

Look at what we achieved

Congratulations to all our members for the amazing contributions that you have made to support the use of evidence in your countries and across the region during the last 12 months. We have been called upon in new and challenging ways to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to meet a growing demand for evidence-informed decision-making. This year, the AEN has proven to be greater than the sum of its parts: we have seen members working together to generate evidence, often very quickly, and to support its integration into policies. Whilst we have much to celebrate as 2020 comes to an end, we also look forward to 2021. I wish you a restful break, and strength as we look forward to a new year with new challenges and opportunities.



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Message of congratulations from the AEN chair to all AEN members

In 2020, the EIDM community had to meet a growing demand in the field due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Photo: Africa Evidence Network (AEN)

The **Africa Evidence Network (AEN)** is inviting stories for both how the AEN has made a difference to its members (Stories of Change) and examples of evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) at work (Evidence Matters series). These stories serve the AEN's goal of raising the profile of EIDM by sharing the achievements of the EIDM sector in Africa.

The 2020 winner of the **Africa Evidence Leadership Award (AELA)** was **Mr Frejus Thoto**, Executive Director of **Actions pour l'Environnement et le Développement Durable**, with **Ms Mapula Tshangela** as the winner in 2019. In 2020, they showcased their work at **EVIDENCE 2020 ONLINE**, contributing both prior to and during the event as working group members.

An **AEN-driven** research study, started in 2019, was wrapped up in 2020. The study sought out organisations in Africa working to advance evidence-informed decision-making across sectors to explore the views, demands, capacities, and potential for collaboration across institutions in the same sector.

At the biennial **EVIDENCE 2020 ONLINE**, the working sessions on *Enhancing Evidence Capacities* produced a draft Manifesto on capacity development for evidence-informed decision-making in Africa. The working group now invites Africa Evidence Network members to contribute to and comment on the **draft Manifesto**, viewed as a living doc and a tool for members' continued engagement with one another. In early 2021, the AEN Secretariat will host an online workshop on what's happening next with the Manifesto.

Mark your calendars

10 December: Challenging Questionable Publication Practices: Strategies and Solutions, **online.**

15-17 December: Science of Dissemination and Implementation in Health, **online.**

Opportunities

- **Applications** are now open for the School for Thinktankers 2021 until 20 December.
- Apply by 10 December for the **scholarship opportunity** at the **African Institute for Development Policy**.
- **Submit your papers** for the Evidence Synthesis Technology special series.

This month, we **feature** two **blogs** by Siziwe Ngcwabe, the operations senior manager of the **Africa Evidence Network (AEN)**. She reflects on **EVIDENCE 2020 ONLINE** and provides some highlights from 2020 as well as what 2021 has in store for the AEN.

View all blog posts **online** and use the Network to share your work – submit your AEN blog **here**.



AFRICA
EVIDENCE
NETWORK

Only together can evidence-
informed decision-making
become reality.

NEWSLETTER || December 2020

Platform to promote evidence-informed health policy in Africa

The [London School of Economics and Political Science](#) partnered with the [World Health Organisation](#) to develop a platform that seeks to advance production of evidence on health systems and knowledge transfer in Africa. Called the African Health Observatory Platform on Health Systems & Policies (AHOP), the ultimate goal of AHOP is to contribute towards the overall increase of evidence-use when making decisions in the health sector in the African region. This new platform will create a conducive opportunity for those working on African national and regional health systems to share their experiences and encourage a greater use of high-quality evidence by decision-makers.



African Health Observatory Platform A collaborative partnership fostering cross-country learning to promote knowledge exchange and evidence-informed policymaking.

Photo: London School of Economics and Political Science

INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

In his recent article, [Gleb Tsipursky](#) argues that [cognitive biases](#) weaken the quality of data collection, causing poor decision-making. To overcome such biases, he proposes the use of an eight-step technique called "failure-proofing" that will support the collection of quality data to inform effective decision-making. The process starts with how data is gathered and ends with a process of 'imagining success' and revising the initial decision.

[Read Hayes](#) writes an [article](#) about how decision-making can be improved by computer vision which can more quickly access and process larger amounts of data. He highlights that decisions can be better informed by integrating all the relevant data and that doing so will enhance the situational awareness and increase understanding because of the ever-improving artificial intelligence that benefits decision-makers.

Every aspect of life has been affected by COVID-19, especially the transport sector. But how has the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the shaping of evidence-based decisions? You can find out one view in a [recent blog](#) by [Gurpreet Singh Sehmi](#), who shares three ways in which the pandemic has reshaped the way data is collected and used in the transport sector.

Hot off the press

[Reddy et al](#): 'Comparison of a traditional systematic review approach with review-of-reviews and semi-automation as strategies to update the evidence'

[Robinson et al](#): 'Bridging the research-practice gap in healthcare: a rapid review of research translation centres in England and Australia'

[Robyn et al](#): 'Engaging stakeholders across a socio-environmentally diverse network of water research sites in North and South America'

[Rosenberg & Kotschy](#): 'Monitoring and evaluation in a changing world: A Southern African perspective on the skills needed for a new approach'

[Using evidence](#) to make informed financial decisions is very important, especially during COVID-19, writes [Joanne Pitt](#). As a result of the pandemic and other preceding austerity initiatives, the public service is faced with tight budgets and limited resources. Being able to access the relevant information to make knowledgeable and effective decisions is crucial to benefit society.