy narrative perspective'

[Waddington et al](#): 'What have we learned after ten years of systematic reviews in international development?'

A scoping review published by [Tricco and colleagues \(2018\)](#) aimed to map the evidence that exists on engaging knowledge users in the context of health. The users that were most commonly engaged with were policy-makers, while the stages of knowledge synthesis during which users were most frequently engaged was data analysis and interpretation.