Africa Evidence Network

NEWSLETTER || August 2015

UJ-BCURE workshop: Barriers to the use of evidence in government decision-making

The University of Johannesburg's Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (UJ-BCURE) programme hosted a capacity building workshop for South African government officials on the 13th of August 2015. The workshop focused on unpacking the barriers to the use of evidence in government, Professor Brahm Fleisch from the University of Witwatersrand, presented views from the research community and Ms Harsha Dayal from the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) presented views from government. Some of the concerns raised from the workshop are the quality of research available to government and the herculean effort in co-ordinating an evidence-informed approach across government.

Professor Ruth Stewart (standing) and Professor Brahm Fleisch (to the right)

The re-analysis of research on school-based deworming in Kenya has identified positive impacts such as reduced school absenteeism according to Edward Miguel from Oxfam. Deworming is currently being implemented in many parts of the developing world. Recent statistics suggest that 280 million children, out of 870 million in need, are treated through school-based and community-based programmes.

The July 2015 issue of Evaluation Matters features an article written by Nompumelelo Mohohlwane and Stephen Taylor from the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE). This article discusses DBE's programmes that have been evaluated through the National Evaluation Plan using randomized controlled trials.

AFIDEP's blog shares lessons about the SECURE Health evidence-informed policy-making training programme for health policymakers in Kenya and Malawi. The programme has trained 76 policymakers from both countries and increased their knowledge and skills in finding, assessing, synthesizing and applying research evidence in their work.

The Evaluation Society of Kenya (ESK) conducted a successful two-day outcome mapping training workshop. The induction session covered defining outcome mapping, outcome mapping steps and demonstration of monitoring tools and evaluation reports used to apply outcome mapping.

Evidence events

21 September-20 December: A short online course on systematic reviews

12-16 October: South African Monitoring & Evaluation Association meeting

13-14 April: AITEC Southern Africa ICT Summit 2016

Announcements

- The UN General Assembly endorses 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' declaration.

- 3ie requests proposals for the process and formative evaluation of select government programmes and policies in Uganda.

The latest AEN blog by Precious Motha from UJ-BCURE focuses on growing the evidence-informed decision-making community. The blog highlights the success of the event AEN hosted with the Anglophone Africa Centre for Learning, Evaluation and Results (CLEAR-AA). AEN blog submissions are welcome on our website.
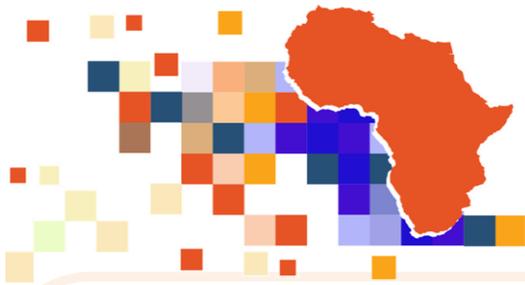
Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development
2015 is the deadline year of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are replacing the MDGs with 17 proposed goals and 169 targets. The new goals cover a broader range of issues, including peace, oceans and climate change. The SDGs will guide policy and funding for the next 15 years. The UN General Assembly has endorsed 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' declaration. This declaration includes evaluation of SDGs' outcomes. Paragraph 74 of the declaration includes the need for country-led evaluations and the strengthening of national data systems. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon at the UN Evaluation Group High-Level event emphasized that evaluation is not easy nor popular, but essential to Achieve the SDGs. The members of the United Nations will adopt this new agenda at the Sustainable Development Summit which will be held from 25 to 27 September 2015 in New York. Once agreement is reached, the focus will be on how to implement such a comprehensive agenda during the next 15 years.
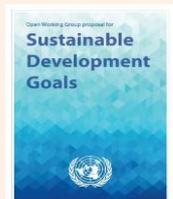
INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

Dr Ellie Ott from the Humanitarian Evidence Programme in her article featured on Oxfam's policy and practice blog highlights the importance of making evidence-based decisions in humanitarian response. She suggests critically examining the latest research by accessing good quality research and research syntheses databases. This process ensures the relevance of synthesis and also identifies evidence gap maps.

A blog featured on Nesta argues that it would be more sensible and cost effective if countries, cities, and professional bodies clubbed together to commission experiments and systematic reviews. This stems from the fact that many governments are looking for what works to solve problems in their countries and there is a need to maximize the limited resources for generating high quality evidence.

How do you build a 'system view' of a country and then what do you do next? Jonathan Harke from INASP shares INASP's experience in developing systems for capacity building in some of the countries they work in. The first step they follow is to develop a country profile, mapping research and knowledge systems. The second step involves visiting the country and meeting representatives involved in producing and using research and knowledge. The third step is understanding what is happening in the country and how one can support or facilitate change.

Evidence from academia

Special Issue: Journal of International Development on Sustainable Development Goals

McKenzie & Yang: 'Evidence on policies to increase the development impacts of international migration'

Rispel et al: 'Exploring corruption in the South African health sector'

Waddington et al: 'Improving lives through better evidence'

The World Bank's Edutech blog discusses the rapid growth of new educational tablet initiatives in schools and any related evidence that show an impact of student learning. The Commonwealth of Learning published a short report this year that looked at a number of national efforts around the world. The report paid particular attention to large-scale government-supported tablet initiatives in eleven countries and found that none of the identified initiatives was supported by evidence. The report confirms that there is a shortage of studies that show impact of tablets in schools.