

## Africa Evidence Network

NEWSLETTER || December 2018

### Africa Evidence Network looking ahead to 2019

What an exciting year this has been for the **Africa Evidence Network (AEN)**, with even more ahead! Not only does the Network have great plans for increased interactions amongst its members in the future, we have also received a second funding grant from the William and Flora **Hewlett Foundation**. The grant will allow the Network to strengthen its secretariat at the Africa Centre for Evidence to serve our members better. We'll be refining the AEN strategic plan and its organisational structures, including formalising our Advisory Group and Reference Group, to advocate for evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) in Africa, and for Africa's place as a leader within the global field.



**Hewlett funding:** The grant will enable the AEN to support capacity sharing, bring people together to build bridges between individuals and evidence communities across traditional boundaries, share as well as understand knowledge.

The report for **Evidence 2018** is available online; read more about this great conference. One of the objectives of the conference was to position the AEN as a key player in the body for EIDM in Africa. Based on feedback received from the Evidence 2016 evaluation, the AEN introduced Evidence Online 2018, the **Africa Evidence Leadership Award**, a welcome reception for new attendees, and thematic areas.

The AEN hosted a **learning exchange** and **public lecture** on two approaches to facilitate policy-makers' use of evidence in Africa, namely evidence mapping and rapid response services. We also hosted three **webinars** on various topics, including **evidence networks** as a mechanism to support evidence-informed policy-making in Africa, **amongst others**.

This year, the AEN established the first **Africa Evidence Leadership Award (AELA)** for EIDM in Africa with funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. **Ms Velia Manyonga** was the inaugural winner of the AELA. As part of her award, the AEN fully covered her attendance at the Evidence 2018 conference. Look forward to the AELA in 2019!

The **Africa Evidence Network (AEN)** membership has increased from about 1262 members in 2017 to almost 2000 members this year. During the year the AEN hosted over 600 people at six events. One of AEN's highlights for this year was the **Evidence 2018** conference that attracted 222 physical and 308 online participants from across Africa, and further afield.

### Evidence events

12-14 December: [Science Forum](#), Pretoria, South Africa.

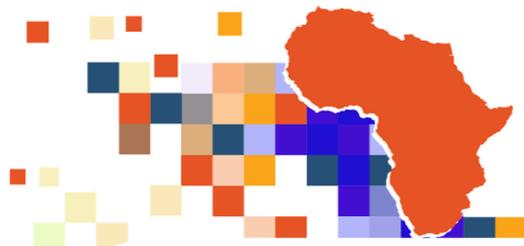
11-15 March: [9th AfrEA Conference](#), Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

25-26 March: [African Cochrane Indaba 2019](#), Cape Town, South Africa.

### Announcements

- Check out the [grants for post docs](#) who are interested in investigating infectious diseases.
- [Call for 2019 applications](#) open for African postdoc researchers for all disciplines.
- Have a look at the [useful list of resources for researchers](#).
- Vacancy as an [assistant professor](#) at Carleton University, Canada.

AEN co-ordinator, Precious Motha gives her reflections on the AEN highlights for 2018 in this month's [AEN blog](#). You can view the blog post [online](#). Use the Network to share your story – submit your blog post [here](#).



## Sustainable organisations for sustainable development

The **Think Tank Initiative Exchange (TTIX)** was held in November in Thailand to explore how think tanks can enhance a sustainable future through new kinds of collaborations to promote EIDM. TTIX was organised by the Think Tank Initiative, in partnership with the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI). **East Africa Institute** Director **Dr Alex Awiti** gave a **keynote address** urging think tanks to use evidence as an instrument that enables a deeper information flow on policy matters, and to use social media to stimulate public engagement. A number of AEN members attended the event.



**Three days of collaboration, engagement, exploration, building networks of think tanks and learning together:** The TTI/TDRI Conference Team: Photo credits: Morakot Theptaratip/IDRC.

## INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

In their blog **Dell Saulnier, Claire Allen, Anneli Eriksson and Ben Heaven Taylor** from **Evidence Aid** highlight that there are gaps in evidence and the use thereof. This is because research findings are not always available to its beneficiaries or they may be too difficult to understand. The authors recommend that there should be a standardised way of using scientific evidence in the humanitarian sector.

The Just Actions group **launched a new report** which is based on the new Global Burden of Disease (GBD) 2017 data. **Pneumonia has not been given enough attention** yet it is now the leading killer infectious disease. The report's main recommendation is that the most susceptible people in high-burden countries must be protected through pneumonia control policies, as well as properly diagnosed and treated.

As a scientist, have you ever struggled with communicating research findings with your audience? A solution is offered in the **London School of Economics (LSE) Impact blog**, where a **method** of communicating science through comics was developed. The steps developing comics comprise of firstly, finding a key message of any published research, then pulling out research highlights, developing a fictional setting, characters and lastly, a comprehensive storyboard.

## Evidence from academia

**Cairney & Oliver:** 'How Should Academics Engage in Policymaking to Achieve Impact?'

**Durrant et al:** 'Realising the Benefits of Integrated Data for Local Policymaking: Rhetoric versus Reality'

**Howard & Masset:** 'The rise of impact evaluations and challenges which CEDIL is to address'

**Mohamed et al:** 'Prevalence, awareness, treatment and control of hypertension and their determinants: results from a national survey in Kenya'

**Duncan Green**, the strategic adviser for **Oxfam GB**, advises universities on how they can make their research more useful to activists. He recommended that universities should focus more on writing (publishing) as opposed to talking. In addition, universities should ensure that their published articles are open access so that they are available to a wider audience. **Academic research will be more beneficial if universities collaborate with NGOs.**