

Africa Evidence Network

NEWSLETTER || August 2019

Evidence for better health policy

The **West African Health Organisation** (WAHO) promotes the use of evidence in **decision-making** and practice as part of the program for the development of health research in the sub-region. WAHO implemented a project on moving maternal, new-born, and child health Evidence into Policy in West Africa. The situation analysis conducted at the beginning of the project made it possible to develop a regional implementation framework for improving demand for the production and use of evidence in decision-making in maternal and child health. The institutionalisation of the use of evidence has emerged as a strategy for strengthening and sustaining achievements.



Regional workshop on validation of evidence-based policy-making guidance in West Africa Delegates attending the workshop

Photo: The West African Health Organization

Research at **Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division** has made a positive impact on the national government **AIDS policy** in South Africa. The aim of the programme is to reduce the number of new HIV infections among learners by partnering with the Department of Basic Education in South Africa to carry out sexuality and HIV prevention education programmes informed by evidence.

Curious Minds Ghana has recently set up an initiative called the **CM Policy Institute**, which collaborates with stakeholders to train youth in essential skills required to promote **evidence-based advocacy**. This training strategy will act as a channel through which the youth can endeavour to do research on matters that have an impact on their population.

In a recent **Conversation** article, **Willem Fourie** argues that South Africa aims to move beyond ticking boxes through its first Sustainable Development Goals report card. He recommends four practical steps to ensure that the country makes progress towards the goals, including acquiring reliable, accurate data.

Last month the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, **Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia**, gave a **keynote address** at the opening of the Evidence to Action 2019 conference in Accra. He emphasised the crucial role of research evidence to inform decision-making. The delegates represented 14 sub-Saharan African countries.

Putting the spotlight on...

... an emerging organisation! **Afya Research Africa** is a Kenyan organisation that helps communities set up and manages medical centres, design the right technology for small remote healthcare facilities, and promote local research and evidence-based medicine to improve quality of care.

Want to spotlight you or your organisation? **Let us know** and you could be featured!

Evidence events

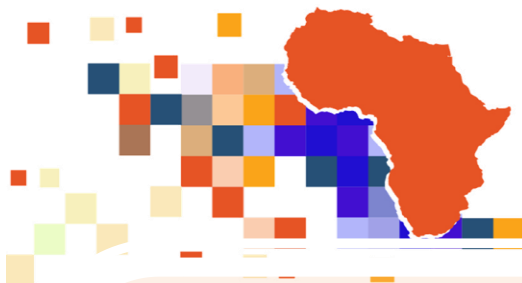
2-13 September: [Development Training Programme in Africa](#), Gauteng, South Africa.

21-25 October: [7th Biennial SAMEA Conference](#), Gauteng, South Africa.

22-26 October: [Uganda Management Institute 2nd International Conference](#), Kampala, Uganda.

On the **blog** now: Natalie Tannous writes about some of the activities to look forward to during the Africa Evidence Week, happening 9-13 September.

View all blog posts **online** and use the Network to share your view – submit your AEN blog [here](#).



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Evidence for campaigns: lessons from Chicago

Barbara Risman and Christine Percheski emphasise the need for researchers and policy-makers to work closely in harmony to ensure that **decision-making** in government is evidence-informed. In order for policies to be effective, the research evidence that is produced must be easily accessible in a simple language that can be understood by the people in the community, not just a few learned people like academics. Furthermore, addressing the gap between theory (research) and practice (policy-making) is crucial in promoting the use of research evidence at all the government levels.



Evidence-informed policy-making Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot appreciates the evidence-based policy briefs by the Scholars Strategy Network

Photo: Scott Olson/Getty Images

INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

A **report** by the **European Commission's Joint Research Centre** recommends additional guidance from professionals since there is a growing intricacy of **policy issues**, which is coupled with the vagueness of scientific knowledge. Yet, the expert knowledge of these specialists is being questioned. Bridging the gap between scientists and policy-makers can result in more informed decisions based on scientific evidence.

Howard White, the Chief Executive Officer of the **Campbell Collaboration**, uses the analogy of the 'Peter Principle' to explain how **evidence** is misused and abused. The Evidence Peter Principle is the inappropriate use of studies or data which results in an evidence-based system that is not grounded on the suitable evidence and that continues to exist because there is insufficient investment into the evidence architecture.

According to Aparna Lal, a member of blog partner **PopulationHealthXchange**, early career researchers can use numerous strategies to establish functional relationships with **government policy-makers**, including speaking the language of policy-makers. It is also worthwhile to welcome any opportunity to network with an open mind since networking between researchers and policy-makers can facilitate new connections with other stakeholders.

Evidence from academia

Aronson et al: 'Key concepts for making informed choices'

Gough et al: 'Clarifying differences between reviews within evidence ecosystems'

Marshall & Wallace: 'Toward systematic review automation: a practical guide to using machine learning tools in research synthesis'

Stewart et al: 'The evidence ecosystem in South Africa: growing resilience and institutionalisation of evidence use'

Announcements

- **Applications** for research fund networking grants are now open!
- Apply to be a **post-doctoral research fellow**.
- Job vacancies available: **apply** before 15 September.
- Submit your abstracts and papers for the 2019 Social Policy in Africa **Conference**.
- **Job opportunities** at Young 1ove.